

Devotional Time

The first day of your study time will be a devotional day. This day is very much like the *Lectio Divina* practice of Scripture reading, meditation, and prayer. This process was established by Saint Benedict in the 6th century. It is a helpful way to spend time in the Word and really focus on how God speaks to you through it. The emphasis is not on theological analysis. Instead, it is a time for contemplative prayer, asking God to work on your heart and allowing Him the time to do so. It is a time to focus on Christ and how you can become more like Him. It is a time for prayerful thanksgiving and basking in God's goodness. We have given you some leading questions for your devotional time; however, you do not have to stick with those questions. You can always come back to this page and use it as a guide for your time. Here are some tips for how to approach the devotional day:

1. It would be good to practice this in the same location every day. When spending time with God, it can be helpful to find a place that is safe, quiet, and removed from everything else. This is the place where you will meet God, so try to keep it the same place each day. Perhaps, step outside into nature or find a quiet room where you can sit and really be in His presence.
2. Start with solitude. Solitude is an important practice that has become very difficult in our culture. This is an important first step to devotional time. Cultivate the ability to really listen deeply and hear with your heart. Perhaps, keep a tablet nearby, and if anything comes into your mind that distracts you, write it down and then forget it. Try to quiet your mind. Nothing else competes in importance at this moment. Repeat "*Speak Lord, your servant is listening*" however many times you need to in order to fully be listening. Don't rush through this part, but give it the time it deserves.
3. Spend time meditating on the Scripture. Read the text slowly, listening carefully. Read attentively to hear a word or phrase that stands out to you. Sometimes a word or phrase will speak to us in a personal way, and this is what you want to spend time pondering in your heart, repeating it to yourself and allowing it to really interact with your thoughts, hopes, and desires.
4. Spend time in prayer. Allow what word or phrase you have emphasized today to really touch and change you. Invite God into that process. Ask Him to do His work on your heart.
5. Close in contemplation. Rest in God's presence. Often, this is the step we want to rush through, but I would encourage you to really spend time here. Enjoy the experience of being in the presence of God.