It was in 1882 on the campus of Cambridge University that the world was first given the slogan:

"Remember the morning watch."

Students like Hooper and Thornton found their days "loaded" with studies, lectures, games and bull sessions. Enthusiasm, they thought, would soon wane, and the men soon discovered a flaw in their spiritual armor -- a small crack which if not soon closed, would bring disaster.

They sought an answer and came up with a scheme they called the morning watch -- a plan to spend the first minutes of a new day alone with God, praying and reading the Bible.
The morning watch sealed the crack. It enshrined a truth so often obscured by the pressure of ceaseless activity that it needs daily rediscovery: To know God, it is necessary to spend consistent time with Him.

The idea caught fire. "A remarkable period of religious blessing" followed, and culminated in the departure of the athletes and men of wealth and education, for missionary service. They gave up everything to go out to China for Christ.

But these men found that getting out of bed in time for the morning watch was as difficult as it was vital. Thornton was an early riser. His watchmen were not. He would wake them by setting his fishing tackle in motion, and the sheets, clipped to the line, moved swiftly into the air off the sleeper's body.

Thornton wanted to get up to meet his God!

The intimacy of communion with Christ must be recaptured in the morning quiet time. Call it what you want -- the quiet time, the morning watch, meditation, or personnel. Every man who ever became somebody for God has this at the core of his priorities: time alone with God!

David says in Psalm 57:7, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed." A fixed and established heart produces stability and commitment. It will help you follow through on your plans. Hurry up and get started!

I want to suggest that in order to get under way, you start with seven minutes. Perhaps you could call it a daily "Seven-Up." Five minutes may be too short, and ten minutes for some is a little too long at first.

Are you willing to take seven minutes every morning? Not five mornings out of seven, not six days out of seven -- but every morning. This morning for at least seven minutes. Tomorrow when the alarm clock goes off at 6:15 a.m., I have an appointment with You.

Your prayer might be, "Morning by morning, O Lord, You hear my voice; morning by morning I lay my requests before You and wait in expectation" (Psalm 5:3).

How do you spend these seven minutes? After getting out of bed and taking care of your personal needs, you will want to find a quiet place and there with your Bible enjoy the solitude of seven minutes with God.

Invest the first 30 seconds preparing your heart. Thank Him for the good night of sleep and the opportunities of this new day. Ask Him to make your mind alert, your soul active, and your heart responsive. Lord, surround me with Your presence during this time. Amen.

Now take four minutes to read the Bible. Your greatest need is to hear some word from God. Allow the Word to strike fire in your heart. Meet the Author!
One of the Gospels is a good place to begin reading. Start with the Book of Mark. Read consecutively -- verse after ... When you have finished Mark, start the Gospel of John. Soon you'll want to go ahead and read the entire New Testament.

After God has spoken through His Book, then speak to Him -- in prayer. You now have two and a half minutes left for fellowship with Him in four areas of prayer that you can remember by the word ACTS.

A -- ADORATION. This is the purest kind of prayer because it's all for God -- there's nothing in it for you. You don't ... So worship Him. Tell the Lord that you love Him. Reflect on His greatness, His power, His majesty, and sovereignty!

C -- CONFESSION follows. Having seen Him you now want to be sure every sin is cleansed and forsaken. Confession comes from ... in the church -- God calls it gossip. "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Psalm 66:18).

T -- THANKSGIVING. Express your gratitude to God. Think of several specific things to thank Him for: your family, your ... "In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (I Thessalonians 5:18).

S -- SUPPLICATION. This means to "ask for, earnestly and humbly." This is the part of your prayer life where you make your ... abroad, friends in distant places, and above all the people of many lands who have yet to hear about Jesus Christ.

Let's put these seven minutes together:

1/2 Prayer for guidance (Psalm 143:8) 4 Reading the Bible (Psalm 119:18) 2-1/2 Prayer Adoration (I Chronicles 29:11) Confession (I John 1:9) Thanksgiving (Ephesians 5:20) Supplication (Matthew 7:7) 7 minutes

This is simply a guide. Very soon you will discover that it is impossible to spend only seven minutes with the Lord. An ... it's not long before you're spending 30 precious minutes with Him. Do not become devoted to the habit, but to the Savior.

Do it not because other men are doing it -- not as a spiritless duty every morning, nor merely as an end in itself, but ... of fellowship with Himself. Covenant with Him now to guard, nourish, and maintain your morning watch of seven minutes.

This article is published in print-media by NavPress. The devotional life is discussed more extensively in the booklet APPOINTMENT WITH GOD.