

THE STEWPOT

A POTPOURRI OF PRACTICAL IDEAS TO HELP YOU BECOME A BETTER STEWARD

July/August 2026 • Volume 3 • Issue 4

Why My Devotional Time is Not Optional

By Janet Salazar

I had anger issues. One of my struggles from a very young age was learning to control my anger. Not the kind of anger that surfaced only occasionally, but the kind that remained just beneath the surface, waiting for an opportunity to emerge when things didn't go the way I wanted—when I was tired, stressed, or felt like I was losing control.

I used my anger to try to control situations and people, hoping to ensure better or safer outcomes. But in reality, it robbed me of peace and contentment. More than that, it affected my marriage and the atmosphere of our home with our children.

We all struggle with bad habits or character traits we wish we could change. Some may seem minor—like biting your nails or being a bit disorganized—but others carry much heavier consequences. They may affect our relationships, hinder our spiritual growth, and keep us stuck in unhealthy patterns.

It can be very frustrating, and you may find yourself asking, “Why can’t I just stop doing this?” or “I know better—so why do I keep falling into the same trap?”



STEWARDSHIP IS REVOLUTIONARY GENEROSITY. IT INVOLVES THE 7 T'S:
TIME, TEMPLE, TALENT, TREASURE, TRUST IN GOD, THEOLOGY, AND TESTIMONY.



THE LONG, FRUITLESS BATTLE TO CHANGE

The battle to overcome this anger character trait was long and exhausting. I begged God to take it away. I went to counseling. I read Christian and secular self-help books. I tried breathing exercises, journaling, even keeping a gratitude list. Those tools helped me grow in self-awareness and improve my communication, but they did not bring the deep, lasting transformation I longed for. I was frustrated—especially with God. Why wasn't He helping me more?

Why wouldn't He just take it away?

Didn't He see how hard I was trying? Didn't He hear my prayers? Didn't He see how much I was doing at church? I believed in His power to change hearts, so why wasn't He changing mine?



A WORKS-ORIENTED DEVOTIONAL LIFE

From childhood, I was taught that Bible study and prayer were essential to the Christian life. Yet I found it difficult to practice them consistently. I approached the Bible more like an instruction manual than a way to build a relationship with God, so it was often boring at best—and sometimes a real struggle, especially when working through books like Leviticus. Besides, with all my responsibilities at church and at home, it seemed my energy was better spent doing rather than reading and praying. At least when I checked tasks off my list, I could see results. Reading my Bible and praying didn't seem to produce much visible change.

My devotional life was sporadic at best. I'd be inspired by a sermon, retreat, or crisis and dive into Scripture and prayer with renewed zeal. But after a few days or weeks, the zeal would fade. I'd miss a day, then two, then a week. Up and down. On again, off again.

A GROWING REALIZATION: GOD'S WORD CHANGES US

One day, I changed the focus of my prayer and Bible study from behavior modification to simply getting to know God for who He really is. Something began to change in my heart. Slowly, I found myself looking forward to opening my Bible, eager to discover more about who God really is.

Instead of leaving my devotional time feeling discouraged and defeated, I began leaving encouraged and strengthened. At times, it felt as though God was speaking directly to me through His Word. I had never experienced anything like that before. It

was both humbling and exciting.

As time passed and my relationship with God grew, I began to perceive a pattern emerging. On the days I spent time in Scripture and prayer, I was noticeably more patient and kinder. I was a more loving and understanding wife and mother. There were even moments when words came out of my mouth that I knew were not mine, but God's. I saw glimpses of the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23) budding in my life.

But at the time, I didn't connect this with my devotional life. I still treated Bible reading and prayer as optional items on my agenda. When things were too busy, I reasoned, surely God would understand if I skipped it for a day. After all, I was a busy pastor's wife and mother. How could I carve out time every single day?

Or so I thought.

THE WAKE-UP CALL

One morning, the connection between my devotional life and my behavior became painfully clear.

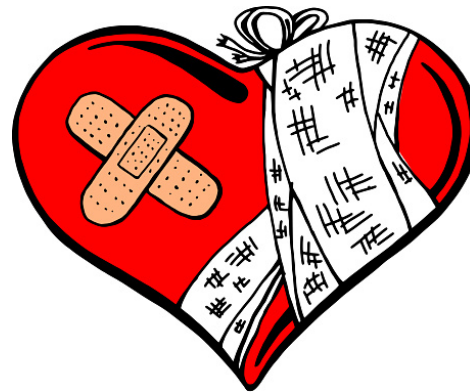
It was a school morning, and not only did I get up late, but I woke up on the wrong side of the bed. I was irritable, impatient, and unkind, and my frustration spilled out on everyone in the house. I scolded, nagged, and yelled at anyone who came near me, desperately trying to push everyone out the door on time.

Finally, after breakfast and a chaotic scramble, the boys



bolted for the van with obvious relief, eager to escape the battlefield I had created that morning. But just before shutting the door, my husband, with pain in his voice, turned and asked, "What happened to you?"

I stood there—mouth open, finger still pointed at the closed door—when the Holy Spirit whispered, "It's



[Watch this video about Trust in God:](#)



been three weeks since you've spent time reading your Bible and praying. How do you like the results?"

Conviction hit me like a wave. Suddenly, the connection between my inconsistency in devotions and the way I treated my family snapped into sharp focus. It was real. Visible. Undeniable.

A DEFINING DECISION FOR DAILY DEVOTIONS



That was the day I decided: No matter what, I would spend time in God's Word and prayer every day; not to earn God's favor, not to be a "good Christian," but because I needed it.

I needed transformation, and I couldn't experience real change apart from daily communion with the One who transforms. I knew that on the days I spent time with Jesus, I was different. So devotional time was no longer optional.

Years later, I understood why. Jesus explains it clearly in John 15:4, "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in Me" (NKJV). I had been trying to produce patience, gentleness, and self-control without staying connected to the Vine. No wonder I kept struggling.

Daily Bible study and prayer place us where the Holy Spirit can quietly reshape our hearts and lives.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Janet F. Salazar is an author and speaker. Portions of this article are adapted from her book *Engaging with God: Journey from Pharisee to Disciple*. Learn more at janetfsalazar.com.

PRODUCED AND
DISTRIBUTED BY:
STEWARDSHIP
MINISTRIES, NORTH
AMERICAN DIVISION
OF SEVENTH-DAY
ADVENTISTS.