

Afternoon Tea

Quiet Moments with God

Celia St. John

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Foreword

With this devotional, I wanted to stress the importance of contemplation and pondering. Most people lead very busy lives, and it is difficult to find a quiet moment. Our society has lost something in that respect. In Scripture, God tells us to seek solitude when we pray. He specifically states, “Be still, and know that I am God.” He wants us to concentrate on building our relationship with Him, and we need alone time for that.

A couple of friends gave me gifts for Christmas one year, not knowing what others had given. I received a lovely china cup from one friend, a glass teapot and tea from another, and my dad made a tea tray out of the leftover wood from the building of the mantel above my wood stove. They all knew I stopped whatever I was doing and drank hot tea every afternoon, and so they gave gifts centered on my ritual. (We all have rituals we do on a daily basis.) I later added a small quilted doily and a tiny, antique sugar/creamer set. And so, the idea of *Afternoon Tea, Quiet Moments with God* was born.

I specifically chose Scriptures that contained some key words. The word *contemplation* isn't in

the Bible, per se, but *ponder, learn, train, and study* are. I wanted to stress going back to the beginning of our walk with God, when we finally accepted Jesus as our Lord and Saviour. When we looked at the Bible as if it were a candy store (as one of my friends says), with the joy of learning all we need to know about the new relationship we're excited to have. The importance of learning is stressed in these pages. We may not understand every passage right now, but if we have God's Word written on our hearts, when the time is right, a Scripture will make sense. God promises us understanding when we need it.

I hope you enjoy *Afternoon Tea* and these quiet moments with God.

May God bless you abundantly,
Celia St. John

How to Use This Devotional

This devotional is divided into fifty-two weeks—one for each week of the year. There is one Scripture reference for each week. Each Monday, read the Scripture, the devotion, and the personal contemplation prompt.

On days Tuesday through Saturday, you will find additional contemplative prompts. Each day, re-read the Scripture reference for that week and then consider the prompt for that day.

On Sunday, do as the Lord commanded and did: Keep holy the day and rest. He is with you in the resting.

You may find some of the contemplation easy and some challenging. That is the goal. Sometimes we need not to be overwhelmed, and other times, we need to be stretched. By the end of the year, hopefully, you will have strengthened your relationship with God, learned without doubt that you aren't perfect (if you thought you were, consider that your first fault!), that you are loved and valuable, and that the God Who created all things visible and invisible loves you without ceasing, without you having to merit it, and regardless of whether you love Him back. How awesome is God?



**I have no peace, no quietness; I have no
rest, but only turmoil.**

~ Job 3:26

Week 1

Job's story is one of great hardship and deep faith. Satan came before God to prove that Job had faith only because God had blessed him. God knew otherwise but decided to let Satan see for himself. Satan was not allowed to kill Job, but Satan destroyed Job's family, his great flocks of animals, and his wealth.

Turmoil is a fact of life. We live in a fallen world, and even in the best lives, pain and sorrow enter in at some point. We can become dispirited, as Job did, but it is at these times we must lean on every scrap of faith in God that we can grasp. God will not abandon us. God always restores His faithful, perhaps not in the ways we thought, but

in deeper, more meaningful ways. He promises us newer and greater blessings if we hold on to our faith in Him. Our most precious gift from God is Prayer and communion.

How do you deal with turmoil when it comes into your life? Does the anxiety bring distress, grief, or anger? Do you rely on God so fully that you have faith even in the midst of trial? God asks us to lean on Him when we are being tossed about in the storms of life. Consider the disasters that must have taken place for Job. He lost his family and his entire way of life. His friends scoffed and told him not to keep his faith. Job lamented his sorrow and pain, but he never lost his trust in God. Because of Job's unwavering faith, when the trial was over, God gave Job more than he had before.



TAKE ON YOUR STRENGTH ALL THAT I DO, SO THAT
WHATEVER LIFE THROWS AT ME, I CAN REST IN YOU. IN
JESUS' NAME I PRAY, AMEN.

Day 2: Take a quiet moment to think about how you've handled stress in the past. If you've given the problems to God and remained faithful, thank Him for the grace He's given you to do so. If you've lacked the faith to believe that God will work things to the good for you, then ask Him for the grace you need. Conclude by praying the prayer included for this week or by saying your own

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spontaneous prayer.

Day 3: Take a quiet moment to think about the times you've vowed to trust God but have continued to worry about a situation. Ask God for the grace you need in order to trust Him and to let Him be in control of your situations. Conclude by praying the prayer included for this week or by saying your own spontaneous prayer.

Day 4: Take a quiet moment to think about the times you've believed your hardship was a punishment from God. It is true that your actions have consequences, but God loves you beyond measure. He will help you out of any situation in whatever way is best for you...no matter what you've done in the past. All you have to do is ask for forgiveness and deliverance. Do it now.

Day 5: Take a quiet moment to consider your blessings. Even in the midst of hardship, Job was able to praise God for the good things He bestowed. Let thoughts of the good overpower thoughts of the bad, even if only for this quiet moment. Conclude by praying the prayer included for this week or by saying your own spontaneous prayer.

Day 6: Take a quiet moment to consider a past trial you had to endure. Afterwards, were you able to see the way God used it for good? If so, thank God for the grace of hindsight and then conclude by praying the prayer included for this week or by saying your own spontaneous prayer. If you never recognized the good, pray to see it now. Pray for the same understanding and peace that Job had and to see how God took your hardship and helped you.

Day 7: Attend a Church service and enjoy a day of rest.



**...Fear God and keep his
commandments, for this is the duty of
all mankind. For God will bring every
deed into judgment, including every
hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.
~ Ecclesiastes 12: 13-14**

Week 2

God gives us everything we need to learn the way to salvation, and we should heed His command. For this reason, it's important for us to study Scripture, to have the law written on our hearts. Salvation is a free gift, but God will still judge our actions. Daily, we should strive to perfection, but we need not become so test-oriented that we fail to recognize the ease of God's

yoke. Studying can be wearying. We grasp for knowledge, hoping that when the test comes, we will be able to make it through. But the Scripture in Ecclesiastes isn't meant to scare us into thinking God's test is a pass/fail venture that we'll surely fail because we're weak. Yes, we should strive to fulfill our duty to know His commandments; but this Scripture is meant to remind us that because God's law is perfect, keeping His commands is—*should be*—the visible manifestation of our grace-filled faith. As such, keeping our deeds in line with His law should be a joy rather than a chore.

Have you ever had to do something you weren't sure you were capable of—perhaps putting together a piece of furniture? You pored over instructions and diagrams, hoping as you assembled it that you'd not do something wrong and have to take it apart again. God has an instruction book for us—a way for us to assemble our lives so that we can be fulfilled and joyful. The Bible is packed with examples of how flawed humans came to love God and, because of that love, came to do great and small things that served as a template for you to follow. Read and memorize Scripture with a prayerful heart so understanding comes when you need it.



LORD, GUIDE ME WITH YOUR WISDOM. HELP ME TO STUDY THE BIBLE. FILL ME WITH THE UNDERSTANDING I NEED DAILY. IN JESUS' NAME I PRAY, AMEN.

Day 2: Take a quiet moment to read a passage in the Bible which you understand. As you read, ponder its meaning. Are there any life experiences that you have had that are similar even if the result was different? As you read today, did this familiar Scripture reveal something new to you? Thank God for giving you the ability to understand this Scripture.

Day 3: Take a quiet moment to read and think about a passage in the Bible that you don't understand. Did anything within the passage become easier to grasp? Was the result an unexpected surprise? Ask God to give you the ability to understand this Scripture.

Day 4: Take a quiet moment to think about a project that didn't go well because you misunderstood something in the execution of it. Were you eventually able to re-do the project due to better understanding or guidance? If not, what valuable lesson did you learn from the apparent failure? Thank God for the experience.

Day 5: Take a quiet moment to memorize two of the Ten Commandments. Keep them in your heart and ponder them throughout the day. Ask God to give you a deeper understanding of these commandments.

Day 6: Take a quiet moment to memorize two more of the Ten Commandments. Keep them in your heart and ponder them throughout the day. Ask God to give you a deeper understanding of these commandments.

Day 7: Attend a Church service and enjoy a day of rest.



**All people will fear; they will proclaim
the works of God and ponder what he
has done. The righteous will rejoice in
the Lord and take refuge in him; all the
upright in heart will glory in him!**

~ Psalm 64: 9-10

Week 3

This verse leads us to ponder God's glory. We can look at the scenery around us and know that God planned it all. He encourages us to walk in nature, to observe the hills, the trees, the grasses, and the wild animals that are a part of His creation. By acknowledging His works, we begin to bond within our relationship with God. As with all great artists, we see the soul that went into the work and can admire and be comforted by the fact that this world was created by God and given into

our care. When we share a kinship with our Creator, we begin to see the wondrous life He has given us. He is our Father, One Who loves us and wants to share with us the very best of what He has to offer. He mourns with us through the trials of this earth, offers solace with the promise of everlasting life, and rejoices at our triumphs. Our troubles will pass, and we can take refuge in the Lord and rejoice.

Have you ever looked around and gloried in the natural world? Did you see the fresh crispness of a leaf, hear the musical bubbling of a creek, feel the soft breeze scented with the perfume of flowers, as it brushed against your skin? God created every blade of grass, every tree, every growing thing that moves through the seasons—and He created us! If He can do all that in six days, He surely can work wonders in your life, no matter what your circumstance. On your next walk, commune with God and thank Him for this unique, beautiful world He made. Glory in Him.



LORD, HELP ME SEE YOUR MARVELOUS WORKS AROUND ME AND TO REJOICE IN KNOWING THAT YOU CREATED THE WORLD AND EVERYTHING IN IT. LET ME FIND JOY IN WHAT YOU HAVE GIVEN. IN JESUS' NAME I PRAY, AMEN.

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Day 2: Take a quiet moment and go for a walk. Leave your technology at home and look around at all of God's creation. Ponder the ways in which He provided for us with all of nature's bounty. Conclude by praying the prayer included for this week or by saying your own spontaneous prayer.

Day 3: Take a quiet moment to watch birds. Think on how Jesus pointed out that God takes care of even these creatures that do not sow or reap. Conclude by praying the prayer included for this week or by saying your own spontaneous prayer.

Day 4: Take a quiet moment to consider creation. Ponder the ways in which you create... Do you make art, sing, or put words to paper? Do you knit, crochet, or woodwork? Fix mechanical things? Cook? Keep things tidy and clean? Run a business? All these things require some form of creation, even if the creation is simply in how well you organize your time. Consider how you revel in a job well-done. Rejoice with God over His creation (which includes you!). Conclude by praying the prayer included for this week or a spontaneous prayer.

Day 5: Take a quiet moment to memorize a passage of Scripture that deals with creation (maybe today's Scripture). Take it to heart, and sing it within yourself every day. Conclude by praying the prayer included for this week or by saying your own spontaneous prayer.

Day 6: Take a quiet moment to consider the sunrise. Each morning, by God's grace and power, you wake to life-giving light and heat. Conclude by praying the prayer included for this week or by saying your own spontaneous prayer.

Day 7: Attend a Church service and enjoy a day of rest.



Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress. He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed... But he lifted the needy out of their affliction and increased their families like flocks. The upright see and rejoice, but all the wicked shut their mouths. Let the one who is wise heed these things and ponder the loving deeds of the Lord.

~ Psalm 107: 28-30, 41-43

Week 4

Psalm 107 is a study in contrasts. The psalmist depicts the subject of good and evil in equal portions and shows how God deals with each. The

wicked may have their mouths shut, but our loving God deals beautifully with those who strive in righteousness. Verses 29 and 30 are especially encouraging. God stills the storm to a whisper and hushes the waves of the sea. He guides all to their desired haven. The storm hasn't passed, but God brings the sailors to safety. God can calm our lives even amidst turbulence. He is showing us that we can lean on Him, and in our relationship and our prayer, we can find the solace needed to carry on despite our woes in this world.

Have you ever experienced turbulence in your life? No matter what you do, everything seems to go wrong? Perhaps it's opposition from others even when you are trying to help them. Perhaps it's being disturbed when you are trying to pray. Perhaps it is having to deal with the fallout from other people's wrong choices. Whatever it is, remember that God will uphold you. Simply rest in Him. Don't stray. The storm may not have passed, but He can allow you to walk on water.



LORD, WHEN TURBULENCE OVERCOMES LIFE, PLEASE GIVE ME THE CALMNESS OF SPIRIT THAT I NEED TO BE RIGHTEOUS IN YOUR EYES. ALLOW ME TO CONTEMPLATE

YOUR PLAN AND KNOW YOU'RE AT MY SIDE. IN JESUS' NAME I PRAY, AMEN.

Day 2: Take a quiet moment and think on the bad situations in your life. Go over the details of what happened, the consequences of your own actions. Trace through the memories and experience the emotions again. And then bow your head and pray and lay all the bad parts at God's feet.

Day 3: Take a quiet moment to go over the good things that have happened to you. Walk through the happy times, savor them, smile with joy. Keep them in your heart all day. Ask God to help you rejoice.

Day 4: Take a quiet moment to consider a time when you had to pay a consequence for someone else's choice. Recall the emotion, but then lay it all at the feet of Jesus. Consider that the need for His sacrifice was a consequence of your choice to sin. Thank Him for His mercy and pray for the grace to pass that mercy on to the person who hurt you.

Day 5: Take a quiet moment to consider the woes of this fallen world. Pray for peace and understanding to prevail.

Day 6: Take a quiet moment to consider another's turmoil. Pray for their deliverance and salvation.

Day 7: Attend a Church service and enjoy a day of rest.



**But Mary treasured up all these things
and pondered them in her heart.**

~ Luke 2:19

Week 5

Imagine being a young woman who believes in God enough to risk even her life. Knowing in her heart what was right and good, Mary leaned on God as she navigated the troubled waters of telling her betrothed that she had been visited by an angel, she was already pregnant...and oh, by the way, the child was the Son of God. Joseph, because of his own faith and an angelic visit, believed her. Both Joseph and Mary followed God's commandments. Mary "pondered" the truth revealed about the Messiah's birth, relying on God to tell the world in His own time. Can you imagine the consternation when a bunch of