**TIME ALONE WITH GOD**

Ingredients:

* Half an hour, every day.
* Quiet, so you focus on yourself and on God;
* Prayer, worship, thanksgiving, as your response to God
* Word, so you can ponder His truth
* Life, people and events, so you are aware of Him in these situations

Method:

* Time – a fixed time when you are unlikely to be interrupted is best but more important is to actually start having such a time with God.
* Quiet – A simple method is to be quiet until you are aware you are in God’s presence before you start to respond to Him.
* Word – Read and be familiar with what is said. Meditate on the Word: “What does it say?” “What does it mean?” “How should I respond?” You may use the questions to help you or set them aside.
* Life – Use the time to also be aware of the things that are happening, inside you and around you. Bring these before God and speak to Him.

# Monday and Tuesday

[**DANIEL 1:1-6**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel+1&version=NIV)

Remember this is your time alone with God. It is a time to tell God what is on your mind (thinking back over the past day), listen to him speak to you (reading and meditating on a bible passage), and finally, to respond to him (prayer). The questions are there to help you do this. Ignore them if they do not help. If your time is limited, I suggest that you don’t do everything in one go but spread them over the two days.

1. Take time to be quiet so you can focus on your time alone with God. Recall and briefly write down any significant things that happened or occupied you the past day. Share with God what you thought or felt. Pray also for those he has laid on your heart.
2. Read [DANIEL 1:1-6](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel+1&version=NIV). Write down what you think the passage is about and what it says to you. Feel free to use the questions in “Further Thoughts” to help you think over the text.
3. What is God saying to you? Write down a prayer in response.

**Further Thoughts**

*Following the events in 2 Chronicles 36, Daniel and his friends were captured and carried into exile in Babylon. They were likely in their teens at the time. With Jerusalem captured and the Temple destroyed, there is little left of the institutions that uphold the Jewish faith, except for what remains in the hearts of the Jews.*

1. What strata of society did Daniel and his friends come from? What would this imply about their knowledge of Jewish history, culture and religion? How were they described?
2. What were the king’s intentions for them?
3. Jerusalem was destroyed together with the Temple and they are now living in Babylon, probably somewhere in the palace grounds, receiving training in the language and literature of Babylon, given food fit for a king, with good prospects of being in the service of the king; they were well-treated and well-positioned to be assimilated into Babylonian society. Do you think God has abandoned them?
4. Jeremiah the prophet prophesied to the people living in exile and told them, *“Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage, so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile. Pray to the Lord for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.” (Jeremiah 29:5-7).* Why do you think God advised them to not to fight to return but to build their lives and seek the good of the country? Is there a principle here about our attitude towards the non-Christian life and society that most of us live in? If you were one of the exiles, what would you do?
5. Daniel and his friends experienced both the wrath and the mercy of God in the destruction of Jerusalem and the life that God has brought them into. They were torn from home and loved ones and had to survive in a foreign culture, yet they were treated well in captivity. What do you learn about God from their experience?

# Wednesday and Thursday

[**DANIEL 1:6-16**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel+1&version=NIV)

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1. Take time to be quiet so you can focus on your time alone with God. Recall and briefly write down any significant things that happened or occupied you the past day. Share with God what you thought or felt. Pray also for those he has laid on your heart.
2. Read [DANIEL 1:6-16](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel+1&version=NIV). Write down what you think the passage is about and what it says to you. Feel free to use the questions in “Further Thoughts” to help you think over the text.
3. What is God saying to you? Write down a prayer in response.

**Further Thoughts**

1. Why did Daniel accept the hospitality of Babylon, the education provided by Babylon, even the new name that Babylon gave him (which refers to a Babylonian god) but refused the food from the King’s table? Having been assimilated into the Babylonian culture, why does Daniel draw a line on the matter of food? What do you think this action of Daniel represents?
2. What reason did Daniel give to Ashpenaz for not taking the food offered to him but instead asked for just vegetables and water? What can you learn from the non-confrontational approach that Daniel took? What was the outcome of the 10 day experiment? What did Ashpenaz learn from it? What did Daniel learn from it?
3. From the situation he was in, it would appear that God had abandoned Israel and him. With everything gone, there was nothing to go back to. How would you have responded if you were in Daniel’s shoes? Yet Daniel chose to draw a line for the sake of his faith and found that God was still very much with him. Note that he and his friends were teenagers at the time. What lessons can you draw from their example?

# Friday and Saturday

[**DANIEL 1:17-21**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel+1&version=NIV)

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1. Take time to be quiet so you can focus on your time alone with God. Recall and briefly write down any significant things that happened or occupied you the past day. Share with God what you thought or felt. Pray also for those he has laid on your heart.
2. Read [DANIEL 1:17-21](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel+1&version=NIV). Write down what you think the passage is about and what it says to you. Feel free to use the questions in “Further Thoughts” to help you think over the text.
3. What is God saying to you? Write down a prayer in response.

**Further Thoughts**

1. *“To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.”* While we are given the impression that they were intelligent young men when they were brought into exile, here we are told that God gave them knowledge and understanding that was exceptional. And Daniel had a special gift in interpreting visions and dreams. And they proved to be excellent when examined by the King. What do you learn about God from their experience? Do you think their success was also due to their own effort and discipline?
2. “All kinds of literature and learning” clearly imply that the four young men excelled in the wisdom and knowledge of the world in those days. What inference can you draw from the fact that God had enabled them to excel in those fields, which likely would include mysticism and even Babylonian religions, and about our Christian attitude towards the knowledge, culture and technology that the world has achieved thus far?
3. Do you think the 4 young men continued to eat only vegetables even after being inducted into the king’s service?
4. What do you think the people around them would learn about God seeing that they not only kept themselves from being defiled but are clearly blessed? What about you? How do people know you are a Christian? How do they know that God has blessed you? How can they learn about God from your life?
5. What lessons can you draw from the 4 young men’s experience about being “in the world but not of the world” as Jesus prayed in [John 17:15-19](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John+17&version=NIV)?

# Sunday

##### EXILE

In a very real sense, we Christians are living in exile. We have escaped from the wrath of God and have become citizens of God’s Kingdom but we are not living in that Kingdom. We are in Babylon, a biblical metaphor for the World. God’s Kingdom is our future hope, when Jesus our Lord returns as the conquering King.

It is instructive that God told the Jews to put down roots in Babylon and seek the welfare of the city. They are not going anywhere anytime soon and the good that Babylon enjoys they will enjoy too. Babylon was not the enemy to be opposed at all cost. The exile is his will and they do well to embrace it.

Jesus, in his prayer in John 17 also tells us that it is his will that we remain in the World: *“As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world,”* he prays. Clearly he wants us to be in the World and he wants us to bless the World with our presence: As he was sent, so he sends us.

But he also prays that as we remain in the World we will be protected from the evil one, we will continue to be sanctified, and we will remain citizens of God’s Kingdom and not of Babylon.

Daniel (with God’s resources) responded to his situation as a Jew in Babylon by blessing Babylon with his gifts and intelligence, yet drawing clear lines to underline the fact that he remains very much a worshipper of God. He expressed his faith through the simple discipline of refusing the rich food of the King and limiting himself to vegetables and water. I'm sure in doing so he also found solidarity with his people who are suffering. And he found that God responded to his simple act of faith. God surprises us when we reach out to him in simple faith.

As God’s people living in the World, we are called to serve the community and be a blessing. Daniel had to learn the language and literature of Babylon; we too have to be educated in the World and serve it with our skills and intelligence. Yet we are called to separate ourselves from the values and principles of the world (the rich food of the King’s table?) and adhere to the values and principles of God’s Kingdom (simple vegetables and water). And in the midst of all these, we trust that God will protect us from evil and will continue to sanctify us by his truth.

This is Jesus’ prayer for us, his will for us, as he sends us into the World.

*“I am coming to you now, but I say these things while I am still in the world, so that they may have the full measure of my joy within them. I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world. My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world. For them I sanctify myself, that they too may be truly sanctified.”* (John 17:13-19)

1. Review the answers/thoughts you wrote down in the past week. Read the short sharing above. Does it add anything to your own thoughts?
2. What is God saying to you? Write down a prayer in response.