



The benefits of private devotions

How many seconds, minutes, or hours do you spend praying to God and reading, studying, or meditating upon God's Word? Or, are you like many young people who find it hard to find some quiet time to even get started in the Bible? Perhaps you have tried and tried, and still, the time spent privately and personally before your Lord does not seem so beneficial to you. Well, in this brief article I have been given the assignment to list the benefits we all should be receiving from our "private" or personal times before the Lord and His word, I will first then, briefly talk about why we should have a private time of devotion; second, we will look at what or whom it is we should devote ourselves privately. Finally, we will talk about the benefits that you should expect from this time spent personally, privately, and quietly with your Lord.

Why have private devotions?

Because it is listed as one of those holy responsibilities or duties in our Church constitutions: *"Every member shall engage diligently in private devotions"* Yes, and because, even as a "younger member", perhaps even as a confirmed young man or woman, you need to continue to grow in your being confirmed in your faith and in your Lord?

Indeed why? Because, dear young men and women, to engage in "private devotions" or in the personal study of God's word, in prayer and fellowship with your God, is something that all Christians should desire to do.

Yes, should *desire* to do, especially after they have diligently been faithful in attending to the preaching and teaching of God's word from Sunday to Sunday. Listen up now, for from this chief means of grace, our hearts and minds should be energized or further challenged and encouraged to learn more of God, His ways, and our calling to be Christians! Yes, I mean to say, that even as a young person, if you are not first of all diligently seeking the kingdom of God and His righteousness through the faithful preaching and teaching of God's Word on His day, then you will certainly not know "why" you should engage in private devotions. Get this part of your Christian life right and you will most assuredly desire to further study God's Word and to spend some quiet time with Him, alone in prayer and devotion.

To what or to Whom should you devote yourselves privately?

I know that you know this, but seriously, what does "private devotions" consist of, and to whom or what are we devoting ourselves privately? Brethren, yes, that includes you younger covenant folk. You are to devote or specifically set apart some time during the day or even the week, that you might spend time praying to God, reading His word, and then meditating on or listening to His word.

Whether you spend five minutes or fifteen minutes, that personal time (yes, that allotted or specifically set-aside time) should be spent in reading through God's Holy Word. In studying and thinking about the sermon passage preached, or the Sunday school lessons taught, or the Heidelberg Questions and Answers for that week. "Devotion," or to devote one's self to something, such as time to personally commune with your Creator-Redeemer, is consecrating or dedicating a tiny or brief time-slot, in your 'way-too-busy' schedule, or your 'filled-with-me-only' schedule so that you can actually converse and talk with God in prayer as you study and read His Word!

Wherefore dear younger brothers and sisters of the RCUS, if you are diligently engaged in preparing for and praying for your Sunday time of devotions with the Triune God in the corporate worship services and Bible studies, you will find the time to privately devote or consecrate and give yourself some time to be with God in prayer and study.

Again, listen up here: For you know that all of us really do what we truly *want* to do, when we want to do it! Therefore if you really and truly desire to know God and His Son better, to learn more of God's ways and of your calling as a Christian, for His glory and your sanctification, you will find or make the time to privately spend some quiet time with God and His word, communing with Him, listening, petitioning, and thanking Him.

What benefits should I expect?

What benefits should I expect from this time spent personally, privately, prayerfully, and quietly with my Lord and His Word?

The first of many benefits is that you will certainly grow in your knowledge and understanding of God and His ways. That is, you will grow in the grace and knowledge of your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and thus, in your love for God and your neighbor. You will also see your life becoming conformed more and more unto the image of His dear Son. Likewise, you will learn more and more how you ought to defend the faith, or *stand up, stand up for Jesus as soldiers of the cross!* Moreover you will be fortified against the assaults and attacks of the wicked one, and your own easily deceived hearts.

Furthermore, you will be saints or members of your Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, whom others desire to be around. That is, you will attract or have the right kind of friends wanting to hang out with you! Surely, from these private times before the Lord you will become more humble and meek, and thus, a greater witness to all whom God brings before you, whether they be your believing or "unbelieving" friends!

Truly then, you will also be filled with greater joy and hope in your Christian walk or sojourning. If you spend a little private time with your Lord in prayer, and in studying His Word, you will certainly desire, more and more, to be with your Lord, or to spend even more time in His word; you will begin to desire more and more to see Him return on the clouds of glory.

Let's see, are there any other benefits that I may have forgotten? Well, if you are diligently disciplining yourself, setting aside some specific time for reflection, meditation, and prayer with God and His word, you will most assuredly receive from our gracious God help, grace, and strength for the day-to-day spiritual warfare that all of you are daily engaged in, or should be engaged in. Yes, and you will be better equipped or more thoroughly equipped for every good work. Surely this is every Christian's desire. Surely this is every true believer's hope. Surely this is every church member's prayer and holy wish, both young and old.

Wherefore once again, dear "younger" brothers and sisters in the Lord, as mentioned earlier, seeing that the benefits from engaging diligently in private devotions spring from or develop from diligently engaging in the means of grace that God has so graciously provided for us in the Sunday and/or mid-week services and studies, see to it that you first practice preparing to come before Him in humble dependence and worthy worship. Then the benefits derived or gained from seeking God's kingdom and righteousness through a private, personal, set-aside time of prayer with Him, and His word, will indeed be absolutely manifold and immeasurable!

Yes, I know, even though the benefits are manifold and immeasurable for us when we diligently have private devotions, sadly, many of us fall way short of this diligence. Let us all beg earnestly of our gracious God, that He might strengthen us in this holy practice.

To get started reaping some of these benefits listed, I encourage you to set aside some private, personal, quiet time to prayerfully read Psalms 1, 19, and 119. Then perhaps move on to the Gospel according to John or one of the other Gospel accounts. The Lord bless you all as you invest or commit some of your day or week in having private devotions.

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