Back in my college days, the campus Christian crowd seemed to have one universal requirement of religious commitment: a daily “quiet time.” You weren’t a “real” Christian unless you spent designated time each day in private Bible study and prayer. To score some points at Bible study or prayer group, you just had to preface your remarks with “I wrote this down in my journal during my daily quiet time yesterday.”

For folks like me who were utter failures at most forms of self-discipline, the inability to get up early in the morning (or otherwise reserve a special block of time) for a daily devotional left us feeling like we weren’t quite up to spiritual snuff. My natural tendency to resist any form of legalism also made me rankle at anyone insisting that I must follow such a regimen.

I still bristle when I hear the term “quiet time” used in a religious sense due to those college memories, but I’ve actually become quite a fan of the practice over the years. Maybe that’s because I’ve become an early riser, and it’s easier to set aside time at the beginning of the day when it’s still dark outside.

I don’t like to talk about it much just because it’s so easy to sound boastful or legalistic. But I have found it to be a foundational practice upon which other spiritual disciplines are based. Setting time aside to think, reflect, study and pray puts everything else in perspective. It helps me to try to put God at the center of my thinking and to make that sense to look at the map before doing anything else.

I’m not just promoting personal piety. Setting aside such time equips people of every calling. The most effective Christians from either the liberal or conservative end of the spectrum tend to share such a discipline. Whether you spend all day trying to make a living or you’re on the front lines fighting for social justice, you still need time each day to regroup and readjust.

It’s human nature, regardless of how much we profess our faith in God, to slip back into the gravitational pull of self and worldly concerns. Ideally we should constantly re-set our course throughout the day whenever that occurs. But if each day is its own journey, it makes sense to look at the map before doing anything else.

Randy Limbird is editor of El Paso Scene. Comments? Send to randy@epscene.com

El Paso Scene accepts news items by mail (P.O. Box 13615, El Paso, Texas 79913) or email (news@epscene.com). There is no charge for news announcements. All items will be edited for brevity and style. News items should include an event name, description, time, date, place, sponsorship organization, information phone number and admission prices, if any. Please include a contact name and phone number. “A fill in the blanks” online press release form is at www.epscene.com/pressrelease.html

El Paso Scene accepts news items by email (P.O. Box 13615, El Paso TX 79913) and name (news@epscene.com). There is no charge for news announcements. All items will be edited for brevity and style. News items should include an event name, description, time, date, place, sponsorship organization, information phone number and admission prices, if any. Please include a contact name and phone number. “A fill in the blanks” online press release form is at www.epscene.com/pressrelease.html

El Paso Scene publishes about 40,000 copies each month, distributed throughout El Paso and also Las Cruces, including area Village Inns, Walgreens, Wing Stop, Leo’s, The Cleaners and many more locations.