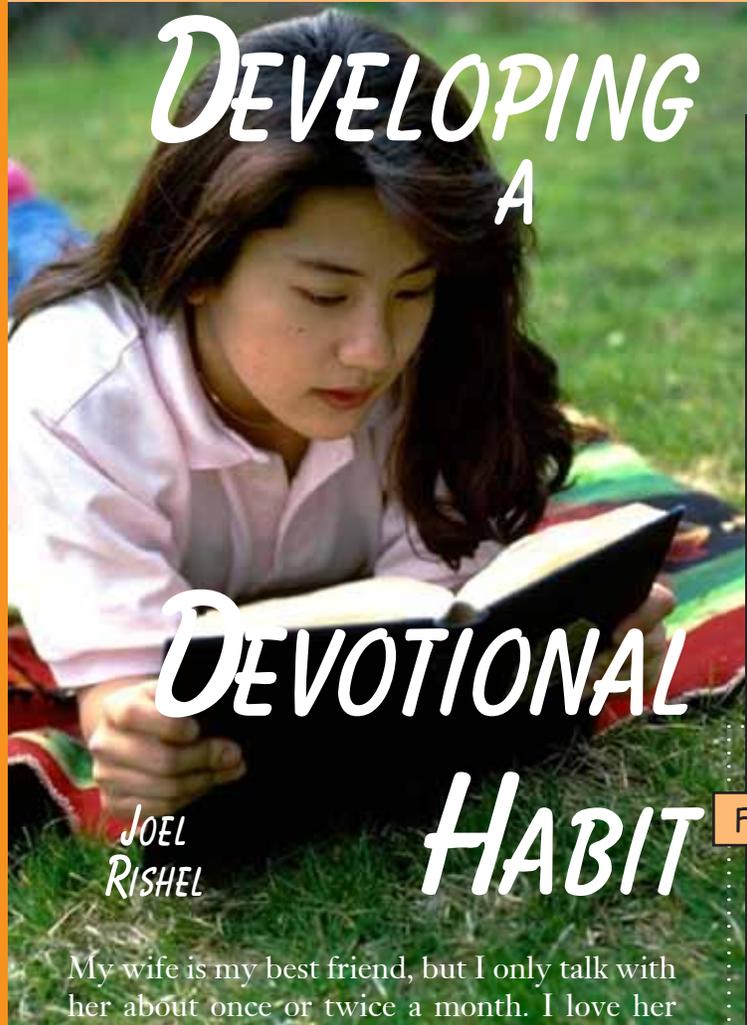




Character Building Ministries
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EDIFY

The Newsletter of Character Building Ministries



DEVELOPING A

DEVOTIONAL HABIT

JOEL
RISHEL

My wife is my best friend, but I only talk with her about once or twice a month. I love her dearly, but don't know what makes her happy. She is my sweetheart, but I'd rather hang out with other friends most evenings.

These are, of course, contradictory statements. If I were really saying these things about myself, it would mean that I am a bad husband and self-deluded about my love for my wife. The reality is, I do love my wife, and I am always searching for ways to make it known and to make it grow. There is nothing I would rather do any evening than be with her, talking with her, finding out everything about her day, learning what makes her happy and sad, dream-

Continued inside ...

This free Newsletter is sent to leaders and directors of Christian youth camps who are concerned about the spiritual growth and development of their staff.

What's Inside?

For Directors

Your own spiritual growth is the greatest thing you can offer your staff. This issue's lead article provides practical suggestions in developing your personal devotional time.

The 5-Year Club

This is Character Building Ministries' seventh year, but we have sixteen more camps joining our 5-year club. Look inside to find out who they are.

Wintertime Reading

The next few months provide the closest thing to "spare time" that you ever get. Here are some reading suggestions that will strengthen your walk with Christ and your ministry.

FALL 2003

Character Building Ministries is dedicated to the edification of Christian camp staff by equipping them in the Word of God.

ing with her, drawing her out, caring for her, loving her, and serving her. In a word—I have a personal relationship with her.

In a similar way, a Christian is one who has a personal relationship with God. It's not about how much doctrine you know or how well you obey God's law. It's all about how well you know and love the Lord Jesus Christ. This is the essence of developing a devotional habit—a personal relationship with the living God. Sadly, many Christians—even those committed to camping ministry—are like the hypothetical person I described. They say they love God, but hardly talk to Him, don't listen to Him, and spend very little time with Him. If the essence of Christianity is a personal relationship with God, then personal devotion to God must be developed as a daily exercise.

As in any interpersonal relationship, the most important tool to develop and maintain the relationship is *communication*. In simple terms a Christian *hears* from God primarily through the Bible and *speaks* to God

primarily through prayer—we must focus on these two elements. Other things may be a part of our devotional time, but the Word of God and prayer must be at the center. Lots of things can be done during a devotional time such as Scripture memorization, keeping a prayer journal, singing hymns or choruses of praise to God, word studies on key words or phrases, in-depth study of a central topic or doctrine, reading through a theological or devotional book, inductive Bible study on a certain passage, extended meditation, and journaling your thoughts or devotional experiences. However, I would suggest making a firm commitment to a relatively simple plan.

1. Find a quiet time and place to reserve for your personal devotions.
2. Begin with prayer asking God for wisdom to understand the Scriptures and

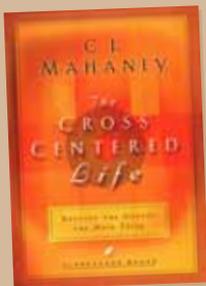
to open your heart to His will.

3. Read a passage of Scripture. There are many plans available to guide a Christian in reading through the Bible. To start with, try reading a chapter or

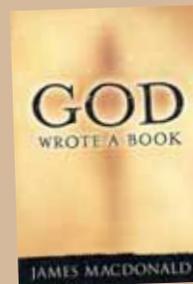


Transforming the Mind

How are you strengthening your walk during the “off” season of camp? With time easier to come by, consider challenging yourself by expanding your reading list and allowing the Spirit of God to transform your mind. Pick from this list of recommended readings and then watch as He transforms your ministry.

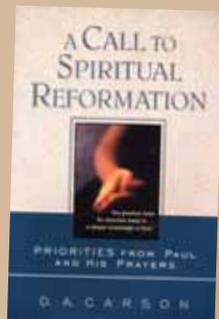


We all need our focus constantly readjusted to keep the main the main thing. *The Cross Centered Life* by C.J. Mahaney will help you place the gospel at the center of everything (Multnomah, 2002).

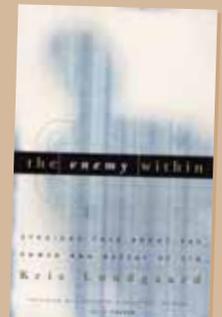


For a refreshing look at where the Bible came from and why you can trust what it says, read James MacDonald's popular apologetic, *God Wrote a Book* (Crossway, 2002).

God desires for His people to know Him more intimately. *A Call to Spiritual Reformation* by D.A. Carson presents a deeper understanding and application of priorities from Paul and his prayers. (Baker Books, 1992).



There is great benefit in reading classic books such as John Owen's *Sin and Temptation*. For those with less time, here is a great “repackaged” version by Kris Lugaard—*The Enemy Within*. Prepare to learn more about sin in your heart and to love Christ more. (P&R, 1998).



These books can be ordered from your local Christian Bookstore or through these fine distributors:
Cumberland Valley Book Service (800) 656-0231 www.cvbbbs.com / Christian Book Distributors (800) 247-4784 www.Christianbook.com

- two from the Gospel of Mark or John every day.
The Psalms also provide good devotional material.
4. Think about any new concepts you have learned, what you discovered about God from the reading, and how to apply it to your life today.
 5. Close with an extended time of prayer.

Does your devotional life need a jump start? At one point or another, despite our good intentions, we all struggle with our devotional life. We may go through the motions, but it seems irrelevant, dry, and burdensome. Sometimes we neglect it altogether. If this describes your experience, the first thing you should do is be deliberate about focusing on the character of God in your devotions. In every story and teaching that you read in the Bible, think about what it teaches on the character of God. To develop a relationship with God, your focus must be on God, not on yourself. Second, be thorough in self-examination. For instance, when you're reading about a particular sin, carefully search your own heart to see if you would potentially have any tendencies towards that sin. Third, be quick to focus on the work of Christ on the cross. This is especially important as you learn more about the holiness of God and the indwelling sinfulness of your heart. For every glance at your own sin, take ten long looks at the cross.

The main thing is the gospel of Jesus Christ. This should be the primary focus of every devotional time—get in the habit of preaching the gospel to yourself every day. As sin is exposed in your heart, go quickly to the cross of Christ to see how your sin has been paid for by Christ's death. Linger at the cross, reflecting on God's undeserved love for you through Jesus Christ. When guilt or condemnation overcomes you, remind yourself that you are not saved by your own works, but by the works and righteousness of Jesus Christ. When you are tempted to pride or self-sufficiency, remind yourself that you can do nothing apart from Christ, but that through Christ you can do all things. When your passion wanes, remind yourself of the glorious gospel of the One who is Altogether Lovely. 

This article, along with extensive practical suggestions for devotions, is available at our website, www.CBMinistries.com, under On-line Resources.

Joel Rishel is the Director of Publications for CBM and former Program Director for Camp Susque in Trout Run, Pennsylvania. He is currently attending Pastor's College for Sovereign Grace Ministries. You can email him at Joel@CBMinistries.com.



Character Building Ministries is proud to provide a one-week devotional book for attendees at the CCI National Conference in Keystone, Colorado this December. All of the devotions will be excerpted from *Living Water*—the 2004 CBM devotional book—and will be tailored for the CCI Conference.

5-YEAR CLUB

We have a tradition of honoring camps who have used the Character Building Ministries' devotional books for five years. However, this is more than a tradition for us; this is heartfelt gratitude to God for what He is doing through you. In the Fall of 2001 we honored eleven camps. Last Fall, nine more camps were added to the list. This year, out of the 203 camps that ordered from us, we are doubly grateful for these 16 camps for their continued support.

Aldersgate Camp RAVENNA, KENTUCKY

Camp BaYouCa MARATHON, NEW YORK

Camp Hebron HALIFAX, PENNSYLVANIA

Camp Living Waters LUTHER, MICHIGAN

Camp Swoneky OREGONIA, OHIO

Hartland Christian Camp BADGER, CALIFORNIA

Idyllwild Pines Camp IDYLLWILD, CALIFORNIA

Kenbrook Bible Camp LEBANON, PENNSYLVANIA

Lake Beauty Bible Camp LONG PRAIRIE, MINNESOTA

Lake Geneva Youth Camp LAKE GENEVA, WISCONSIN

Lake Louise Baptist Camp NORTH BRANCH, MICHIGAN

Lakeside U. Methodist Center SCOTT CITY, KANSAS

Mt. Gilead Camp STROUDSBURG, PENNSYLVANIA

Pine Valley Bible Camp ELLWOOD CITY, PENNSYLVANIA

Trout Creek Bible Camp CORBETT, OREGON

Twin Pines Camp STROUDSBURG, PENNSYLVANIA

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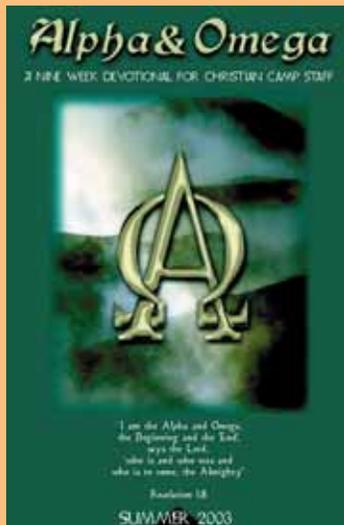
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You are doing an excellent job of presenting the truth of God's Word in a very easy to understand format.

~ Lake Koronis
Assembly Grounds
(Paynesville, MN)

Fantastic!
~ Alpine Camp &
Conference Center
(Blue Jay, CA)



Here's what fellow Camp Directors said about *Alpha & Omega*, CBM's 2003 Staff Devotional Book.

I think our staff was enriched by this book. I know I was!
~ Camp Bethany (Bethany, LA)

I noticed this year that attitudes and actions were much more positive than in years past. Plus Alpha & Omega opened up spiritual conversations more than once during the summer.
~ Park Springs Christian Center (Providence, NC)

Alpha & Omega gave good spiritual input, especially on issues that camp people face.
~ Big Sky Bible Camp (Big Fork, MT)

FAMILY CHANGES AT CBM

- ◆ Natalie Yvonne Klees was born to Bill & Heather on December 14, 2002. Natalie is healthy and joins her older brother, Avery.
- ◆ Joel & Cindy Rishel were married on May 17, 2003. They have just moved to Gaithersburg, Maryland to pursue training at the Sovereign Grace Ministries' Pastors College.

SECTIONALS

Would you like to see a CBM display at your sectional? Email Bill Klees for details ...
Bill@CBMinistries.com.

Camp Name _____
Contact Person _____
Address _____
City _____ State ____ Zip _____
Phone () _____

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Find out for yourself why CBM
has grown over 20% every
year for the past 6 years.