

Devotional Guide

The greatest honor we can give anyone is our undivided attention. God, who created us in His image and loves us unconditionally, deserves our attention and devotion more than anyone else. The Devotional Guide is a means to that end. Start by finding a place that is comfortable, quiet and free from distractions. After getting situated, relax your body, take a deep breath slowly, and let it out slowly. Continue doing so, while softly saying, *Lord*, as you inhale, followed by, *Jesus*, as you exhale. Now, imagine a beautiful setting. For me, I'm on a level trail in the woods. The trail is carpeted with lush green moss, which feels cool to my bare feet. I notice that the forest on either side is not dense, but open with shafts of light penetrating the broadleaf canopy. The only sound is of a breeze gently blowing through the branches, prompting the leaves to dance gracefully. As I look ahead, I see an opening of bright blue sky that gets brighter and more vivid with each footstep. Suddenly, I find myself stepping off the mossy trail and onto a beach of fine sand. It's warm on my feet. The forest is now behind me, but the edge of its canopy is still above, providing welcome shade from the sun. Before me is a wide-open view of the ocean with a gentle surf approaching, and then retreating just as quickly. Back and forth; back and forth... The combination of sounds created by the breeze and surf is calming, and the twinkle of sunlight on the water is captivating. I sit down and lean back against a small sand dune, resting easy and taking it all in. I'm alone, but suddenly realize that I don't feel alone at all. He's right beside me. I can't see Him, but know He's there. Just the two of us. After a long silence He speaks softly to the quietness of my heart, saying, *Be still, and know that I am God* (Psalm 46:10). Lord, as I still my heart, my soul, my spirit in your presence, help me to meditate on your divine attributes:

Eternal – You exist forever and ever

From everlasting to everlasting, you are God. (Psalm 90:2)

Creator – You made everything from nothing

In the beginning, you created the heavens and the earth. (Genesis 1:1)

Sovereign – You reign over all creation

You are the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords.
(1 Timothy 6:15)

Lord – You rule all of creation

You established your throne in the heavens, and your kingdom rules over all.
(Psalm 103:19)

Holy – You are the perfect One

Holy, holy, holy are you, Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of your glory.
(Isaiah 6:3)

God – You are the only One

You are the first and the last; besides you there is no god. (Isaiah 44:6)

All mighty – You can do anything anytime

What is impossible with me is possible with you. (Luke 18:27)

All present – You are everywhere at once

If I ascend to heaven, you are there; if I make my bed in the grave, you are there. (Psalm 139:8)

All knowing – You understand everything and everyone

Oh, the depth of the riches of your wisdom and knowledge; how unsearchable are your judgments and inscrutable your ways. (Romans 11:33)

All loving – You care unconditionally and endlessly

You loved the world so much, that you gave your one and only Son. (John 3:16)

I acknowledge Your Greatness

Great are you, Lord, and greatly to be praised; your greatness is unsearchable. (Psalm 145:3)

I appreciate Your Goodness

I give thanks to you, dear Lord, for you are good, your love endures forever. (Psalm 136:1)

Eternal Father – You protect and provide

You are my refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. (Psalm 46:1)

You will provide my every need according to your riches in glory in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:19)

Eternal Brother – You redeem and restore

In you I have redemption through your blood, the forgiveness of my sins. (Ephesians 1:7)

If I am in you, I am a new creation. The old is gone; the new has come. (2 Corinthians 5:17)

Eternal Lover – You comfort and convict

Spirit, I receive you as another Comforter to be with me forever. (John 14:16)

Convict me concerning sin, righteousness and judgment. (John 16:8)

Cleanse me

Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity; cleanse me from my sin. (Psalm 51:2)

Fill me

You say be filled with the Spirit. Please, Lord, fill me. (Ephesians 5:18)

Lead me

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. (Psalm 119:105)

Dear Lord, please open my mind to understand and my heart to receive as I read and reflect upon your word. In Psalm 46, I begin by meditating on the fact that you, and you alone are my *refuge and strength*... Thank you for being my *present help in trouble*... I rest in you, and *will not fear*... Oh God, *though the earth should change*, you do not change. *Waters roar and mountains quake*, but you are not affected, and neither am I, because you are my *refuge and strength*. In the midst of calamity, I see a life-giving *river, whose streams make glad your city*. Lord, it seems to me that this *city of God* refers to the people of God; your people, of whom I am part. Indeed, we are your *holy dwelling places*, and you are our God *Most High*. Since you are *in the midst* of us, we will *not be moved*. You help us *when the morning dawns*, because you are our *refuge and strength* through our dark nights. Thank you!

Let's now reflect on this spiritual experience, which began when we gave God our undivided attention, in order to honor, worship and hear the Lord speak to us through His word. Relaxing ourselves in a comfortable place free of distractions, we focused on breathing slowly and deeply in and out, while saying, *Lord Jesus*. Then, using our imaginations to create a lovely, peaceful setting, we experienced God's presence and company in silence, until hearing Him call us to *be still, and know that he is God*. In response, we stilled our hearts, and meditated on God's divine attributes, as we presented each one in a word (e.g. Eternal); a statement (e.g. You exist forever and ever); a verse (e.g. *From everlasting to everlasting, you are God*; Psalm 90:2). Then, after acknowledging that *God's word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path* (Psalm 119:105), we opened His word to read, reflect, listen and respond, using Psalm 46:1-5 as an example. This one-on-one encounter with God is called pray-reading, because it involves a conversation with the Lord, while prayerfully reading and reflecting on His word. Imagining ourselves in God's presence, we converse with Him directly and personally by turning verses about God into statements and appeals to God. For instance, Psalm 46:1, which reads, *God is our refuge and strength*..., becomes *You are my refuge and strength*... The same is done with Scripture verses that affirm the divine attributes of God listed in the Devotional Guide. The result is an intimate dialogue with the Creator, which is deeply spiritual, personal and life-changing.

God created us for intimacy with Himself and each other. Spiritual intimacy, which is best defined as in-to-me-see, is what life is all about, both on earth and in heaven. Think of the Devotional Guide as a highway with rest stops along the way to pause wherever the Lord may lead to reflect more deeply on one of His divine attributes (e.g. Eternal; Creator; Sovereign; Lord; etc.). Such stops should not be hurried, and may be the destination for a particular devotional experience. If God has you proceed to the end of the guide, where you say, "Lead me," with Psalm 119:105 in mind (*Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path*), continue by pray-reading whatever Scripture text you're using for your devotions. A devotional time is all about experiencing God while pray-reading His word. In essence, it's a conversation with these questions of the Lord in mind: What are you revealing about yourself? What are you revealing about me? How should I respond? Listening for God's answers to these three questions will deepen your spiritual and personal relationship with Him in ways you can only imagine.