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Every morning, lean thine arms awhile
Upon the window sill of Heaven and gaze upon thy Lord.
Then with the vision in thy heart, turn strong to meet thy day.

-Anonymous

1

First Things First

A familiar tightening in my throat. A small lump threatening to grow rapidly. Eyes that smarted—I blinked fast, so they didn't overflow. We were walking to church, which meant the promise of relaxing for at least two hours during the service. So why the tears?

The last straw was that my husband had said “yes” to a family who wished to come for an evening visit. Because we were hosting lunch visitors, this meant a whole day of company. We enjoy our open-door policy, so why did I keep envisioning a basket filled with Bible, pen, journal, and tissues?

Deep inside, I knew the answer. School would be starting in two days, and my devotional time had slipped through

“We are no stronger than our devotional time.”

Harry Erb

the cracks. Any schoolteacher's wife knows what August looks like for a family, marriage, vegetable garden, mending pile, kitchen, gas tank, and yes—devotional life. Funny how something as private as the prayer closet should so greatly affect a mom's composure! Or is it?

In our quest for balance, what is urgent often clashes with what is important. Vegetables waiting patiently in the garden begin to take on an urgent appearance, even though I know attending a teacher's conference with my husband is more important. School preparation is both urgent and important because "school is starting in two weeks." So we lay aside the mending pile, promise the green beans a

“ Being born again from above is a perennial, perpetual, and eternal beginning; a freshness all the time in thinking and in talking and in living, the continual surprise of the life of God. Staleness is an indication of something out of joint with God. ”

Oswald Chambers

Friday date, and ignore the rapidly encroaching clutter of toys, half-used tissues, and garbage that would normally receive daily attention. Sad to say, God also sometimes gets the promise of a Friday date, or "when I have more time after school starts."

Worship precedes service. This timeless principle is illustrated by the many heroes who spent hours every day communing with God and still accomplished His will for

their lives in remarkable service. Amy Carmichael, George Mueller, and praying mothers spring to mind. Even Jesus spent all night in prayer in preparation for the monumental task of choosing disciples.

“ He stands best who kneels most; he stands strongest who kneels weakest; he stands longest who kneels lowest. Bent knees make strong backs. ”

Conversely, this principle is also illustrated by those who served without worship. We can do the right things with our own energy for only so long before it catches up with us. Hollow things disappoint. Jesus condemned hollow whitewashed sepulchers, dead Christianity that is covered with the right clothes and does the expected thing. People, especially those we are serving, see through a pious veneer remarkably fast.

We know the symptoms of a servant committed to *doing* without first *being*. We find ourselves giving a listening ear to a needy friend, then hanging up the phone and losing patience with our own dear children, or pushing prayer aside in favor of a magazine. When our soul gets its energy from God, we can discern His will, serve with joy, and give sacrificially.



Ways to Keep First Things First

- ☞ This sounds basic, but it starts with a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Without this, our service for God should be relabeled “humanitarian efforts” or “tinkling cymbals.”
- ☞ Resolve to live in the presence of God. This requires conscious effort at first, for we tend to divide our lives and our duties into natural and spiritual categories. End the dichotomy!
- ☞ Stay hungry. When emergencies or sickness prevent us from our quiet time, we should ask God to fill us with righteousness and recharge our appetites. “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled” (Matthew 5:6).
- ☞ Post meaningful Scriptures above your kitchen sink or a timely verse on the bathroom mirror and keep a Bible in your purse. Pursuing God shouldn’t happen only during a set time in a set place. Mindless tasks like peeling potatoes and ironing clothes can be wonderful opportunities for prayer and meditation instead of letting our minds revolve around petty issues or negative thoughts.
- ☞ Lower your expectations for a season. Simplify—seriously. Because time with God is never lost, doesn’t it make sense to skip the dusting, window washing, or the new recipe in favor of our appointment with God? To be supportive wives, our souls need to be energized by God. When things level

out again, we can practice time management skills that incorporate our other priorities.

- ☞ Plan ahead. Make conscious decisions in February about what size of garden will feel reasonable in August. If you do your own sewing, it helps to find a slower time of year, even as early as January, to sew for the children and other needs. Even lovelier—several buckets of soup or foil pans with casseroles in the freezer for pressure-filled days in July or August. These details may make the difference in our spiritual and emotional health. We plan ahead for dentist appointments and family trips. Time with God is worth planning for even more!
- ☞ Remember there is a difference between being weary *in* the work and being weary *of* the work! Each is its own separate problem and has its own separate antidote.