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SHARPEN YOUR SPIRIT

7

**Bible Study
Methods**

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Introduction

When you are devoted to God first, everything in your life flourishes.

Have you ever felt like a boat drifting with the tide? One minute you seem to be heading in the right direction; the next your attention is pulled elsewhere. You may feel like you have great intentions but something always seems to get in the way. And you may even feel like you're always putting out fires, losing control of everything around you.

What if I told you it doesn't have to be that way? **The answer lies in where you've placed your devotion.**

The word "devoted" can be defined as giving yourself entirely to a specific person, activity or cause. We are all devoted to something.

Some are devoted to family. For others, it's their career. Some have great devotion for their favourite sports teams or television shows. We live in a world where we are constantly bombarded with things crying out for our time and attention.

"No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and be enslaved to money."

Luke 16:13 (NLT)

There are many great things you can devote your time and effort to, but only one thing can fill you with what you need to handle all the rest. **When you are devoted to God first, everything in your life flourishes.** You will have the strength to parent your kids well, the insight to excel at your career and the unconditional love to have great relationships.

As you devote yourself to God, that drifting feeling passes and you'll begin to feel confident in who you are and the direction you're going.

How do you devote yourself to God and His Kingdom? By reading His Word and getting to know Him. Let's dive into seven methods you can use to get to know God's character, nature and His thoughts on you and your life.

Take Time in Prayer

When you are devoted to prayer, your heart becomes so full of His joy, courage and peace.

Firstly, I would like you to look at prayer differently. You see, prayer isn't just asking God to do things for you. **Prayer is becoming saturated with God.** During your prayer time, you absorb His strength, His courage and His love.

The heartfelt and persistent prayer of a righteous man (believer) can accomplish much [when put into action and made effective by God—it is dynamic and can have tremendous power].

James 5:16 (AMP)

James 5:16 is one of my favourite scriptures. Are you taking full advantage of the power of prayer? **Prayer can make tremendous power available** to your kids as they live out their lives. It can unleash God's power into your business and your marriage. It's simple—you talk to and hang out with God so that He can build His strength into you.

In your quiet time with God, you receive just the right download you need from Him. He loads His power into you for your situation. Ask Him to teach you what you need to know. He's just waiting for the invitation so He can show you the best way to go through your day.

You can talk to God when you are at work, in traffic and doing chores around the house. You can ask for His input on decisions you need to make. When you are devoted to prayer, your heart becomes so full of His joy, courage and peace.

Let God radiate His ability into your life. Then you will be ready to radically impact your world out of His overflow of love and strength.

Sharpen Your Spirit

You can sense God speaking to you in the centre of your being.

Your mind works in logic and knowledge, but your spirit operates from God's wisdom. Psalm 119:97-99 says **if you study God's Word and meditate, you will be wiser than your teachers, wiser than people older than you and wiser than your enemies.** That's the kind of wisdom that will help you do exceedingly well in all areas of life. It's the kind of wisdom that comes from your spirit first.

The spirit of a man is the lamp of the Lord, searching all the inner depths of his heart.

Proverbs 20:27 (NKJV)

This verse says that you can sense God speaking to you in the centre of your being. When He gives you direction, you feel it in your belly. Your job is to learn how to listen to those intuitive gut-feelings and follow them.

You are a three part being: spirit, body and mind. We know the importance of exercising our bodies to stay vibrant and healthy, and the mind is something we are encouraged to continually sharpen into old age. But we also need to sharpen our spirit. This happens as we spend time in God's Word.

A strong spiritual self leads to an increased mental capacity and greater physical health. **In order to become your best, remain committed to strengthening all three areas of your being.**

When you act on the Holy Spirit's direction, you increase your trust in His leading. **Look for a feeling of peace.** When you are on track, even if you are under stress, deep down you will sense His peace that surpasses all understanding.

Build a Habit

Fill your heart with life-giving truth—and it produces incredible results.

According to stats, nearly half of all marriages in North America either end in divorce or endure the bitter heartbreak of infidelity—sometimes both. I read one study that surprised me. It shows that Christians aren't doing much better in their marriages than their non-Christian counterparts. It seems like faith doesn't make us immune to relationship failure.

In fact, when it comes to depression or addiction, studies show that believers usually don't rise above in those areas either. Now you may be wondering, "Then what's the point of going to church or following Jesus?"

For starters, having a relationship with Jesus comforts you and helps you turn your life around when you're up against something difficult. But more importantly, consider this finding: **people who meditate on God's Word at least four times a week fall off the radar when it comes to divorce, depression and addiction.** What's going on here?

For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12 (NKJV)

Proverbs 4:23 instructs you to guard your heart above all else, because out of it flows the issues of your life. **When you meditate on God's Word, you fill your heart with life-giving truth—and it produces incredible results.** Regularly meditating on the Word brings health into to your relationships, mind, body and all of your behaviours.

Start building this habit today by meditating on a few verses or one of God's promises. Let the truth sink into your heart and create life-giving beliefs!

Let God Go to Work in You

Something new and beautiful can only be birthed in your life if you stay with the process..

Many people want to grow and change but they strive and work at it all on their own. Change can be really hard work if you do not understand how God has designed you to change. The power and desire to change come from God but you have to let Him finish what He starts.

For it is [not your strength, but it is] God who is effectively at work in you...

Philippians 2:13 (AMP)

You may want to get up and walk out when things get hard, but you need to give God time. **He wants to birth something new in your life.**

Imagine if a woman in labour said, "Stop! I changed my mind." Something has been started that needs to be followed through to completion, even if it's uncomfortable. In the end, when she's holding her precious baby, she will know it was all worth it.

Something new and beautiful can only be birthed in your life if you stay with the process. If you keep studying the Bible, you are letting God finish His work. When you let God finish what He starts in you, you will be able to look back at where you once were and see how you have become a new, more improved you!

Those who do not take the time to study the Bible slow down God's work. Set aside time to spend with Him. Allow Him to keep working on you so He can finish what He's started, leaving you better, stronger and healthier than you have ever been.

Set a Filter

Ask yourself, “Does this line up with what the Bible teaches?”

When Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden, God walked and talked with them every day. Everything they needed to know came through Him and they lacked nothing. Unfortunately, they were deceived into thinking that God was holding out on them.

They bought into Satan’s lie: “You can’t trust God.” They no longer believed that He had their best interests at heart—that trusting Him would lead to the most fulfilling, amazing life they could ever imagine.

Many of us still fall for this lie today. We look to other sources to help us make sense of our world or we analyze and reason our way through perplexing information and confusing experiences. Unfortunately, this approach tends to lead to negative, fear-based, angry, jealous and judgemental thoughts.

For the Word that God speaks is alive and full of power... it is sharper than any two-edged sword... exposing and sifting and analyzing and judging the very thoughts and purposes of the heart.

Hebrews 4:12 (AMPC)

God is not holding out on you. According to Hebrews 4:12, He has given you an invaluable tool to help you when you are not sure what to believe. **His Word.**

Whatever you read and hear today, ask yourself: **“Does this line up with what the Bible teaches?”** If you are not sure, search it out. Study and meditate on His Word. It will help you to discern between what information you should accept and what you should reject, keeping your heart and mind safe from destructive thoughts and beliefs.

Tear Down Misbeliefs

What you repetitively see, hear and experience can form beliefs within you.

Left unchallenged, destructive beliefs only become stronger and more numerous. Eventually, a fortress of negative beliefs can form in your heart so that every one of your days feels controlled by judgemental, fearful and angry thoughts.

The Bible calls these negative beliefs strongholds, and they can form two ways: by repetition or intensity. **What you repetitively see, hear and experience can form beliefs within you.** For example, if you were repeatedly told that you were not wanted as a child, those words may war against everything you try to accomplish until dealt with on a deeper level.

A single very traumatic experience also has the intensity to build a strong belief. For example, a girl whose father abandons the family could develop the belief that it was her fault. Although completely untrue, this belief could affect her relationships with men from that point on unless it is replaced with the truth.

For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds.

2 Corinthians 10:4 (NKJV)

Trying to talk yourself out of believing lies does not touch the subconscious, heart level that contains your deepest beliefs. Instead, study God's Word every day and it will go to work on your heart. Ephesians 5:26 (NLT) calls this process becoming "washed by the cleansing of God's word." It gradually replaces all negative, incorrect beliefs you hold with the truth, empowering you to function at your best.

What strongholds are you facing? **To tear down a stronghold, nothing is more powerful than meditating on God's thoughts on the subject.**

Chew On It

The real life-changing power of God's Word can only take effect once you have meditated and absorbed what you can learn from it.

A long time ago, a man told me of a dream he had that involved me. In his dream he saw a scroll and on it was written the Word of God. As people were standing around to admire it, I walked in and shouldered my way through the crowd. I stopped, tore off a piece and started eating it.

I didn't think much of this dream at first, but over time God showed me that this picture was from Him.

When I study the Word, I find it easy to get caught up in the absolute beauty of it. **Although there is nothing wrong with enjoying the Word of God, its purpose is to be brought in, enjoyed... but then released so that it can go to work.**

When you eat something, your body breaks the food apart into smaller, digestible bits, absorbing what it needs. The same is true with God's Word. Reading it is like taking a bite of an apple. You still have to chew, swallow and then process that bite before your body can use it.

Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by Your name, O Lord God of hosts.

Jeremiah 15:16 (NKJV)

The real life-changing power of God's Word can only take effect once you have meditated and absorbed what you can learn from it. Then you can put it into practice in your life.

It is better to read two verses a day and spend ten minutes talking to Holy Spirit about it than to read an entire book of the Bible without chewing on one word.

Do you stop to chew on God's Word?

Conclusion

**Sow an act, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character.
Sow a character, reap a destiny.**

Two people in separate cars are stuck in traffic as a train slowly crosses. One person hums along to a song playing on the radio while the other pounds his fists on the dashboard. Each person has to wait the same amount of time, but one will move forward from the delay without letting it ruin his day while the other will be irritable with everyone who crosses his path. We all encounter situations like this and our behaviour—fueled by grace or rage—is dictated by habit.

Almost all of our behaviours are formed by habit. In other words, **we are what we repeatedly do**. Our habits are very powerful forces in our lives; **they can propel us forward or lead us down a path of destruction**.

Thankfully, bad habits aren't cast in stone. They are broken when you replace them with a good habit. Focusing on your bad habits only gives them power. **Nurture new positive habits, and they'll soon overpower the negative ones.**

Don't you realize that you become the slave of whatever you choose to obey? You can be a slave to sin, which leads to death, or you can choose to obey God, which leads to righteous living.

Romans 6:16 (NLT)

The actions you choose form habits in you. These habits will determine your character and eventually your destiny. One of my favourite sayings goes like this: "Sow an act, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character. Sow a character, reap a destiny." It is all up to you.

The small actions you choose today will form your future.