



# 101 Devotions

A DECKDEVOTIONALS  
STUDYSERIES

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LET'S [RE]DISCOVER THE HEART OF  
A FRUITFUL DEVOTIONAL LIFE TOGETHER

DECKDEVOTIONALS

“Thou hast made us for thyself, O Lord, and our heart  
is restless until it finds its rest in thee.”

Augustine of Hippo

## StudySeries Intro

Our devotional life is the heartbeat of our walk with the Lord. Yet, establishing a consistent devotional life seems like such a common challenge believers have. Maybe we've complicated it, maybe we've lost touch with its importance...maybe we've lost touch with its importance because we've somehow made it complicated.

There could be a list of reasons, but here's what I know for sure - My spiritual life has been invigorated by my devotional life, as imperfect as it is.

So if you've struggled to maintain a consistent devotional life and you don't know how to fix it, commit to this StudySeries. Not to give away the ending but... [there is no formula](#), my friends. There are just some questions worth answering to get your heart aligned with the Lord, and to [re]discover the beautiful simplicity of spending time with the Lord.

Let's do this!

~ Alyssa

# Here's the Roadmap

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# Before we get started...

Consider your devotional life as it is today.

*What's it look like?*

*Is it consistent?*

*Is it fruitful?*

*Are you open to hear God speak?*

*Do you believe that God wants to commune with you?*

It is difficult to get where you want to be if you don't know where you're starting. Before you get started with this StudySeries, take a few moments to note the reality of your current devotional life. Use the questions above as a prompt if they are helpful to you.

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## QUESTION 1 What do you want to get out of your devotional time?

Truthfully, this is a little bit of a trick question.

This question is one that becomes a stumbling block for many Christians, too, I think. Sometimes we go into our devotional time thinking, “This is what I need today.... I need God to tell me [*insert answer you’re looking for*] and I need to feel great about myself when I’m done.” Is that a little extreme? Maybe, but you get what I’m saying.

Don’t get me wrong, the Word of God encourages us to:

- *Approach the throne boldly (Hebrews 4:16)*
- *If any lacks wisdom, to ask (James 1:5)*
- *Present our requests to the Lord (Philippians 4:6-7)*
- *Seek healing through prayer (James 5:15-17)*

In fact, in John 14, Jesus says, “Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.”

We are encouraged to approach God in prayer and devotion with an **expectant** heart, specifically when we come desiring for our hearts to be aligned to His. John 14 doesn’t give us the go-ahead to treat Jesus like a genie-in-a-bottle; it is a reassurance that the Lord will honor a heart aligned to His. He longs to dwell with us; the Psalmist often writes of how the Lord delights in those who are His. I share all of that to say this:

We will most definitely get much out of our devotional life, but as a natural byproduct of genuinely seeking the Lord’s heart on the matters concerning our hearts each day. Note the Psalmist also writes:

*I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you. (Psalm 119:11)*

*Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. (Psalm 1:1-3)*

These Scriptures indicate a healthy motivation in spending time with the Lord in prayer and His Word, and it's to know God, His ways, what honors Him and His heart.

Some of us show up to our devotional time with a list in our hearts of what and how God needs to speak to us that day to prove Himself faithful and true. And unless we experience epiphanies or leave that time with our hearts in the clouds, we feel a sense of disappointment or discouragement. Please know, I get needing God to speak loud and clear into a situation. But approaching our time with God this way is like dating someone simply for the benefits of having someone rather than for genuine connection and relationship; it's like dating solely to get something out of it. That's an empty, disappointing, fruitless relationship.

Our devotional life is intended to be much different than that. Listen, we know that God will show up. God will speak. God will be found by searching hearts. [Jeremiah 29:12-13]. He promises us these things in His Word. This question I've asked really isn't about God at all because we know His heart is genuinely for us and connecting with His creation, intimately. It's about the posture of *your* heart.

This week, take notice of where your heart is as you begin your devotional time - whatever that may look like. When the question changes from "What do I need to get out of this today?" to "How can I know You better today?" things will change when it comes to your devotional life.

Our devotional life will be the most fruitful - when our heart's chief desire and intention is to get to know Him through His Word, and communicating with Him through prayer. It makes sense doesn't it? Our hearts are naturally bent towards pursuing what we desire.

When it's knowing God's heart we desire, what flows from that (the way God speaks, blesses us) becomes a natural byproduct.

If you have never established a consistent devotional life before, let this encourage you to begin one with a heart whose chief desire is simply, yet profoundly, to know the heart of our Heavenly Father and Savior better. When that is your motivation, consistency isn't so challenging to achieve.

### Something to Consider...

What has been the chief desire of your heart as you approach your time with God?

*I encourage you to be brutally honest with yourself. No lasting change is achieved by painting a picture of ourselves and our intentions that isn't accurate. The reassuring truth is that if you need the Lord to wake your heart up a little bit, He will. Be bold enough to ask.*

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## QUESTION 2 What does your devotional time look like?

This question is, in fact, asking about what your devotional time physically looks like because this is a subject that causes us to get stuck in our heads sometimes.

What I mean by that is this -

It is not uncommon to hear someone you may think a lot of describe their devotional time in a way that paints a picture of something you've never experienced. Even less uncommon is that many are left thinking, *"Well my devotional time doesn't look like that at all, I must not be doing it right."*

When we allow our thoughts to go there, we allow the enemy to shift our focus from the real heart of God and nature of our devotions to something outward, almost Pharisaical.

When my heart is genuinely seeking the Lord, the moments I'm spending with Him while I swiffer my kitchen floor have been just as profound and fruitful as when I'm two chapters into a book of the Bible one morning with worship music playing in the background; when everything looks "right." Our devotional time doesn't need to be picture perfect to be fruitful.

There is no blueprint for what your time with the Lord needs to look like. But in the Gospels, Jesus shows us something important as He finds quiet time with the Father.

Mark 1 holds one of my favorite passages in Scripture, maybe because it pertains to this idea of devotional time so clearly. It may even be fair to say that it shows us what it *shouldn't* look like more than it shows us what it *must* look like. In verses 29-39, Jesus is healing nearly an entire city of people all day long. Then verse 35 says:

*“And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.”*

What shouldn't our devotional time look like? Chaos. Jesus removed Himself from the busyness to get alone with the Father. He didn't sit in the middle of the chaos of the crowds, and His disciples, and the work He was doing, and expect to somehow find quiet time with the Father. Could God speak in the midst of that? He sure can. But that shouldn't be the habit we develop - forcing God to speak louder than the noise we surround ourselves with so we don't need to step aside and get alone with Him.

When your heart is in pursuit of Him, you'll be driven to do whatever necessary to have sweet fellowship with him each day. The answer to the question we've asked today should simply, and only, be this...

Your devotional time should look like whatever it needs to look like to have focused time with the Lord in His Word, and talking with Him through prayer.

- *Maybe it's 20 minutes in your car alone after you drop the kids off at school.*
- *Maybe it's an hour in your prayer closet before anyone else wakes up, or after they're asleep, or before your work day starts and the busyness begins.*
- *Maybe it's time in the Word, and in prayer, on your lunch break.*
- *Maybe it's sitting on your bed with a devotional before you take a shower and listening to worship music or a sermon, or praying while you're in the shower.*

And maybe it's a hundred other things that leave you with physical time and space to spend with God. There is no time minimum or limit. There is no painted picture you need to emulate. There is no playlist that is guaranteed to make you feel His presence.

There is just you and your heart, and God and His heart, and a desire to spend time with the ultimate Lover of your soul.

## Something to Consider...

We make time for work, household tasks, friendships and relationships because we know they matter; they are necessary to life and we find value in them (even the things we don't necessarily enjoy). Do you give yourself physical time and space to spend with God?

*You'll want to know the answer to this before Day 3 when we unpack the question that naturally flows from this one. And again, I encourage you to be brutally honest with yourself. No lasting change is achieved by painting a picture of ourselves and our intentions that isn't accurate. The reassuring truth is that if you need the Lord to wake your heart up a little bit, He will. Be bold enough to ask.*

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## QUESTION 3 Do you give God time and space to speak?

Life does not fail at trying to pull us in a thousand directions sometimes. It's like the day starts and we take off running. We go from one task to the next. One conversation to the next. One heart struggle to the next. One "how are we going to pay this bill this week?" to the next. One "is our relationship always going to be this way?" to the next. It becomes all too easy to leave no time to stop, talk to God about it, process and make a decision we have confidence in.

When we get stuck in this cycle, not only are we left with little to no margin regarding time, we're left with very little margin in our hearts as well. And so, we either become overly solution-oriented and handle things the best we can as they come so we can file it away and move on, or we shut down because we don't have the capacity to deal.

**This is why carving out daily devotional time is truly vital.**

For many of us, this time is the only relatively quiet time we get in a day to be in the Word, hear God's heart, talk to Him about where our heart is, and process through all that life throws our way in a healthy, productive way. This is where we give God time and space to speak. But this question goes beyond that...

Making the time is half the challenge. The other half is actually giving God room to speak and be heard. It's entirely possible to carve out time for prayer and devotions each day, and still not actually give God time and space to speak to your heart. Life is overwhelming! There are dozens of moving pieces for the average person as it is, then add dozens more if you are a wife and/or a mother. It is very easy to get caught up in everything we are thinking and feeling, and wanting God to do in an instant; so caught up that He gets no opportunity to be heard over the noise we allow to stay in our hearts and our minds; so caught up in what we think needs to happen that we aren't willing to hear God speak something different.

Years ago when I started DeckDevotionals, I was fresh out of a broken engagement. I was in the process of deciding if I was going to step away from ministry and leading worship for a season to slow down and heal. We had a major family situation that turned all of us inside-out for a long while just surface. Less important, but still in the mix, was a job search and potential career change coming up. My world was turned upside-down, and I had spent weeks trying to figure out what to do about it all to absolutely no avail. When did I talk to God about it? Well, I didn't.

So one Sunday afternoon, I felt all of this weigh on me in an unbearable way. I walked myself out to the deck in our backyard, sat down with my Bible and a cup of coffee, and said to God, "I am not moving from this place until I hear from you. I want what You want for me." I will never forget saying those words. I was done fighting to make things go my way, or rationalizing my decisions. I needed my heart to hear clearly from God. The only way I was going to find peace was aligning my heart to His and moving forward with the confidence that I was abiding in Him, even if it wasn't what I thought I wanted; even if it hurt in the moment, I knew joy was waiting for me on the other side.

He didn't give me answers that night, but He gave me peace and a plan. I would meet Him on that deck every morning before work that week and I knew by the end I would hear from Him clearly.

*And I did.* God used that to show me the importance of giving Him time and space to speak, even/especially in the midst of chaos.

We see examples like this all throughout Scripture, too. In Joshua 7, we see a very frustrated and confused Joshua on his face talking to God; frustrated, but going to God with it with an open heart - and God spoke! In Acts 27 we see Paul on a ship destined to shipwreck due to stormy seas, but with peace and confidence because He made room for God to encourage and reassure His heart in the midst of it (v25).

(I encourage you to read those passages!)

All of this is to say... it's one thing to make the time. It is another entirely to give the Lord the time and space to speak to us in the way that He needs to, rather than the way we want Him to.

### Something to Consider...

Is your heart open to what God has to say, knowing it may not be what you want to hear? Selective hearing with God can be dangerous. Not because He's vindictive and will "make us pay," but because everything He's called us to do - big and small - is for our good and His glory. Walking outside of His will is bound to bring unnecessary friction and pain as a natural byproduct.

*As always, I encourage you to be brutally honest with yourself. No lasting change is achieved by painting a picture of ourselves and our intentions that isn't accurate. The reassuring truth is that if you need the Lord to wake your heart up a little bit, He will. Be bold enough to ask.*

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## QUESTION 4 How's your prayer life?

This question is asking more than it seems. Let's unpack it together.

So much happens in prayer. We present our requests to the Lord (Phil. 4:6-7). We cast our anxieties upon Him (1 Pet. 5:7). We boldly ask for healing, forgiveness, etc. (James 5:15-17). We praise God for who He is, and what He's done (Psalm 103 | 139). We intercede for others (Eph. 6:18). We go to battle, with praise and petition, and the Lord on our side, when we pray.

But above and before everything listed above, in its simplest form, prayer is communication with the Creator; the Lover of our souls. All of what's listed (and more) are things we communicate, yes, but for today I want us to think/talk about prayer as a means of intimate communication.

Why do we communicate? To grow in a relationship; to get to know someone.

*/rə'lāSH(ə)n,SHip/ the way in which two or more concepts, objects, or people are connected, or the state of being connected.*

Relationships are about forming a connection. It's about knowing them, and letting them know you. Communication is the means by which we accomplish that. It's a two-way street - we share with them, they share with us. The more sharing there is, the closer the relationship tends to be, which is the goal. To pursue communication with someone for nothing more than getting something from them is manipulation, not relationship.

The more we communicate with someone, the more natural it becomes; the more we want to communicate - share - with them. When I think about how I communicate with my closest friends, I promise they know more about my day-to-day than they ever wanted to! I don't even think about it. Something happens, big or small, and they hear from me.

I mean, I have quite literally text my friend about the time I went to bed the night before on the same day we spoke about one of my biggest, most challenging life decisions. But that's something we're all after, I think. Relationships that remind us someone has the desire to know us for all we are, and all we aren't.

This kind of communication, this kind of relationship, is something we see best in the Psalms. The entire book (longest book in the Bible by the way!) is a conversation between David and the Lord. There is nothing David does not talk to God about. He's feeling victorious - he's talking to God about it. He's learning - he's talking to God about it. He's depressed, praying for rescue - he's talking to God about it. He's struggling with hate against his enemies - he's talking to God about it. He's broken over the fact that he just had a man killed in battle because he got his wife pregnant - still talking to God about it. It is the most beautiful display of intimate communication and relationship with the Lord!

Praying eloquent prayers that praise Him is wonderful and deserved, but He is well aware of the struggle you're trying to bury in your heart. Just lay it before Him. Let Him know you in that way, meet you in it, communicate with you about it. That's intimacy; the freedom to let someone meet you in the ugly spaces. David didn't hesitate in that.

And even with all that raw intimacy, we still always find David approaching God with such reverence for who He is. Psalm 103 is WELL worth the read to see what I mean! This is God David was constantly in communication with - the Creator of all life, the Author of Salvation, Great Redeemer, Wonderful Counselor. Intimacy is to be balanced with reverence...and yet how much sweeter that balance makes my relationship with the Lord! He is so high above, and yet so accessible to me at all times.

I need no permission or escort into the Throne Room. I have access to this Great and Mighty God, who is also - perfectly - my Loving Heavenly Father, at all times for all things. I can hardly contain my joy as I ponder all of this! It's like I'm learning it again for the first time as I write.



I have to be honest with you, though, and share that I'm sitting here wondering when I drifted from this kind of prayer life; this kind of open communication and relationship with my Father. I had it once, where did it go? I want to know Him the same way I want to be known by Him. Our prayer lives are *not* about routine and "putting the time in.". It's about intimacy and pure intention.

### Something to Consider...

How is your relationship with God looking at it through this lens?

*As always, I encourage you to be brutally honest with yourself. No lasting change is achieved by painting a picture of ourselves and our intentions that isn't accurate. The reassuring truth is that if you need the Lord to wake your heart up a little bit, He will. Be bold enough to ask.*

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## QUESTION 5 What's the fruit of your devotional time?

Some people may give you complicated, long-winded answers to this question. Perhaps they wouldn't be technically wrong, but the answer the Lord gave me to this question is simply this:

The fruit of your devotional time is a **devoted life**.

Every believer's life may paint the picture a little differently according to the gifts, calling(s) and walk they have in the Lord, but there are a few things the Bible tells us we'll notice about ourselves and each other regardless of anything else, including negative life experiences. I say this because it very easy to slip into thinking that what we've been through is a barrier to living for Jesus the way we're called to,, but the truth of Scripture and those written about within it tell us another story -

**We love one another.** *"A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." John 13:34-35*

Jesus is speaking to His disciples here about loving each other so the world may know they are devoted to the truth Jesus taught. He is specifically telling them that the world will know whose they are by their love for each other as fellow believers. Love produces unity. Unity allows for peace. Peace is something the world is desperately searching for, and something we can find in time spent with the Lord.

**Evidence of the Spirit in our lives.** *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. Galatians 5:22-25*

These verses, which describe a life lived in the Spirit, are *preceded* by a description of life lived in the flesh. I can't speak for you, but when I'm not actively, regularly communing with God, very little about my life bears even a resemblance to what Paul writes in verses 22 through 25. When I'm spending time with Him, in His Word, in tune with His voice and guidance, the byproduct is bearing the fruit of the Spirit. This doesn't mean all of them all the time, and it doesn't imply any level of perfection. All I'm saying is my responses are gentler, my focus shifts and my desires are better aligned with His when I'm doing life with Him.

**We find joy in things of Him.** *You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore. Psalm 16:11*

I have to be honest with you... I've spent the last three months in a bit of a spiritual funk because I was pursuing joy, fulfillment and solutions in things that didn't start and end with the Lord, and my heart couldn't escape the subtle conviction I felt about it. Everything I was devoted to I was led away from for this season of my life, and I began to flounder. I'm talking about a slow drift; distance from Him that happens slowly over time as we take one step after the other chasing things He didn't lead us to, or running from things He's calling us to deal with. And I've come to (re)realize that this is because I had become more devoted to what I did than to my personal relationship with God. What a loving God He is to remove me from it all so that would come to the surface of my heart.

Once we experience true joy in and through Jesus, nothing outside of Him and the things of Him satisfy. But God is gracious in leading our hearts back to Him, where we can fully realize and experience that joy again no matter how far we drift! In His presence, through His Word, within His calling, among His people. A devoted life shines the joy of the Lord, and that devotion begins in time spent with Him, consistently.

I wrote this as I was sitting on the deck on Easter Sunday. The sun would shine bright for a few moments, warming me as it did. Then, it would sink behind the clouds and I'd feel the reality of the weather without its presence. It was a chilly day down the shore, a slight breeze. I longed for the sun to remain in front of the clouds. I basked in it when it did! At one point, I audibly asked God to send it back out for a while. The more I felt the sun on me, the longer I wanted to sit in it.

To me, this illustrates the relationship between our devotional time and a devoted life. I am not convinced that you can spend time with the Lord, basking in His presence, and not greatly desire more of it. To know Him is to love Him. The love Him is to desire communion with Him. To commune with Him is only to know and love Him deeper, and experience the depths of His love for us. I can not imagine being more motivated - deeply convicted and driven, really - to live a devoted life for His name.

And from where I'm sitting, a devoted life is the fruit of consistent devotional time; time we set aside to sit in God's presence, grow in His Word, hear His gentle whisper to our hearts. Commune with our Creator, the author of Salvation, and gaze at the wonder that our Jesus is.

### Something to Consider...

I have no specific questions for you today.. I simply encourage you to write anything laying on your heart. *As always, I encourage you to be brutally honest with yourself. No lasting change is achieved by painting a picture of ourselves and our intentions that isn't accurate. The reassuring truth is that if you need the Lord to wake your heart up a little bit, He will. Be bold enough to ask.*

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## A final note

I continuously pray that anyone choosing to [re]discover the beauty of a consistent devotional life experiences the fullness of God's presence in the process.

Establishing a devotional life changed my walk with Him, and changed my life in such a profound way. The Lord has been faithful to meet me in the smallest of moments in such tender, specific ways to reassure my heart and guide me through the next steps of my life. In fact, that's exactly why DeckDevotionals got started to begin with!

At the end of the day, everyone's devotional life will look different - in general and in different seasons of our lives. No matter the details, let this be the cry of our hearts:

*How lovely is your dwelling place,  
O Lord of hosts!  
My soul longs, yes, faints  
for the courts of the Lord;  
my heart and flesh sing for joy  
to the living God.*

*[Psalm 84:1-2]*

Watch how God meets you in the time and space you give Him to speak to your heart. It *will* undoubtedly change your life.

Let's be a people devoted to the Lord.

~ Alyssa

## Be Devoted.

Let your heart therefore be wholly true to the Lord our God, walking in His statutes and keeping His commandments, as at this day.

I Kings 8:61



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