

INSIDE:

+ **Making time for God
in our busy lives &
how it changes**



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Editor's Note:

This month we asked our writers how they make time for God/spiritual practice in the midst of busy schedules and how it changes with the seasons of their life.

God's Presence

Written by:

Cheryl Glassman

Life sure has evolved for most people! I remember a time when my friends would ask if I wanted to go to lunch. Now, we ask one another if we have TIME to go to lunch. There are four of us and it sometimes takes a month before we can all meet! People have said life can become busier when someone retires. There are plenty of things to be involved in. We can either turn from those things and people that are important to us or we can embrace them. I have chosen to be open to more options.

I am directing an upcoming program at Hays Arts Council, and volunteering for events at Old Fort Hays and Ellis County Historical Society. I am going to concerts and plays and musicals. I help with music at church. We have been blessed

with a sweet grandson and watching him grow and learn is so much fun. Dad, at age 97, lives at home and I am honored to help him with his meals and daily chores. Dad and I reminisce, talk about current events, and discuss football (Go Chiefs!).

Looking at my life at age 67, I also think about young families. Some have both parents working full time, going to kid's activities, practices, and making time for trips to see family and friends. It can definitely be a full life. Sometimes it is filled with much joy, and other times the challenges of frustration and sadness. So, in the midst of our busy lives, where and how does God fit in?

God's presence is not always ours to "fit in." Sometimes, God takes care of helping us know He is with us in special ways. I recall a few years ago my daughter was

going through a rough time. She needed to find a new apartment immediately, and her mind was whirling with the events leading up to it. She was lucky to have friends who could accompany her as she searched for a place. Her heart was hurting and, although her friends were there, she did not think she had anyone to turn to who really knew what she needed that day. After a full day of searching, my phone rang. My daughter was on the other end. She said she thought she had found a place but wasn't sure. The sadness in her voice was almost overwhelming.

I knew the awful events that led to this day. Although I was angry and sad for her, I needed to let go and let God. I took a deep breath, said a silent prayer from Psalm 33:22 (NAB) "Let your love surround us Lord, for our hope is in you," as she described the

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apartment. I asked her where it was located, and she told me. We were both silent for what seemed like minutes.

Then I remember like it was yesterday the words that came to me. I asked what buildings were near her. There was more silence as she must have peered through the window. She said there was a large church across the street. I asked her if she could see the name. She said, "Yes. It is St. Stanislaus." It was then I realized God had helped direct her to this place. I told her, "You know, your great-grandmother had a twin sister. She was a nun. Her name was Sister Stanislaus." I heard a deep sigh, a sigh of relief. And then, "Thanks, Mom." I replied, "Thank the Lord sweetie...and St. Stanislaus."

Life moments like the one I just described happen more than we sometimes let ourselves realize. When it feels like we have too much on our plate or cannot make things work the way they should, it is then we need to step back and let God know we need His presence. We can also renew our faith-filled selves by taking time to notice and appreciate God's creation. I love to take a few moments to step out on my back porch as the sun begins to set, take some deep breaths of fresh air and let God know how much his love means to me. The words of Psalm 46:10 (NAB) "*Be still and know that I am God,*" were never truer words spoken.

Even if our lives are filled to what we think is the brim and

we are close to giving up, we must always take time to speak to God, even for a few moments. In those moments, when we open our hearts to Him, we are again renewed and filled with His joy, His great love, and His strength. If we can do this, the small moments will happen more frequently, become longer and will fill us with peace. May God's unfailing love fill your hearts, and may you find Him in even the smallest things. And always remember, "*Our help is from the Lord, who made heaven and earth,*" Psalm 124:8 (NAB)



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Time with God: A Must

Written by:
Amber Cunningham

God makes it very clear that He wants to be first in our lives, as the first two of the ten commandments that God gave to Moses are to have no other Gods other than Him and to not have any other idols (Exodus 20:3-4). But so often, we tend to let the busyness of life take over and we end up putting everything

else before Him and only give our leftover time. When we do that, we will end up being burned out, frustrated, tired, weary, and bearing no fruit in our lives. John 15:5 (NLT) says, "*Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who remain in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.*"

It's simple. If we don't spend time with the God that created us, we will bear no

fruit in our lives and can do nothing apart from Him. But when we connect ourselves to Him through worship, spending time in His presence, and reading His word and prayer, then we will bear the good fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) in our lives that we all desire to have. We will never "find" time for God because something will always get in the way. We must "make" time for God. If

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we do not schedule it into our daily lives, then it most likely will not happen.

I've learned that I can't do anything apart from the Lord. I used to strive and try to make things happen in my own strength, but that only left me tired and frustrated. When I started spending time with God and relying upon Him, my days would go smoother. I would be at peace, have patience, and have so much more joy. I still had trials because we aren't guaranteed a trouble-free life. Jesus tells us in John 16:33 (NLT), *"Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."* When the trials came, I was able to get through them because the Lord gave me the wisdom, strength, peace, endurance, and everything that I needed to overcome.

Matthew 6:33 (NLT) says, *"Seek the Kingdom of God above all else, and live righteously, and He will give you everything you need."* When we pursue God's kingdom and His righteousness as our priority for living, then God will take care of everything that we need.

Spending time with God should never come out of religious duty, but from our love for the Lord. When you

love a person, you will spend time with them. What we do with our time will show us our priorities in life. Jesus loved us enough to die for us. He paid the penalty for our sins so that we could be forgiven and spend eternity in Heaven if we place our faith in Him. We owe our lives to Jesus. The least we could do is give Him our time and affection. He's waiting each day for us to come and spend time with Him. Nothing in this world will satisfy the longing in our hearts except for Jesus.

Your time with God may look different in each season. As a working mother of five, I had to learn that each season wasn't going to look the same. When we had our fourth child, we had one kid in grade school, another in middle school and one in high school. I was working 40 hours per week, nursing my baby, and was completing a leadership course that took an extra 10-15 hours per week. It was a tough season, but I still spent time with the Lord, it just looked different.

My time with God was every time that I nursed my baby (which was every three hours). Rather than being on my phone, I was worshipping, praying, or reading the Word of God out loud to our baby girl. I would pray in the car or in the shower, just whenever I

had the chance. You won't always have seasons where you can devote one to two hours with the Lord, but you make the best use of whatever time that you do have whether that is getting up 30-60 minutes early in the morning or taking those little pockets of time throughout the day to connect with Him.

I've found that the busier that I am, the more time I need to spend with God. I need His Spirit to lead me. I don't want to operate out of my flesh. We have enough flesh running around in this world. We need people operating out of God's Spirit. You and I need the Holy Spirit to be the person that we desire to be.

We need the Holy Spirit to guide and direct our days. Ask the Holy Spirit each day what He wants you to do. Life is so fun and exciting when you are walking with The Lord and guided by His Spirit. You never know how God will use you to be a blessing to others when you spend time and are yielded to Him. So, draw near to Him and He will draw near to you (James 4:8).



Amber Cunningham serves on the Leadership Team at Hays Family Worship Center.

He is Enough

Written by:

Terri Braun

Until about 10 years ago, I would classify my relationship with God as casual. I believed in God, but never nurtured it. I only went to church every now and again, prayed when I remembered, and He only crossed my mind during those times. I found out a casual relationship was not enough to sustain me through life and its seasons.

Over the years, I discovered that precious time with Him for me is a necessity! It transforms me into a better parent, better spouse, better employee, and better friend. A better version of myself appears. But I must make Him a priority! That doesn't mean I have to spend hours with Him, it means being intentional with the time I do spend with Him. For me, I prefer to start my day with Him. It helps me keep life in perspective, helps me see His blessings through the day and life seems to have more joy and peace. My day just seems to go smoother knowing that He is always by my side.

It is easy to put God on the back burner when life is going smooth, but when your season of life changes and it becomes challenging, you

will need Him more than ever. I have "been there, done that." After suffering a brain injury in 2014, the casual relationship I had was not enough to carry me through the darkness.

I watched myself spiral down into despair where there was no light and no hope. I was at my wits end and was so mad at Him for allowing this tragedy to happen. Not wanting to lose everything and not knowing what else to do, I said to myself, "All right God, let's do this." So, every day, I would spend time with Him. Not being able to read much, I began to listen to a podcast of the daily readings. Sometimes I would go sit on the front porch and just listen to the birds chirp, admire the beauty of His nature, and feel the warmth of the sun on my face. He is everywhere and will fill your senses if you just look and listen.

By listening to His Word, I began to build a relationship with Him, and hope and light began to shine once again in my life. The more time I spent with Him, the more the relationship began to blossom. I discovered that He longs to have a relationship with me, His creation. That really impacted my life. The all-mighty, all-powerful, all-

knowing God can have anything He desires and yet He wants to spend time with me. How awesome is that!

Jesus suffered and died for us so we can start over with a life that has Him in it. So whatever struggle you are going through, remember, His strength can carry you. He is beside you, and in front of you. Choose a life rooted in Him and build a firm foundation that can sustain you through those tough seasons. He will welcome you home any time, just as He did when I hated Him. He forgives and forgets.

Every morning is a new day, so start getting to know Him: whether it is in the grocery store line, when you are alone in your car, listening to a podcast over lunch or getting up a little early. When you establish a relationship with God, His mercy and grace will envelop you. He is more than enough to get you through each day as you journey through life with Him and in Him.



Terri Braun is the ministry coordinator for St. Nicholas of Myra and the author of several Christian books.

Time for God: Another Way of Thinking About It

Written by:
Kurt Beyers

Considering the proposition of "How can we make time for God with our busy modern schedules," it occurred to me that the problem of finding or making time is not in "finding" or "making" but in thinking. Is time ours or is it God's? Is He just one of many disparate interests competing each day for our attention - work, food, play, laundry, carrying out the trash? If we set aside a specific time, does that mean we don't have to think about Him beyond that?

How do we quantify it? Do we measure it in minutes or hours or as a percentage? Should we build our days in segments, like a Lego set: get ready for work; breakfast; work; lunch; more work; eat; play; sleep. Where, among all these multicolored little plastic bricks of time, do we insert God's brick?

And is there a quota? We should, without question, spend time in specific acts of discipleship-reading the Bible; Bible studies; meditation on the reading or the study; discussion of the pastor's sermon or the Sunday School lesson; fellowship; and prayer, among others. This is what most people think of as

"making time for God."

What about the rest of the day? Blocking out "time for God" may ensure that Bible reading gets done every day on time, or we make it to a Bible study every Monday night. However, thinking of God's time this way can tempt well-meaning people to see the exercise as an end in itself, a requirement, like a parking permit, with God as some kind of cosmic meter cop. The phrasing helps us forget that all time is God's and can lead us into a mindset that puts all our "God time" into that one little space, much like the famous example of people who show up to church on Sunday so that they can do what they like the rest of the week.

What about the rest of the day? Consider all the possibilities in any given day for life to give cause for fear, anger, distrust, contempt, bitterness, hopelessness: an inconsiderate co-worker; the news; a rude shop clerk; a spam phone call; a family dispute; a work emergency; a political dispute; a religious disagreement; a rebellious kid; or maybe you just have to deal with someone you don't like. Because, unless we retreat from the world to live a life of blissful contemplation, a large chunk of our days will be spent in activities that carry the

potential for temptations to evil thought, intemperate language and unhelpful acts.

What if we define "time for God" as opportunities for godliness in moments like these? When someone cuts us off at a roundabout, or pulls out in front of us at a four-way stop, do we curse? That is obviously not God time. If we repent, ask forgiveness, and pray for the safety and well-being of the offender, surely God would consider that time well spent.

But perhaps the real trick is to go a step further and use our discipleship time, however much or little of it we have, to help us gain control over our emotional triggers, to prepare us to react in godly ways to worldly intrusions on our consciousness. Study, meditation and prayer are never going to be a majority or even a significant minority of our time, and worrying about what is enough and how to get it only takes more time from God.

The focus should be on the rest of the day, when we should be always ready to display the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Peter, in 1 Peter 5:8, tells us to

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beware of the devil, who "prowls around like a hungry lion, seeking someone to devour." I think it unlikely that Peter is talking only about life-and-death issues that provide opportunities for glorious heroism or contemptible

villainy. I believe he is also talking about ordinary time.

The measure of whether time is spent with God, I think, is how well we use it to work toward or demonstrate godliness. And God makes that measurement.



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