

15
MINUTES
ALONE WITH **GOD**
FOR MEN

BOB BARNES



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*To the various pastors, coaches, businessmen, and
fellow journeyers who have contributed to my Christian walk.
Though you are far too many to mention by name,
I have been blessed through the years by your
guidance, love, and example.*

*I especially want to dedicate this devotional to
my son, Bradley, his two sons, Bradley Joe II and Weston;
my two other grandsons, Chad and Bevan Merrihew;
my son-in-law, Bill Whitney, and my grandson-in-law, Pat Ianni.
You certainly contribute to the goodness of my life!
May you all stay near to God so that
He will impact your lives in a mighty way.*

From Bob

Each decade introduces new challenges for men. We now find ourselves faced with more distractions, temptations, diversions, and opportunities than ever. So plentiful and frequent are the choices spinning in front of us, that many of us struggle to get off the merry-go-round long enough to spend time with God. The absence of that important time can lead to a life of hurried decisions, anxious thoughts, and uncertainty—even fear—about our future and our purpose.

One thing I've learned during my lifetime is to be purposeful in all I do. There are so many choices that seem good, but they don't energize me to become the man God created me to be. How wonderful that we can choose to pause and refresh our minds, thoughts, spirits, and hearts by asking, "Why am I here on earth? Who does God call me to be?"

My hope is that your identity as a godly man will become clearer and more compelling as you spend time immersed in these readings, key Scripture verses, prayers, and action steps. There are three boxes in the top corner of each entry. Because these devotions can be read in any order and will help you more than once, you can put check marks in the boxes to track your progress. The material in this devotional is designed to challenge and encourage you in your spiritual journey by daily reading Scripture and meditations built around the verses. It takes twenty-one days to develop a new habit. And unlike many of life's distractions, this habit—this choice—can transform your life, marriage, relationships, perspective, and faith in amazing and eternal ways.

Let's begin together.

Bob Barnes



Time for God

SCRIPTURE READING: Psalm 116:1-2

KEY VERSE: Psalm 116:2

I will call on [the LORD] as long as I live.

.....

You know you should spend time with God each day, but have you ever really considered what God wants to give you during those daily times with Him? The apostle Paul wrote, “The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22-23 NASB). These—along with guidance, wisdom, hope, and a deeper knowledge of Him—are what God wants to give to us, His children. Think about each item in Paul’s list. Which of us doesn’t need a touch of God’s love, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control in our life?

“But,” you say, “who has time? My to-do list is always longer than my day. I run from the time the alarm goes off in the morning until I fall into bed at night. How can I possibly find time to do one more thing? When could I find even a few minutes to read the Bible or pray?” Let me answer your questions with a question: Are you doing what’s important in your day—or only what is urgent?

People do what they want to do. All of us make choices, and when we don’t make time for God in our day, when we don’t make time for the most important relationship in our lives, we are probably not making the *best* choices.

God greatly desires to spend time alone with you. After all, you are His child (John 1:12; Galatians 3:26). He created you, He loves

you, and He gave His only Son for your salvation. Your heavenly Father wants to know you, and He wants you to know Him. The Creator of the universe wants to meet with you alone daily. How can you say no to such an opportunity?

I know people who spend hours commuting on the California freeways and use that time to be with God. I used to pray while I was driving an hour between home and work. Now that our children are raised and our home is quiet, I find mornings—before the telephone starts to ring or I get involved in the day's activities—are the best times for me to be alone with God. And I love getting to church early and having 10 or 15 minutes to open my Bible and think upon God's thoughts. Despite the distracting talk that is often going on around me, I use this block of time to prepare my heart for worship. (In fact, I believe if more members of the congregation devoted time to reading Scripture and praying for the service beforehand, church would be more meaningful for every worshiper.) Although the times and places where we meet God will vary, meeting alone with God each day should be a constant in our lives. After all, we are God's children, and like any good father, He wants to spend time with us.

"Okay," you say. "You've convinced me. I need to be more regular in my time with God—but exactly what should I do when I'm alone with Him?" I suggest that you read and meditate on God's Word for a while (devotional books like this one can help) and then spend some time in prayer. Talk to God as you would to your earthly parents or a special friend who loves you, desires the best for you, and wants to help you in every way possible. Here are a few suggestions:

- Praise God for who He is—the Creator and Sustainer of the universe who is interested in you, His child (Matthew 10:29-31).
- Thank God for all He has done for you, for all He is

doing for you, and for all that He will do for you in the future (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

- Confess your sins. Tell God about those things you have done and said and thought for which you are sorry. Remember that He is “faithful and just and will forgive us our sins” whenever we confess them (1 John 1:9).
- Pray for your family. Pray for friends and neighbors who have needs—physical, emotional, or spiritual. Ask God to work in the heart of someone you hope will come to know Jesus as Savior. Pray for government officials, for your minister and church officers, and for missionaries and other Christian servants (Philippians 2:3-4).
- Pray for yourself. Ask for God’s guidance in the day ahead. Ask Him to help you do His will and to arrange opportunities for you to serve Him throughout the day (Philippians 4:6).

Time with your heavenly Father is never wasted. If you spend time alone with Him in the morning, you’ll start your day refreshed and ready for whatever comes your way. If you spend time alone with Him in the evening, you’ll go to sleep relaxed, resting in His care, and wake up ready for a new day to serve Him.

Remember too that you can talk to Him anytime, anywhere—in school, at work, on the freeway, at home—and about anything. You don’t have to make an appointment to ask Him for something you need or to thank Him for something you’ve received from Him. God is interested in everything that happens to you.

Father God, thank You for the privilege of prayer—and forgive me for taking it for granted. I want to spend time with You each day. I want to know You better. I love You. Hear my adoration, my confessions, my thanksgivings, and my

supplications. Help me to live according to these desires despite all the demands I feel. And teach me, Lord, to call on You in every situation throughout the day. Thank You that You are always within the sound of my voice and always only a thought away. As I pray, help me be genuine with You, unconcerned about eloquence or impressive speech. Remind me to pause and listen to what You say to me. Amen.

Taking Action

- If you aren't already spending time with God each day, decide today that you will give it a try for one month.
- Tell someone of your commitment, and ask that person to hold you accountable.
- Read and pray Colossians 1:9-12 each day this month.

Reading On

Galatians 5:22-23

Galatians 3:26

John 1:12

Luke 5:16

Matthew 14:23

1 Peter 5:7

Lord, make me an
instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred,
let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
and where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master,
grant that I may not
so much seek to be consoled
as to console;
to be understood
as to understand;
to be loved
as to love;
for it is in giving
that we receive;
it is in pardoning
that we are pardoned;
and it is in dying
that we are born to Eternal Life.

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI



God's Man for Life

SCRIPTURE READING: Job 1

KEY VERSE: Job 1:22

*In all this, Job did not sin by
charging God with wrongdoing.*

.....

A landholder, rancher, and community leader, Job was one of the most respected and influential individuals in the entire region. Still, his number one priority was his large, active family. Despite the tremendous demands on him, he always had time for his children. They were never an interruption. And a person couldn't talk to him very long without him pulling from his wallet a favorite picture of his troop. He was always eager to tell you about each of them. This wise man knew that his most significant legacy wouldn't be his possessions or his bank accounts but his sons, daughters, and grandchildren. As a man living in the present but with a vision for the future, a man of God, a man whom God had greatly blessed, Job caught Satan's eye.

As the Lord holds court in the heavenlies, He asks Satan, "Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil" (Job 1:8).

Satan shrugs and replies, in effect, "Of course Job is close with You. Who wouldn't be in his position? He's got all the advantages. You handle him softly and protect him. Just try taking away a few of his precious toys and then see what he does. He'll surely curse You to Your face" (verses 9-11).

For reasons unknown to us, God gives Satan some freedom to do what he wishes to test Job's faith. God does set limits, but even with those limits Satan causes Job to experience great loss and immeasurable pain. In a quick series of catastrophes, Job loses his business, his wealth, his health, and all 10 of his children. But still Job worships God. Then, with God's permission, Satan afflicts Job's body. At this point, Job's wife tells him to curse God and die (2:9). Would Job remain a man of God or would he reject the God who had once so richly blessed him? Is Job a man of character or a fair-weather follower of God?

Job remained God's man! By doing so, his life offers us many valuable lessons. One of these is the fact that things on the outside can be taken away from us, but no one can take away those things on the inside—our heart, our character, our soul. We can throw these away by turning from God and following after false gods, but no one can ever rob us of our heart and soul when we're committed to the Lord. And no one can take the character we develop as a result of our commitment.

So what will you do when the things of life are taken away from you? What will happen to your inner man? Will you stand strong in Christ? Will the loss purify and strengthen your character or will it break you?

We know that Job's trials strengthened his character, and people still talk about the patience of Job. But Job demonstrated more than these. He shows us a faith in God that has staying power and is able to endure to the end. As today's key verse says, "Through all [his losses and suffering] Job did not sin nor did he blame God" (Job 1:22 NASB).

And how does our faithful God respond to His people who have faith in Him? Read Job 42:10-16. May this passage give you hope when the circumstances of life bog you down. You can rejoice in the Lord in all situations and give thanks in whatever challenges that come your way because you know God is your faithful Redeemer.

Father God, thank You for all that You teach me through the life of Job. Thank You for showing me that my faith in You has staying power. May my life reflect the endurance of Job in whatever comes my way. Remind me to not measure my life by outward success; instead, help me see the internal as much more important. I want to make choices that preserve the character You're developing in me.

I pray that You, merciful God, will spare me from the kind of testing Job underwent. If I am to be tested, help me find strength in You. As I trust You with my life, increase my confidence that You know what I can handle and will not allow circumstances to overwhelm me. With You on my side, I can handle whatever comes my way. And when the trials are over, I know I will have grown even more into the person You want me to be. Amen.

Taking Action

- List five commitments you've made in your life, and then answer the questions.
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 -
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 -
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- How are you doing with these commitments?
- Which ones, if any, have fallen by the wayside? Why?
- Are you satisfied with your progress? Why or why not?

- Now list 5 blessings and thank God for each one of them.
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 -
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- Finally, list those areas of your life that are giving you difficulty. Thank God for each one because these struggles promote spiritual growth.

Reading On

This week read the rest of the book of Job. Reread this book whenever you feel you're being tested and need encouragement and hope.



What Your Kids Need to Hear

SCRIPTURE READING: Psalm 127

KEY VERSE: Psalm 127:3

*Children are a heritage from the LORD,
offspring a reward from him.*

.....

Oh look, Daddy, I caught it!”
“That’s my boy. Now get ready; here comes another.
Make me proud and catch this one too.”

“Look, Daddy, I’m only eight years old, and I can throw
faster than anyone in the league!”

“But your batting stinks, Tiger. Can’t play in the big
leagues if you can’t hit.”

“Look, Dad, I’m 16, and I already made the varsity team.”

“You better do a little less bragging and a little more practicing
on your defense. Still need a lot of work.”

“Look, Father, I’m 35, and the company has made me a
vice president!”

“Maybe someday you’ll start your own business
like your old man. Then you’ll really feel a sense of
accomplishment.”

“Look at me, Dad. I’m 40, successful, well-respected in
the community. I have a wonderful wife and family—
aren’t you proud of me now, Dad?”

“All my life it seems I’ve caught everything but that one prize I wanted most—your approval. Can’t you say it, Dad? Is it too much to ask for? Just once I’d like to know that feeling every child should have of being loved unconditionally. I’d like for you to put your arm around my shoulders and, instead of telling me I’m not good enough, tell me that in your eyes I’m already a winner and always will be no matter what.”

“Look at me, Daddy. I’m all grown up...but in my heart still lives a little boy who yearns for his father’s love. Won’t you pitch me the words I’ve waited for all my life? I’ll catch them, Father, I promise.”¹

Do your children know you love them? Do your kids know unconditional acceptance? Are your kids winners in your eyes—and do they know that? Our children need to know that Mom and Dad really love them. They long to hear us say, “I love you, and I am very proud of you.” And they need to know of our love for them even when they...

- yell and scream in the grocery store
- have temper tantrums in the restaurant
- wear strange clothes
- have funny haircuts and oddly colored hair
- use vulgar language
- run away from home
- do poorly in school
- run around with friends we don’t approve of

Often they are using behaviors like these to ask indirectly, “Do you love me?” What are they hearing from your reaction?

A good friend's son was not into sports like his dad desired. Instead, he was into motocross racing. When the parents went to see their pastor, the dad asked what he should do. The pastor said without hesitation (and not surprisingly), "Take up motocross!" Predictably, the dad said, "I don't like dirt, grease, motorcycles, the people who ride, sunburns, or the long days at the track." To this the pastor replied, "Fine—but how much do you love your son? Enough to get grease on your hands and clothes?" The following week our friend was off to the local motocross event with his son. They were soon very involved with dirt, grease, and people our friend would never have chosen to spend his weekends with. But through these actions, this father showed his son that he loved him.

Your children are a gift to you. The psalmist calls them "a heritage from the LORD...a reward from him" (Psalm 127:3). What are you doing to show your kids that you love them?

Father God, teach me to show my kids that I love them, and prompt me to tell them with words too. Help me be creative, unselfish, and willing to do things with them that aren't necessarily my first choice. Raising kids is a tough job, Lord. I need Your help. Amen.

Taking Action

- Write each of your children—whatever their ages—a note to let them know how much you love them. Be specific about a few things you love about them.
- Spend some quality, one-on-one time with each of your children this week. Ask them what they want to do and then do it!
- On next month's calendar, schedule another date with each child.

Reading On

Psalms 127:3

Proverbs 16:24

Psalms 128:1-3

Proverbs 18:10