

The Word



This is pretty typical of the e-mails I receive asking for encouragement and direction:

Dear Teri,

First, I want to thank you for Homeschooling with a Meek and Quiet Spirit. I have read it twice and am now going through it for the third time. I have also done the study guide that goes with it. But reading it is easier than doing it. I am in prayer about being more meek and quiet, and for a while I do much better—with the Lord's help, of course. I try to speak lovingly to my children (ages 6, 4, and 14 months), and gently remind them to recall what Scripture says about their actions or attitudes. But I have to say that the past few weeks I have become increasingly annoyed and almost fed-up with my children. I feel like all I hear are complaints, bickerings, back-talking, delayed obedience, and whining. I don't feel very loving toward any of them right now, except maybe the baby. He hasn't really had a chance to learn better than to whine when he isn't happy.

I feel like I have failed with my older two, and they are still young. This should be the time that I am truly enjoying them. If I don't have their hearts now, what is it going to be like when they are teenagers? I feel like I have been acting on auto-pilot with them this week, not emotionally investing in them because I know they are going to frustrate me, and it is easier to deal with it if I am braced for it in advance. I remember a sentence in your book saying that you were thankful that the Lord had helped you overcome your anger and yelling at your children, but that you wanted to be at the point where you never ever had annoyance in your voice. I long for the same thing, but I have to admit that there has been annoyance in my voice almost every time I have spoken to my children this week. I need a soft heart toward them. I am praying for one. But why do they finally obey me when I am angry? I hate feeling like such a failure.

I get so frustrated, not being able to figure out if they need more love and attention or more correction and discipline. Probably both. But I am confused about how to go about both. And as far as affection and attention, I know that they all feel attention starved because they rarely ever get one-on-one time with me. They are all always vying for my attention. They frequently talk over one another, and when one comes for a hug, the rest pile on top of me like football players on a fumbled ball. I feel smothered rather than loved. My daughter, the six-year-old, occasionally comments that I don't have time to play with them because I am always busy cleaning the kitchen or other work. I try to make time to play a board game or card game with them once or twice a week, and we read books every night, in addition to homeschooling. But other than that I don't have a lot of time to play. Is that my job? I can barely keep everything done as it is. I can't schedule time to play doctor.

I am pretty sure that if I had a more organized schedule, things would go more smoothly. I bought every "Managers" book you wrote last May, but I have yet to read even one of them. I don't have time. How do you get organized when you don't have time to figure out how? Did you ever feel

this discouraged? I know that my only real help “cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth [Psalms 121:2].” But I hoped you could offer some ideas, or at least assurance that I am not crazy or alone in my struggle. When I go to the homeschool conference, I see these families with the most amazing children. They are sweet, quiet, mild mannered, and they sit through hour-long sessions with their parents without making a peep. And some of them are as young as two years old. I long to train up my children to behave in the same manner. I would not even consider taking my children to the conference. They have never sat still and quiet for more than ten minutes at a time. Where did I go wrong? I was such a great parent before I had kids!

When I read an e-mail like this, I can hear her heart cry to follow the Lord Jesus with her life, to be the kind of mother that He wants her to be, to have the types of responses He desires her to have, and to teach her children His ways. I have many practical ideas I could share with her, but I also have a critical starting place. I ask her a question and based on her answer, give a project. Her response to the project will indicate whether she is teachable and whether she is willing to invest what it takes to find solutions and work for change. Without that teachable spirit, all the great ideas and direction are worthless.

The question I ask is: Are you spending daily, personal time in the Word? Seldom, if ever, is the answer yes. So the project I give her is really very simple. It is concrete. It is quantifiable. It lets me know whether she has a teachable heart and whether she really does want change in her life. In addition, if she will begin to do this project, she will start hearing from the Lord what she needs to hear for the solutions to her difficulties. I instruct her to spend time reading her Bible every day—not if she feels like it, not if she thinks she has time, not if it is convenient, but every day no matter what.

Sample #2

As I wrestled with the lack of peace in my heart, the Lord began to teach me that when I prayed, I needed to let go of it. It was now His responsibility, and I was to stop allowing it to roll around in my mind, stop trying to be in control of it, and stop stewing about it. If He had something I should do in regard to the situation, He would tell me what it was. All I needed to do was rest and leave it to Him.

That brought the peace I was longing for to my heart. I think it is the peace you want as well. It did something else, too. It took me out of the middle of so much that I was meddling in that I had no reason to be a part of.

Praying is our communication with God. Isn't it amazing that the God of the universe so wants us to communicate with Him that He tells us to pray? The word *prayer* in Philippians chapter 4 actually means to talk or to speak in the Greek. We are to be talking with God.

— Pray Always —

“Pray without ceasing.”

—1 Thessalonians 5:17

 When are we to pray?

This verse indicates that we pray continually. A desire I always have is to become more and more a woman who lives in an ongoing state of prayer. During my years of raising little children and homeschooling, it was especially difficult for me to have that prayerful mindset. I finally bought a special watch that had timers on it. I would set the timer to go off every hour to remind me to stop what I was doing and turn my heart to prayer.

Since as women our minds seem to be quick, busy, and sometimes filled with worry and concern, it is good for us to train ourselves to turn our thoughts to prayer rather than anxiety or fear.

“Now she that is a widow indeed, and desolate, trusteth in God, and continueth in supplications and prayers night and day.”

—1 Timothy 5:5

 When is the widow praying?

We are to be praying during the daytime, but also at night. Praying is a great way to go to sleep. When you pray, you remove worry from your mind, and turn your concerns and plans over to the Lord Jesus.

— In the Morning —

“And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.”

—Mark 1:35

 Who was praying?

 When was He praying?

 Where was He praying?

With the example of the Lord Jesus Christ, I want to encourage you to do what our family has chosen to do, and that is to have an

Sample #3

we must be willing to evaluate our lives and confess the sins that we are continually committing. Even if we consider them to be small, like an impatient tone in our voice, we still need to repent and confess to gain forgiveness and the Lord's help for victory.

For me, one of my problems has been an unwillingness to recognize my sin. It wasn't hard to tell that anger in my life was sin, but when it came to attitudes, I sometimes didn't realize they were bad attitudes. When they were pointed out to me, I would defend them, justifying them as acceptable. That added another sin to the one already on the table, and that was pride.

— Thanksgiving —

“Praise ye the LORD. O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.”

—Psalms 106:1



What is the Psalmist being thankful for in this verse?

If you ever run out of ways, when praying, to express thankfulness to the Lord, simply do a study through Psalms looking for the words *thanks*, *thankful*, and *thanksgiving*. It is obvious that the Psalmists had hearts full of thanksgiving to God and used those words to express their feelings. You can learn and model that kind of praying with a grateful heart and words.

Because of my propensity to notice all that is wrong with a person, situation, circumstance, or item, I have to fight my tendency toward being discontent and critical. The way the Lord wants me to do that is

to give Him thanks. I have to look for what I can be grateful for rather than what I don't like. An example of this is that I don't tolerate heat very well because I get headaches. Anytime I am somewhere that it is hot, I start feeling sorry for myself, want to complain, and try to find ways to get out of the heat. If I look for them, though, there are always reasons for me to thank the Lord in the midst of feeling hot.

“And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.”

—Colossians 3:17

 When are we to be giving thanks?

“In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.”

—1 Thessalonians 5:18

 What are we to give thanks in?

 What does this verse tell us that this giving of thanks is?

Obviously if we look at these verses and come to the conclusion that being thankful is God's will for us and that we are to give thanks in whatever we do, whatever we say, and in everything, then it must follow that thanksgiving will be an integral part of our praying.