

## **TAKING CARE OF YOUR WALK WITH GOD**

### **Take Care – Week 1**

**By Andy Manning**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

One of the most common things people say to each other is, “Take Care.” “Y’all take care, now.” “Take care of yourself.” I say it all the time when I am saying good-bye.

And that’s what this sermon series is all about – learning to take care of yourself. Self-love. Self-care.

#### **WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF?**

Many Christians are not very good at taking care of themselves. Our focus is on pleasing God. On loving others. On knowing and teaching Scripture. On reaching the world for Christ. We don’t have time to worry about taking care of ourselves. We have work to do – kingdom work!

Many Christians seem to believe that it is not very spiritual to focus on taking care of yourself. In fact, to many Christians it sounds downright sinful, and selfish, and self-centered.

What does the Bible say about taking care of ourselves?

The Bible does not command us to take care of ourselves; it takes it for granted. It assumes that we are taking care of ourselves.

**Matthew 22:39** “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

If the Bible didn’t assume that you loved yourself, then it wouldn’t command you to love others the same way you love yourself.

**Luke 6:31** “Just as you want others to do for you, do the same for them.”

How do we know how we should treat others? Consider how you want people to treat you.

If the Bible didn't assume that we loved ourselves, then it wouldn't tell us to treat people the way we want to be treated. Obviously we want people to love us, to care for us, to do what is best for us, to help us, to be kind to us, and that is why the Bible can tell us to treat people the way we want to be treated.

**Ephesians 5:28-30** “8 In the same way, husbands are to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 For no one ever hates his own flesh but provides and cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, 30 since we are members of his body.”

Notice what this passage assumes. It assumes that men love themselves; that they love their own bodies; that they provide and care for their own bodies. And because that is true, it is able to command men to love their wives as they love their own bodies.

It is very important to distinguish between selfishness, self-centeredness, and self-love.

Selfishness is when you do what you want to do, even if it is offensive to God and hurtful to others.

Self-centeredness is focusing only on your needs, wants, and desires only, and not on loving God and loving others. Life is all about you. You don't mean to neglect others, it is just that you are too consumed with yourself to serve God and care for others. The Bible tells us to avoid selfishness and self-centeredness (Proverbs 21:10; Philippians 2:4).

But self-love is different. Self-love is self-care. It is taking care of yourself.

**Galatians 6:5** “For each person will have to carry his own load.”

Self-love is carrying your own load. It is not selfishness, it is responsibility.

Self-love is doing those things for yourself that nobody else should do, and in many cases, the things that only you can do.

Self-love is as basic as bathing yourself, and grooming yourself, and dressing yourself, and feeding yourself, and cleaning up after yourself, and good hygiene, and good dental hygiene. Self-love includes things like going to bed on time and waking up on time. It includes things like driving safely and taking care of your physical health. It includes things like working hard at your job, and managing your money wisely. It includes things like keeping your house clean, and taking care of your yard.

Self-love is simply responsibility – it is doing the things for yourself that would be shameful if others had to do them for you.

Self-love is not selfishness; it is the opposite of sinful-neglect. It is the opposite of foolishness. It is the opposite of laziness.

Self-love is stewardship. It is property management. God, the Owner, has given you a certain number of properties to manage. Your body. Your mind. Your emotions. Your health. Your relationship with God. Your spiritual growth. Your finances. Your marriage. Your children. Your car. Your house. Your education. Your career. Your retirement. Your character. God hasn't delegated these properties to anyone else. These are your responsibility, and yours alone. This is your load. These things all belong to God, but He has put them in your hands to manage. And it is through the management of your responsibilities, of God's properties under your supervision, that God grows you and rewards you. Self-love is simply being a good steward.

### **WHY TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF?**

Let me give you eight reasons to take care of yourself.

**One: If you don't, then God can't.** God loves you and wants to take care of you. But God can't take care of you if neglect yourself, or if you hurt your yourself. If you don't take care of yourself, then you are interfering with God's ability to care for you.

**Two: If you don't, nobody will.** If it's going to be, it's up to me. If you don't brush your teeth, they won't get brushed. If you don't bathe yourself, you're going to stay dirty. If you don't get yourself out of bed in the morning, then you're going to miss your appointments and be late. There are some things that only you can do for you. And if you don't do them, they will go undone, and you will suffer.

**Three: If you don't, then you can't care for others.** God wants you to care for others. **Galatians 6:2** "Carry one another's burdens." God wants you to care for your spouse, and to care for your children, and to care for your church family, and to care for the poor and the suffering. But if you don't take care of yourself, then won't be able to care for others. If you don't help yourself, you won't be very helpful to others. It is hard to rescue others if you are drowning.

**Four: If you don't, then others have to.** At some point, your irresponsibility becomes someone else's responsibility. If you continue to neglect yourself, then others will have to do for you what you should have done for yourself. If you don't care for yourself, then you will eventually become a burden on others.

It is one thing to care for the needy, but it is shameful when others have to care for us because of the problems caused by our own self-neglect, and sin, and foolishness, and irresponsibility.

**Five: If you don't, then eventually you won't be able to enjoy yourself.** God's priority is your character, not your happiness; your growth, not your comfort. But Your heavenly Father loves you, and He wants you to be happy, and to enjoy His creation (1 Tim 6:17). He wants you to have a full and meaningful life (John 10:10). But as you neglect to care for yourself, life becomes more and more difficult.

Life is hard enough as it is; when you don't take care of yourself, you invite extra pain and suffering into your life.

**Six: If you don't, then you will destroy yourself.** Your life is like your home or your car; it requires constant maintenance and upkeep, or it will eventually fall apart.

If you continue to neglect self-care, then eventually you will destroy yourself. You will self-destruct.

You will smoke yourself to death; or eat yourself to death; or sit yourself to death; or drink yourself to death. You will destroy your marriage. You will destroy your family. You will destroy your emotions and face mental disorders. You will destroy your career, and your finances.

The truth is that many Christians' biggest enemy is not the devil, it is self. When you don't take care of yourself all you are doing is making the devil's job that much easier.

**Seven: If you don't, then you will hurt others.** When you don't take care of yourself, you don't just hurt yourself.

You hurt God. God loves you very much; He created you; He died for you; You are priceless to Him; You are His child. It grieves Him when you don't take care of yourself.

You also hurt those who love you. Your family and friends want you to be happy, and healthy, and prosperous. They don't want to see you struggle; they don't want to see you unhappy; they don't want to see you in pain. It hurts them when you neglect yourself.

You also hurt those who depend on you. Your spouse depends on you. Your children depend on you. Your church family depends on you. Your parents depend on you. When you don't take care of yourself, then you hurt them because you're not able to serve them as you should.

Self-care is not selfish; it is the opposite. Self-neglect is selfish, because it inflicts unnecessary pain on others.

**Eight: If you don't, then you will damage God's property.** You are God's property. You, and everything you have are God's. God owns you by creation, and by redemption (1 Cor 6:19-20).

You are God's house. The Holy Spirit indwells you. Neglecting yourself is like destroying God's house.

You are God's tool. His plan is to use you to accomplish His purposes. Neglecting yourself is like destroying one of God's important tools.

You are supposed to be God's picture – His image bearer – reflecting His moral character to the world around you. When you neglect yourself it is like ripping apart God's self-portrait.

It is sinful to destroy another person's property. But to destroy God's property is an extreme injustice.

So over the next few weeks we're going to talk about taking care. How do we take care of ourselves? We need to learn to take care of ourselves spiritually, physically, financially, emotionally, relationally, and chronologically (our time).

## **WHY TAKE CARE OF YOUR WALK WITH GOD?**

Today I want to talk to about taking care of the most important part of your life – your walk with God. This is Taking Care 101. It is the foundation of taking care. It is the cornerstone of taking care.

All self-care must start with taking care of your walk with God; your relationship with God; your friendship with God.

Why is it so important to take care of your walk with God? Let me give you **four reasons**.

**One: It is the reason you were created.** Why do you exist? You exist to have a relationship with God. God created you, and He created you to walk with Him. **John 17:3** “This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and the one you have sent —Jesus Christ.” Life is all about knowing God.

**Two: It is required of you. Micah 6:8** “Mankind, he has told each of you what is good and what it is the Lord requires of you: to act justly, to love faithfulness, and to walk humbly with your God.” Walking with God is not an option. God commands you to pursue an intimate friendship with Him.

**Three: It is the most important command.** When Jesus was asked what was the most important command of all, He said it was loving God, or pursuing an intimate love relationship with God. **Mark 12:29-30** “29 Jesus answered, “The most important is Listen, O Israel! The Lord our God, the Lord is one. 30 Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.”

**Four: Your happiness depends on it.** *The quality of your life is completely dependent upon the quality of your walk with God.*

**Psalms 119:2** “Happy are those who keep His decrees and seek Him with all their heart.”

If you want a good life, to enjoy life, the best life, then you must have an intimate, deep relationship with God. There is no substitute. If you want to be happy, then you need to be close to God.

Money won't make you happy. Fame won't make you happy. Success won't make you happy. Material things won't make you happy. Sex, and drugs, and alcohol won't make you happy. Marriage won't make you happy. Children won't make you happy. In fact, all of those things can make you even more miserable, because it is only through a relationship with God that we can truly enjoy the

things of this world. The source of true, lasting, abiding happiness is in a relationship with God.

## **HOW TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR WALK WITH GOD**

But how do we take care of our relationship with God? There are many things that we must do. Like physical health, there are many things that go into it. You need to confirm your salvation; avoid sin; obey God; learn and meditate on Scripture; pray; participate in church; build deep relationships with other Christians; avoid close friendships with sinners; serve God in church; read solid Christian literature; tithe; evangelize. All of these things and more contribute to the health of your walk with God.

But today I want to just focus on one, and I think it is the most important habit for cultivating and maintaining an intimate walk with God. It's called a daily quiet time.

You shouldn't neglect church participation, and tithing, and evangelizing, and serving, etc. All of those things are essential. But I think the most important spiritual practice, or spiritual discipline, is a daily quiet time.

I call the daily quiet time the Christian X-Factor. I read a book by Brian Tracy called *Goals!* in which he wrote about what some call the x-factor, or sometimes called the focal point.

What is the one activity, if you did it regularly and skillfully, would positively impact your life more than anything else? Going to church on Sunday? Home Group? Reading Christian literature? Those things are great. But the x-factor for Christians, the focal point, is the daily quiet time. I believe that if you have a daily quiet time regularly and skillfully, it will positively impact your life more than anything else.

## **WHAT IS A DAILY QUIET TIME?**



What is a daily quiet time? **Rick Warren** wrote, “The quiet time is simply a daily time of personal fellowship with God through the Word and prayer.”

“The quiet time has been called many things in the history of the Christian church. It is known by such other titles as the morning watch, personal devotions, appointment with God, and the personal devotional time. It really doesn’t matter what you call it as long as you have it regularly. The quiet time is simply a daily time of personal fellowship with God through the Word and prayer. It is a time we deliberately set aside in which to meet with Him. The objective is that we might grow in our personal relationship with God, so that we can know Him, love Him, and become more like Him.”

A quiet time is the daily habit of having an appointment with God in which you talk to Him through prayer, and listen to Him through His word.

For example, six days a week I have an early morning appointment with God. I sit down in my office, and spend time journaling (or reflecting), and praying, and reading the word. That’s a daily quiet time.

### **WHY HAVE A DAILY QUIET TIME?**

Let me give you seven reasons to have a daily quiet time.

**One: To give devotion to God.** Jesus calls us to be fully-devoted to Him. To put Him before anything and anyone else. But it is so easy to allow other things, sometimes even good things, to take priority over God.

We are commanded to be living sacrifices unto God, but living sacrifices have a tendency to crawl off the altar.

99% of the problems we face in life are the result of allowing other things to come before God.

How can we stay devoted to God; how can we avoid the roller-coaster syndrome that plagues so many Christians? **Luke 9:23** “If anyone wants to follow after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily, and follow me.”

To stay devoted, you have to take up your cross daily. You have to recommit yourself every single day. A daily quiet gives you the opportunity to remember your true priority and purpose, and to rededicate yourself to God. Following Jesus requires a conscious, daily decision, and a daily quiet time helps you to do that.

**Two: To get direction from God.** Life is filled with decisions, and these decisions all have consequences.

If you live seventy five years, you will make 1,875,000 decisions.

And God wants to help us with these decisions. **James 1:5** “Now if any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God—who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly—and it will be given to him.” A daily quiet time gives you the opportunity to stop and ask directions. “Lord, show me what to do.”

**Three: To give my desires to God.** Prayer. Prayer is talking to God; telling Him what you need. We should pray for ourselves. We should pray for others. We should pray for our country. We should pray for our church. We should pray for the lost. We should pray for our children. **1 Thessalonians 5:17** “Pray constantly.”

Why does the Bible place such a big emphasis on prayer? God wants to take care of us, but He only works through our prayers. **Thomas Watson** wrote, “The tree of mercy will not drop its fruit unless it be shaken by the hand of prayer.” A daily quiet time gives you the opportunity to daily bring your requests to God.

**Four: To gain strength from God.** God doesn’t promise to keep you out of trials, but He does promise to give you strength to endure trials. But to receive God’s strength, you have to pray for it. You have to spend time in His presence. **1 Peter 5:7 (ERV)** “Give all your worries to him, because he cares for you.” **Psalms 16:11**

“You reveal the path of life to me; in your presence is abundant joy; at your right hand are eternal pleasures.”

Life is hard, but when spend time in His presence, He will strengthen you and fill you with peace and joy. **Rick Warren** wrote, “The most joyful Christians are those who meet with God daily.”

**Five: To grow daily more like God.** God wants to grow you more and more like Christ, loving God and others more and more.

How do you grow? **1 Peter 2:2** “Like newborn infants, desire the pure milk of the word, so that you may grow up into your salvation.” One of the primary ways is by studying and meditating on God’s word. A daily quiet time gives you the opportunity to spend time in the word every single day.

**Six: To go deeper in your relationship with God.** The purpose of your life is to have a relationship, a friendship with God. Not just to know about God; but to know Him personally.

How do you grow in your relationship with God? The same way you grow in relationship with anyone. You need to spend time together. You need to talk to each other. And you need to observe each other in a variety of situations. **James 4:8** “Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.” That’s what a daily quiet time helps you do.

**Seven: To get used by God.** God wants to use you for His purposes; to glorify Him; to lead others to Him; to build His church. How can you make yourself useful to God? **John 15:5** “I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me.” To become more useful to God, you need to spend more time with Jesus. Jesus said, “Stay close, and fruit happens. Stay close to me, and you’ll produce much fruit. Stay close to me, and I’ll use you in a big way.” A daily quiet time helps you to do that. It is a daily appointment with God, to help me stay close to Him.

**Rick Warren** said, “Every great man or woman of God throughout history has spent much time alone with God. Anyone who has ever been used mightily by the Lord was a man or woman of the Word and prayer. The regular quiet time was the one thing they had in common. The common denominator between Moses, David, Daniel, Paul, Calvin, Wesley, Finney, Moody, Spurgeon, Billy Graham, and all of the great saints in history is that they all spent much time with God in personal fellowship.”

King David spent daily time with God. **Psalms 5:3 (NLT)** “Listen to my voice in the morning, Lord. Each morning I bring my requests to you and wait expectantly.”

Jesus had a daily quiet time. **Mark 1:35** “Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he got up, went out, and made his way to a deserted place; and there he was praying.” **Luke 5:16** “Yet he often withdrew to deserted places and prayed.”

Let me put it this way. *The quality of your life is entirely dependent on your relationship with God, and the quality of your relationship with God is entirely dependent upon your quality time with Him.* A daily quiet time gives you the opportunity to spend quality time with God, every single day.

## **HOW TO HAVE A DAILY QUIET TIME?**

So let’s talk about how to have a daily quiet time. Let me give you six essentials.

**One: Time.** Decide when you are going to have a quiet time. Which days of the week? And what time? For most people, the best time is first thing in the morning. That’s when most people can be alert and consistent. **Rick Warren** said, “Doctors often tell us that the most important meal of the day is breakfast. It often determines our energy levels, alertness, and even moods for the day. Likewise, we need a ‘spiritual breakfast’ to start our day right.”

**Two: Place.** Decide where you are going to have your quiet time. **Rick Warren** gives the following advice. “Choose a special place... This is a place where you can be alone, where it’s quiet, and where you will not be disturbed or interrupted.... It ought to be a place where you can pray aloud without disturbing

others. Where you have good lighting for reading. Where you are comfortable. Warning: Do not have your quiet time in bed. That's too comfortable!"

**Three: Supplies.** Gather your supplies. What supplies will you need for a quality quiet time. Let me give you three.

One: You need a Bible. I recommend a modern translation, such as the Christian Standard Bible, or the New Living Translation.

Two: You need highlighters. I recommend four different colors: Pink, yellow, blue, and green (I'll explain later). And I recommend that you purchase gel highlighters; they don't bleed through the page.

Three: You need a journal and a pen. A simple spiral notebook will work fine.

**Four: Journaling.** The first thing to do in your quiet time is to journal.

What is the purpose of journaling? Bill Hybels writes about journaling in his book *Honest to God, Becoming an Authentic Christian*. Whenever he would meet a strong Christian leader who seemed to have a really vibrant, healthy relationship with Jesus, he would ask them their secret. And in almost every case they said "journaling" – "the daily process of examining and evaluating their lives in written form." Journaling is the daily process of examining and evaluating your life in written form.

Just as a football team spends Monday morning evaluating the previous day's game so they can learn from their mistakes and progress, journaling will help you do the same.

So how do you journal? First, write the date. And then start with the word "Yesterday", and then just reflect on your life yesterday. Reflect on your progress; your performance. What did you do wrong? What did you do right? What do you want to change? What are your goals?

**Three: Prayer.** After you've finished journaling, then it is time for prayer. Prayer is just talking to God. So if you want to pray effectively, then you need to do more than ask for stuff. If the only time my kids talked to me is to ask me for things, that wouldn't be good. Your prayer life needs to be balanced. I've taught most of you how to pray with the acronym ACTS. Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication. Another acronym for balanced prayer is the word PRAY.

P – Praise the Lord. Begin by praising God for who He is and thanking Him for what He has done.

R – Repent of your sins. How do you repent? One: Admit your sin specifically. Two: Apologize for offending God. Three: Align yourself with God's will. Four: Ask for God's help.

A – Ask. Ask for yourself and others. Tell God what you need. Pray for yourself, your family, your church, your friends, the lost, your country, etc.

Y – Yield yourself to God's will. End your prayer time with a recommitment to God; to put Him first, and to obey Him no matter the cost that day.

Now for my prayer time I use my journal, and I actually write out my prayers word for word. This helps me to stay away, to stay focused, and to avoid repeating myself over and over.

**Four: Bible.** Read God's word. Here are some tips for getting the most out of your Bible reading.

First, read it systematically. Follow a Bible reading plan that will take you through the entire Bible. This way you can learn and meditate on all of God's word.

Second, use highlighters. Highlighting helps you to apply the Bible and to remember the verses that jump out at you. Use green to highlight commands to obey and examples to follow. Use blue to highlight truths to believe. Use pink to highlight sins and errors to avoid. And use yellow to highlight promises to claim.

## WHY PEOPLE DO NOT HAVE A DAILY QUIET TIME?

Let me give you the four biggest reasons that Christians don't have a consistent daily quiet time.

**One: Pride.** Pride is thinking too highly of yourself. Pride is the attitude that you don't need a daily quiet time. You don't need to spend daily, quality time with the Lord. And it is absolutely delusional.

**John 15:5** "I am the vine; you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit, because you can do nothing without me."

Two big truths in this verse. First, if you want to accomplish anything good in this life, then you need to stay close to Jesus. Second, apart from Christ, you can do nothing.

**Two: Discouragement.** Many people don't have a quiet time because after trying, they became discouraged and quit.

What causes discouragement? Unrealistic expectations. Many Christians have three unrealistic expectations of their quiet time.

One: One quiet time will change my life. Some quiet times will be life-changing; but most will not. It is just like eating right. The habit of doing it over and over again for a long period of time is life-changing.

Two: Sporadic quiet times will be good enough. Have a quiet time once a week, once every other week, once a month does not work. It's better than nothing. But you don't get the full benefits of a quiet time unless it is a daily, consistent habit. Again, it is just like eating healthy. One or two healthy meals a week is not going to cut it. You need to be consistent.

Three: Every quiet time should be equally exciting. Some quiet times will be more exciting than others. Some quiet times you will learn something new. You

will feel more encouraged and joyful. You will have more fun. But it is not always like this. It is like exercising. Some days are more fun than others; but just because it isn't fun doesn't mean that it's not worth it.

**Three: Lack of sleep.** Rick Warren calls this the "Battle of the Blankets." The best preparation for a quality quiet time is getting plenty of rest the night before. If you burn the candle at both ends, you're not very bright. **Rick Warren** says that the key is to "get up immediately on waking. The battle is usually won or lost in the first few seconds."

**Four: Lack of self-discipline.** To have a consistent quiet time, you have to know how to establish a new habit. Psychologists say that it takes three weeks to get familiar with a new habit, and then it takes another three weeks before it becomes a habit. Most Christians never get in the habit of a quiet time because they never make it past the six week point.

The philosopher William James had a famous formula for establishing a new habit. I'm going to give you two of his points, and add a third.

One: Make a strong resolution.

Two: Never allow an exception to occur until the new habit is securely rooted in your life. That means don't miss a quiet time until at least six weeks.

Three: Rely on the power of God.<sup>1</sup> Ask God for the strength to establish the new habit.

## **CONCLUSION**

Time spent with the Lord is time well spent.

You are not going to go to hell if you don't have a daily quiet time. You're not sinning if you don't have a daily quiet time.

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<sup>1</sup> Rick Warren shares the insights of William James, and then adds this last suggestion, relying on the power of God. *Bible Study Methods*, Appendix A.



But just remember that *the quality of your life is entirely dependent upon the quality of your relationship with God, and the quality of your relationship with God is entirely dependent upon the quality of time that you spend with Him.*

If you want to take care of yourself, you have to begin with taking care of your walk with God.

And perhaps the most important way to do that is to establish the habit of a daily quiet time.