

# Food for the Soul

by Jean Fleming

*The following article was reprinted with permission from Discipleship Journal and the author. It is an excerpt from her book, Feeding Your Soul: a Quiet Time Handbook.*

If you are a true believer in Jesus Christ, the Bible calls you an alien. Peter says believers are "aliens and Strangers in the world (1 Peter 2:11). When you became a child of God, you began to live between two worlds - this one on earth and your eternal home in heaven. Jesus said you are no longer of this world any more that He is (John 17:14-16). but while you live here physically, God tells you to fix your eyes on the real but invisible life you have with Christ.

How do we as aliens keep our attention on the spiritual realms - the unseen things above - when the seen world is glittering around us? How do we as strangers and pilgrims maneuver while keeping our eyes on heaven? To navigate this challenging terrain, we need to fix our eyes on the truths of God every day.

Quiet time is a place where we can fix our eyes on God and the invisible realities of our lives. Take a look at just some of the many benefits of spending regular time alone with God.

## **A Place to Renew**

God calls you to live by faith. This means believing and acting with confidence based on the unseen realities (Hebrews 11:1). All the while, the visible, tangible world exerts its gravitational pull. You don't intend it, but the compass of your soul is pulled off true north. The Bible strongly warns and urges you:

*Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing, and perfect will. – Romans 12:2*

God calls you to preside over the care of your soul so that it is not squeezed into the world's mold. He wants you to actively engage in reshaping your mind according to His truth. Quiet time helps you renew your mind. Then you can live by faith, not sight.

## **A Place to Know Yourself**

Living between two worlds can create an identity crisis. Who will you who you are? If you define who you are based on feedback from the world, you will be accepting misinformation. Don't look to other to assign value to you, to tell you how you fit into the scheme of things. They can't. Only god who created and redeemed you can tell you who you are, why you're here, and where you are going.



In the movie, *My Fair Lady*, Eliza Doolittle is transformed from a poor cockney flower girl into a glamorous, cultured woman. Many books and movies are based on the idea that there is a prince inside our froggy selves. One of the reasons we respond to that idea is because it is rooted in truth. The Bible teaches you that you are a new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). But your new self doesn't emerge by singing "The Rain in Spain" or burst forth after a princess's kiss.

This is why quiet time is so important. God is the only one who can tell you who you are because He designed you in the womb and He gave you second birth in Jesus Christ. Just as physical birth is merely the beginning, so spiritual birth is a starting point from which to grow, learn, and develop. In Christ you have a new identity. The trouble is that as you scuff along here on earth, you easily forget that God has chosen you and changed you (John 15:15, Ephesians 1:4) and that you are a citizen of heaven (Philippians 3:20).

### **A Place to Remember**

You need to be reminded every day that God loves you (Ephesians 2:4), that His plans for you are good (Jeremiah 29:11), and that He will never leave you or forsake you (Hebrews 13:5). Consider His death in your place and His desire for you to live with Him in heaven forever – and marvel.

*The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing. –  
Zephaniah 3:17*

### **A Place to Be Whole**

You were created for fellowship with God. The words *salvation* and *blessing*, which pop up everywhere in the Bible, burst with the promise of good coming to you because you belong to Jesus Christ. You were created for a wholeness that you cannot know apart from a relationship with God. David expressed it this way: "You have made known to me the path of life; you will fill me with joy in your presence, with eternal pleasures at your right hand" (Psalm 16:11).

### **A Place to Know God**

When Jesus Christ appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus, Paul asked, "Who are you Lord?" What a great question – a question that only God can answer. Because God is invisible, eternal, infinite, and holy, we are dependent on His revelation of Himself. Our notion of God must be shaped by what He says about Himself, or else we can create a god in our own minds that is as much an idol as one carved from wood or stone. A.W. Tozer wrote:

*It is impossible to keep our moral practices sound and our inward attitudes right while our idea of God is erroneous or inadequate. If we would bring back spiritual power to our lives, we must begin to think of God more nearly as He is.*



## **A Place to Change**

Quiet time reminds you that God intends for you to become like Christ (Romans 8:29). It is not only possible for you to be changed; it is imperative. In fact, if you are not different since your “conversion”. Perhaps you have not yet come to true faith in Jesus Christ. Woven into the warp and woof of life in Christ is the assumption of change. A changed life is the validation of your encounter with God. This change doesn’t happen all at once or without accompanying failures. But authentic change is inherent in our life with Christ.

Change takes place as we focus our attention on Christ and reflect His likeness.

*And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, are being transformed into his likeness with ever increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. – 2 Corinthians 3:18*

## **A Place to Be Fed**

Time with the Lord is soul food, necessary for the life and satisfaction of your soul. Books with the word soul in the title have been hot sellers recently. People sense a hunger for something that can touch their essence. But unless a book on the care of the soul calls the reader to come to Jesus and His Word, it cannot keep its promise. The prophet Isaiah records God’s warning and invitation:

*Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; hear me, that your soul may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David. – Isaiah 55:2-3*

A tasty, attractively presented meal shared with friends is one of life’s true pleasures. A good meal in good company is a taste of what God wants for your soul. Quiet time is fellowship with God over the delicious and nourishing fare of His Word. When the Lord says, “Your soul will delight in the richest of fare,” He tells you to come to Him and listen to Him. You need to hear God’s words spoken to you if you are to experience joy in your deepest places. No wonder Jeremiah said, “When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart’s delight” (Jeremiah 15:16). Remember, man does not live on bread alone.

## **A Place to Refocus**

Quiet time can keep you from frittering your life away on the extraneous, the peripheral. In a culture that exalts and feeds busyness, quiet time can refocus your attention daily on what really matters. God will remind you that your relationship with Him is supreme; every thing else must be subordinate to that relationship. When you pause in God’s presence, the fog clears and values sharpen. You realign yourself with the commitments you’ve made to God and others. The important things emerge, and the secondary things



recede one again. The busier you are, the more desperately you need the pause that refreshes.

### **A Place to Heal**

Humans have been called the “walking wounded”. All of us take a battering from time to time and need the healing touch of our Lord. In times of pain, confusion, and anguish, King David knew to retreat into God’s presence. In 2 Samuel 12, God sent word that David’s young son, who was conceived in an adulterous relationship with Bathsheba, was going to die. David, in great agony of spirit, fasted and prayed. He laid on the floor for seven days and prayed that God might spare the child. But when his son died, everyone noticed something strange. David got up off the floor, washed, and changed his clothes, worshipped God, ate, and comforted his wife.

Those who observed this were astonished. They asked, “Why are you acting this way? While your child was alive, you fasted and wept, but now that the child is dead, you get up and eat!”

The explanation lies with God’s healing power. When David secluded himself in God’s presence, he received forgiveness for his sin. He gained an eternal perspective regarding his son’s death. He was fortified in his faith so that he was able to trust God in a painful loss. He experienced the grace of God and the balm of God’s comfort and strength, so he could offer solace to his grieving wife.

I have friends whose daughter took her own life, friends whose son was murdered, friends who experienced sexual abuse, friends whose teenaged son died of cancer. Excruciating pain won’t yield to easy answers or clichés. For my friends, the ongoing process of healing began and continues in God’s presence.

### **A Place for Questions**

Bill had questions. Lots of them. Over years of enduring a long and painful illness, Bill prayed, “Lord, what do You want me to learn from this? What is the purpose of pain? How do You want me to respond?” Bill asked his pastor and friends their insights. But most of all, Bill asked God his questions. At Bill’s memorial service, several people mentioned his pattern of asking and seeing in the midst of his pain.

In quiet time, you can ask your questions. God intends for the circumstances of your life to lead you into deeper interaction with Him. He wants your questions and struggles to drive you in His direction. What are you facing? What questions do you have about life? Pray, “Open my eyes that I might see the wonderful things in your law” (Psalm 119:18). He delights in answering this prayer. Once you ask, lean toward God in anticipation. Read the Bible in His presence and listen to what His Spirit might say to you.

Your questions may surface from your Bible reading. “What does it mean ‘to abide’?” “How do I grow in grace?” Jesus promised,



*Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. – Matthew 7:7-8*

Spiritual truth is revealed to those who seek it. Asking, seeking, and knocking imply time, effort and persistence.

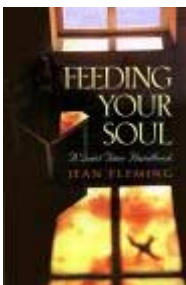
Make your quiet time a place where you withdraw with God to ask your questions about life and his teachings. Ask. Seek. Knock. And then hang around to listen. The answers may not come all at once. It pleases God that you are turning to Him, asking Him to help you make sense of life.

### **A Place for Confidence**

The marriage vow has never guaranteed happiness or durability. Many forfeit their promise of faithfulness to their partner. Business contracts are annulled in legal high stepping. Mothers and fathers deny natural affection for their children and neglect and abuse those given to their care. The world is a precarious and unsure place. If you put your confidence in people, social structures, or the legal system, you find that the footing invariably gives way. Even if you are blessed with honorable and godly human relationships, you may outlive them. Nothing and no one can promise to be there for you always. God is the only one who can keep that promise.

### **Staying Focused**

The benefits of a quiet time are more numerable than can be mentioned here. Quiet time helps spiritual aliens keep their gaze sharply focused on Christ and His kingdom so that they may live between two worlds, serving the kingdom of God on earth. These pilgrims need continual, intense contact with their true, though unseen, life. Greatest delight is found in consistent meetings with God. This is, after all, what aliens were made for.



Have more than just a quiet time...feed your soul! With the help of Jean Fleming, readers will learn to create a strategy that allows them to develop their quiet times in a way that fits their personality.

Laid out sequentially, Feeding Your Soul gets readers started meeting with God and progresses through instruction that will keep them going over a lifetime.

It's indexed to enable readers to find help on a specific topic such as prayer, meditation, or journaling. Each chapter concludes with a brief summary, an application, and questions for individuals or groups. Readers will learn to make space in their lives for God, persevere in dry times, create enriching quiet times and overcome obstacles.

