

INDISPENSABLE FAMILY COMPONENT

BY JERRY D. PORTER

AN ESSENTIAL INGREDIENT OF FAMILY UNITY, stability, and maturity is evidenced every morning as my wife has a bravo cup of coffee and her quiet time.

Toni, have you always had this enthusiasm for the Bible?

As a college sophomore, I lacked direction. I attended a collegiate Campus Crusade retreat to hear Bill Bright. Weary after several challenging sessions, I entered the empty auditorium and was struck with the words on a banner: "Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know—Jeremiah 33:3." My heart cried out, "Do You have a great life for me that I know nothing about? Lord, I want that life!" I felt the Lord's gracious embrace. I returned to college a different person with a passion for God's Word!

Can this love for the Word be passed on to our family?

My aunt gave me a book on family devotions that sparked creativity and gales of laughter in our family devotions as Amy and Bill dramatized the Bible stories.

Were you always consistent in these devotional times?

In Costa Rica I changed my devotional time to the evenings because the mornings were hopeless chaos. The schedule in Guatemala was easier. The children walked to school, and I walked to the regional office. The children and I had devotions each evening, praying for anything and everything! Our schedule in Baltimore was more predictable. Every morning Jerry read scriptures to the children. During Amy's illness we sang, studied the miracles, and prayed for a majestic intervention. Though not perfect, through the years we have grown in our love for God's Word and for prayer.

Is it enough to go to Sunday School and church?

We all need personal Bible study. In Guatemala several missionary wives joined me to study Jeannie

McCullough's powerful book Women of the Word. I also joined a "Precept upon Precept" inductive Bible study group.

This in-depth study of a book of the Bible transformed us as we became intimately familiar with the Word. I loved to do the Greek and Hebrew word studies! The three years I did both Bible studies were some of my richest spiritual growth times. In Baltimore I further pursued my Bible studies and completed a master's degree in theology.

I am saved and sanctified; why do I need to be "in the Word"?

"Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word" (Ephesians 5:25b-26). Christians mature by studying God's Word. We are sanctified in a moment of grace, but we are also being sanctified by the Holy Spirit's continual cleansing by the Word.

Where do I begin this voyage of intimacy with God?

Our heart's desire is to commune with God. The first requirement is time. Whether we prefer mornings or evenings, the key is to sanctify some daily "God-time." Creative alternatives will emerge once we make this discipline a priority.

What does your quiet time mean to you?

My quiet time strengthens me and dispels my fears. After Amy's death, Bible reading became difficult, and the Lord seemed silent. For months I simply cried through my quiet times. Gently, God's reassuring grace led me back to the Word. As my tears dried, my heart began to wait on the Lord. I enjoyed the peace of solitude—and still do to this day. "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). ♦



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