

What Five Minutes A Day Can Do

written by Angela Anno

When I was a young mother with three children under five, I complained to my friend Gloria Lavender that I couldn't find time to do anything for myself. I was restless and at loose ends. "What you need," she told me, "is time with God." Of course I explained how that was impossible—there were just too many things to do to be a good mom. "Why not try just five minutes a day," she suggested. I continued to protest, but finally decided to give it a try—and that has made all the difference. Making time for quiet with God brought me back to my own source and I found myself refreshed and more present to my family. As the poet Edwina Gateley says, "God is lonely for our longing." I found I was lonely for God, too.

What kept me from wanting to spend time alone with God? Perhaps it was fear of just being with God without reciting a lot of prayers. Perhaps it was that I felt that if God really spent time with me, God wouldn't like me. Perhaps it was my old idea of God as the scorekeeper in the sky watching for me to slip up. Yet I discovered that God is loving like the father in the Prodigal Son, compassionate as Jesus who fed the 5000 or raised the widow's son from the dead. It wasn't that if I'd keep the rules, God would love me. God already loves me and because of that I want to keep the rules. As John says, "we love because God first loved us."

Years later when I was working in a chemical dependency treatment center, I found I wasn't the only one who struggled with my idea of God. The 3rd step of Alcoholics Anonymous says, "We became willing to turn our lives and our will over to the care of God as we understand him." There was an exercise we used that helped the patients look more deeply their fear of trusting God and it might be worth repeating. They were asked to honestly answer five questions about their relationship with God and it helped us understand why spending time with God each day as the 11th step of AA recommends was such a struggle for some of them. These are the questions and some of their responses. See how you feel about what they had to say and ask yourself how you would respond.

1. What is your image of God?

- *Loving parent?
- *Creator and Master of Everything?
- *Distant, hard to reach, too busy to be involved in my little life?
- *The big score keeper in the sky waiting for me to slip up? Demanding, accepting no excuses?
- *Accessible, compassionate, gentle, forgiving?
- *Someone who loved me enough to die for me?

2. What does God have to say about what's going on in your life right now? Does God scold and blame you or walk with you?

3. If when you fell asleep last night God changed you, how would you know? What would be different?

Would you be less fearful, less angry, less worried about money, more peaceful, and trusting?

4. What are you willing to trust God with right now? Your family? Your future? Your paycheck?

5. What are you resisting trusting to God? Being in control? Letting go of old hurts and grudges?

I think that if you take the time to sit with these questions and honestly answer them, you might be less afraid and more willing to spend five minutes with God each day. What do you have to lose? Who knows? You might even want to spend ten minutes.