

Some seasons of life are tiring and busy. What are some ways that you have maintained closeness with the Lord in these times?

I wish I could answer this by saying I was really good at this and that it was easy but that would be a lie. For me and I would suspect for many of you, sometimes even when life isn't tiring and busy maintaining closeness with the Lord (or at least me **feeling** close to the Lord) is a challenge. He is always close we just don't always recognize it because we aren't looking for Him because of the busyness.

For me I would sum it up this way – priorities and making time for my relationship with Him.

Great Dean you just added to my list – I told you I'm already busy and tired. I get it but the question we each have to deal with – what am I busy and tired doing? It is so easy to let all of the **good** things we do, pull us away from the **best** things we can do which includes maintaining a closeness with God.

In Matthew 6 Jesus is teaching the Sermon on the Mount. Several verses in here I think give us a clue to ways we can maintain our closeness with God.

In Matthew 6:33, Jesus tells us to seek the kingdom of God and His righteousness before anything else **and then** everything else will be given to you. In this context, He was specifically teaching here about not worrying about food, drink, clothes, etc. but put God first and He'll take care of those things. I believe the same is true with everything in our lives – if we keep God and following after Him as our first and most important priority, task, job then He will help us to find the balance in the other stuff.

v19-21 Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Again I believe this is about keeping our pursuit of the kingdom as our first priority. What is it you treasure? Is it your job? Your TV shows? Your car? Your friends? Your family? Your church? Not that treasuring some of these are bad, but do they take priority over your personal relationship Jesus? Keep your time with God as your treasure and guard it, protect it – your heart will follow after it.

The question was what are ways I've found to stay close to God, **it is about making time to stay close God**. For me, the ways I've found to maintain closeness to God in those busy seasons –

1. Talk to Him – **make daily time to read your bible and to pray**. As our creator, He already knows us intimately, but He wants us to get to know Him intimately. Close relationships require conversation and our relationship with God is no different. Conversing with Him happens through reading the Bible (His main way of communicating with those who love Him) and prayer (a two-way conversation between you and God). He wants you to tell Him what is on your heart and mind, just as you would with a trusted friend because that is what He wants to be in our lives.
2. Engage with His people – **make time for community**. Being in close relationship with others who know Him is a vital part of developing an intimate love relationship with Him. In John 17 Jesus prayed that those who know Him would experience the same kind of unity that He experiences with His Father. In community with other people who are going after God – you will in all likelihood be influenced by them to do the same.
3. **Make time to attend church regularly**. Don't do it out of obligation but out of a desire to worship in the Lord's house and be encouraged. Music, prayer, worship and fellowship can help us stay focused on Christ after a long hard week, or before a hard week ahead. Hebrews 10:25 says "And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near." Not only can we gain much needed encouragement in our spiritual walk by worshipping Jesus corporately, but we are also called to be an encouragement to others.
4. Connect your other activities to God or said another way **make ways to bring God into your other activities**.

Do we have to

- work – yes
- spend time with family – yes
- church – yes
- ministry/serve – yes
- study - yes
- pray – yes
- sleep – yes
- Christian fellowship – yes
- Play/relax

None of these are bad things in and of themselves but our challenge is in finding the balance that always, always, always keeps God at the center and top of our priorities.