

Evening and Morning Prayer

Ex 29:38-41 1 Chron 23:28-30 Eph 5:8-19 Mark 5:21-24, 35-43



A frequent conversation I have with people has to do with **daily devotions**. The conversation almost always goes the same way; it's almost always about the frustration to remain faithful in doing daily devotions. *Perhaps you know exactly what I'm talking about.* You have good intentions, you want to spend time in the Word and in Prayer, but you can't keep it going consistently and regularly. And because of that, you start to feel guilty and eventually you just give up even trying. That is a common story, and a common frustration that we have¹.

Daily devotions is time with God. It is time in God's Word. It is a time for prayer. It is a time of confession and forgiveness; a time to thank and praise God for Who He is and what He has done for you. It is a time of meditation and thinking about your Christian faith in life. There are 1,000 different ways to have daily devotions; **but at its core it's time with God, His Word, and in prayer.**

In Scripture, God helps us with **THE TIMING** of our daily devotions. He instructed the Israelites long ago in the Old Testament to come before Him **in the morning and in the evening**; they had morning sacrifices and evening sacrifices.²

¹ If you have experienced this frustration, then you are probably thinking of your daily devotions in terms of Law rather than Gospel. **TRY THIS:** rather than telling yourself, "I have to do devotions today" (← you are creating a Law for yourself) — remind yourself "I get to have devotions today!" (← you are receiving God's gift – Gospel – to you) Your sinful nature rebels against the Law, and so you experience frustration and maybe even guilt because you can't 'obey' that Law that you created for yourself. (Remember, that you are no closer to the Lord, nor are you farther away, because of your devotional practice. In Christ, you are as close to God as you can get. Your relationship with the Lord is not dependent on your devotional practice!) If you view your devotional time as Gospel, then you see it as a gift that God is giving to you, an opportunity to be with God and His Word and in prayer, and you are motivated to actually do it. (This is called Gospel motivation).

² "From the morning and evening sacrifices offered by Old Testament Israel to the hours of prayer observed by the New Testament Church, the practice of daily morning and evening prayer has always framed the lives of the people of God. Indeed, since Adam and Eve were accustomed to meeting the Lord in the Garden "in the cool of the day," it is clear this practice is rooted in Creation." <https://www.esischools.org/morning-prayer>

As they rise up from their beds in the morning and lay down in their beds in the evening they were to spend dedicated time with God. The *Morning and Evening* rhythm occurs every day and they are natural transitions in our lives. There is a cycle and a rhythm to each day with *the morning and the evening*; and God taught His People in the Old Testament to use those transitions for their devotional life.

It is good to praise the Lord and make music to Your Name, O Most High, proclaiming Your love in the morning, and Your faithfulness at night <small>Psalm 92:1-2</small>
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I lie down and sleep; I wake again, because the Lord sustains me. <small>Psalm 3:5</small>
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The whole earth is filled with awe at Your wonders; where morning dawns, where evening fades, You call forth songs of joy. <small>Psalm 65:8</small>
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Lord, You are the God who saves me; day and night I cry out to you. May my prayer come before You; turn Your ear to my cry. <small>Psalm 88:1-2</small>

Morning and Evening is the rhythm of our days; *morning and evening* are perfect times to spend time with God in His Word and in prayer.

The morning and the evening remind you of God's presence in all areas of your life: in the business of the day and the quietness of the night.

In the morning, you rise up out of bed; that rising up out of bed is a gift from God's good hands. He has given you another day of life. *God's mercy is new every morning* Lamentations 3:22-23; He is gracious and kind and has given you work to do with every new day. He has blessed you with another day to be faithful in your vocations: loving God and serving your neighbor. You rise up out of bed as a child of God, always washed clean, fully forgiven, and filled with the Holy Spirit for the day ahead of you.

And then at the end of the day, *in the evening*, you come before the Lord again. As your day closes, you ask His forgiveness for the day's sins, you thank Him for the day's blessings, you ask for His strength for the day's challenges and struggles. And then you lie down and fall asleep. Throughout the night -- and in the hours of darkness -- when you are completely vulnerable, the Lord keeps you safe. When you are lying still and defenseless, the good Lord is watching over your life.

The morning and the evening remind you of God's presence in all areas of your life: in the business of the day and the quietness of the night.

But there is even more! The *morning and evening* rhythm of our lives foreshadow our death and resurrection.

Falling asleep at night is a foreshadow of death. Frequently in Scripture, death is seen as “sleeping.” For instance in the Gospel lesson for today, Jesus said that Jairus’ little daughter *was not dead, but only sleeping*. He told his disciples the same thing about Lazarus who had died. *Death is pictured as peaceful sleep*³.

**If sleeping is like death,
then rising up in the morning is like resurrection.**

When you die, your soul will immediately be with Christ in Heaven; and then on the Last Day, you will hear the voice of Christ call your name, and your body will rise up out of the grave with a glorified and sinless body fit for heaven and eternity. *We believe in the resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting.* In Scripture, waking up from sleeping and rising up out of your bed is a **foreshadow** of the resurrection of the dead and the life everlasting!

Every evening, **you go to bed and lie down to sleep** safe and sound in the Lord's hands, *just as someday* you will lie down in death safe and sound in the Lord's hands.

Every morning **you wake up and rise up out of your bed** in God's grace *knowing that someday* your body will rise up out of the grave just as Jesus rose up out of His grave on Easter Sunday.

**The morning and evening rhythm of our lives
is a foreshadow of our death and resurrection.**
Morning and evening are natural times for daily devotions!

³ Be careful not to misunderstand this. Death is pictured as peaceful sleep for the body only. We do not believe in “Soul Sleep,” which is a false doctrine. At death your soul is immediately with Christ in heaven; your body however, remains in the grave until the Last Day. Your body in the grave during death is what is pictured as “sleeping” --- to be “awoken” on the Last Day.

ONE OTHER THING: As you think about daily devotions and the rhythm of *morning and evening*; the lying down in peace and the rising up in grace, you may want to consider using the “*Sign of the Cross*”⁴.

The *Sign of the Cross* is using your fingers to make a cross over yourself to remind you that you belong to the Lord. Don't think that this is just a Roman Catholic thing to do, **because it's not**. Christians have been doing this for centuries long before the “Roman Catholic Church” ever existed.

The *Sign of the Cross* reminds you of your Baptism, where these words were spoken over you: “*receive the sign of the holy cross both upon your forehead and upon your heart, to mark you as one redeemed by Christ the crucified.*”



The *Sign of the Cross* reminds you of your Baptism, and that you belong to the Lord. The *Sign of the Cross* reminds you of the salvation event: that Jesus died on the cross for you and He has given you faith to believe it⁵.

The daily cycle of *evening and morning*, of your body lying down and rising up, reminds you not only of Jesus' death and resurrection, but your own lying down in death and rising up to eternal life through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Evening and morning are natural transition points in your daily life; they have always been opportunities for God's People to spend *dedicated time* with God, in His Word, and in prayer. Amen!

⁴ “Making the sign of the Holy Cross deserves some consideration. There is a time not long ago when Lutherans were afraid to make the sign of the Holy Cross because someone told them it was a Roman Catholic practice. But although Roman Catholics do indeed use the sign of the Holy Cross, they most certainly do not own it. Christians of the Orthodox East, Anglicans, and many others freely make this bodily sign. Our Catechism instructs parents to teach children to use it! Thank, Praise, Serve, And Obey W. C. Weedon, p.29 emphasis added

⁵ “When we make the sign of the cross, what we are doing is A) remembering our Baptism; B) Remembering Jesus’ death for our sins; C) Confessing to the world that I am not ashamed to be known as a disciple of Jesus; and D) Holding up the cross of Christ as the central core of my identity” (<http://www.lutheranlogomaniac.com/2009/11/why-do-we-make-the-sign-of-the-cross/>).

Lord God,
our Creator, Savior, and
Comforter,
create within us a desire to
spend time with you,
to long for Your Word and to look
forward to prayer.

We thank You for the evening
and the morning of our days,
which remind us of your grace
and mercy which are always new
for us.

We pray this in Jesus' Name, and
in the power of the Holy Spirit,
amen!

Exodus 29:38-41

[The Lord said to Moses,] “This is what you are to offer on the altar regularly each day: two lambs a year old. 39 Offer one in the morning and the other at twilight. 40 With the first lamb offer a tenth of an ephah of the finest flour mixed with a quarter of a hin of oil from pressed olives, and a quarter of a hin of wine as a drink offering. 41 Sacrifice the other lamb at twilight with the same grain offering and its drink offering as in the morning—a pleasing aroma, a food offering presented to the Lord.

1 Chronicles 23:28-30

The duty of the Levites was to help Aaron’s descendants in the service of the temple of the Lord: to be in charge of the courtyards, the side rooms, the purification of all sacred things and the performance of other duties at the house of God. 29 They were in charge of the bread set out on the table, the special flour for the grain offerings, the thin loaves made without yeast, the baking and the mixing, and all measurements of quantity and size. 30 They were also to stand every morning to thank and praise the Lord. They were to do the same in the evening ...

Ephesians 5:8-19

8 For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light 9 (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) 10 and find out what pleases the Lord. 11 Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. 12 It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. 13 But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light. 14 This is why it is said: “Wake up, sleeper rise from the dead and Christ will shine on you.”

15 Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. 18 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, 19 speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, 20 always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Mark 5:21-24, 35-43

When Jesus had again crossed over by boat to the other side of the lake, a large crowd gathered around him while he was by the lake. 22 Then one of the synagogue leaders, named Jairus, came, and when he saw Jesus, he fell at his feet. 23 He pleaded earnestly with him, “My little daughter is dying. Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live.”

24 So Jesus went with him.

35 While Jesus was still speaking, some people came from the house of Jairus, the synagogue leader. “Your daughter is dead,” they said. “Why bother the teacher anymore?” 36 Overhearing what they said, Jesus told him, “Don’t be afraid; just believe.” 37 He did not let anyone follow him except Peter, James and John the brother of James. 38 When they came to the home of the synagogue leader, Jesus saw a commotion, with people crying and wailing loudly. 39 He went in and said to them, “Why all this commotion and wailing? The child is not dead but asleep.” 40 But they laughed at him. After he put them all out, he took the child’s father and mother and the disciples who were with him, and went in where the child was. 41 He took her by the hand and said to her, “Talitha koum!” (which means “Little girl, I say to you, get up!”). 42 Immediately the girl stood up and began to walk around (she was twelve years old). At this they were completely astonished. 43 He gave strict orders not to let anyone know about this, and told them to give her something to eat.