



WOW: Word Of the Week

Your Spiritual Life

October 20, 2021

WORDS of the Week—three in one. YOUR spiritual life, your SPIRITUAL life, your spiritual LIFE. Personal, focused on spiritual growth and vitality, abundant living.

About 25 years ago while I was serving as Bible program director at Ohio Valley University, we pioneered an upper-level gen-ed course, *Developing Your Spiritual Life*. Offering such a course to non-Bible majors was a new idea, not a common practice at that time.

In ministry, I wanted to maintain a focus on the spiritual health of the church. Early on, along with many other churches, we counted Daily Bible Readers. Later, we counted and reported “Daily Prayers” and “Daily Family Devotions.” To encourage contact with unbelievers, we counted the number of evangelistic encounters and conversations each week.

For the past 30 years, I have counseled church leaders, ministers, missionaries, and other workers. I have worked closely with ministry and mission students in the universities, and more recently with church workers in numerous mission fields. Questions related to leadership, church growth, mission methods, evangelism, and church planting are common. In addition, I have received and answered hundreds of Bible questions.

But, my classes, seminars, and conferences always include one more question—how is your spiritual walk? Tell me about your sabbathing, your devotional time, your Bible reading plan, your prayer life, your marriage and family. In ministry and mission work, a priority must be the development of a disciplined life, the life of discipleship. Often, we struggle with the simple, biblical concept of “disciples making disciples” because we do not start with fully-committed disciples. Church members struggle with spiritual vitality, marriages, and family because church leaders struggle and our churches are largely silent. The spiritual health of church leaders is an essential component of ministry.

When I ask about spiritual life, I rejoice when I receive a clear, defined answer about God-time. Here’s what I do every day; here’s how I do it. Not long ago I shared a video series focused on the prayer rhythms I use to spend time with God every day. I quickly admit that there was a time when the rhythms of my spiritual life were still being developed, days when spiritual concerns took second place because I had too much to do, times when I was constantly trying to catch up on readings, devotionals, and quiet time. God not only pursues us (Stott), he has made us so that our greatest fulfillment comes from pursuing him. The rich, full spiritual life is not the result of “have to” but of “want to.”

I grew up singing from the hymnal, “Great Songs of the Church.” As we slowly excluded older songs from our worship vocabulary, we lost important messages: “Ere you left your room this morning, did you think to pray?” “Take time to be holy.” Spending God-time is not automatic, it is intentional, planned, purposeful. It is not easy; it is not to be hurried. The hardest thing about spending time with God is finding time, taking time. Joel Comiskey recently wrote, “We will most likely never find time; we will have to take it from the other demands that crowd and press on us.”

Words of the week—Your Spiritual Life. May our spiritual walk grow richer and deeper!