**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

[**ISAIAH 44:1-23**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2044&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 [ISAIAH 44:1-23](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2044&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**

Isaiah was a prophet in the time of King Uzziah, roughly 180 years before the Exile. This prophecy speaks of God as Redeemer, in the context of the rebuilding of Jerusalem in the time of Cyrus.

1. *“But now listen, Jacob, my servant, Israel, whom I have chosen. This is what the Lord says—he who made you, who formed you in the womb, and who will help you: Do not be afraid, Jacob, my servant, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen. For I will pour water on the thirsty land, and streams on the dry ground;”* Who is God and why is Israel/Jacob not to be afraid? How would God describe himself to you, and why should you trust him and not be afraid?
2. *“This is what the Lord says—Israel’s King and Redeemer, the Lord Almighty: I am the first and I am the last; apart from me there is no God. Who then is like me? Let him proclaim it. Let him declare and lay out before me what has happened since I established my ancient people, and what is yet to come—yes, let them foretell what will come. Do not tremble, do not be afraid. Did I not proclaim this and foretell it long ago? You are my witnesses. Is there any God besides me? No, there is no other Rock; I know not one.”* Once again, how does God describe himself and why should we trust him and not be afraid?
3. Read through vv9-20. How does God differentiate himself from other idols/gods/powers? Why should we trust him and not be afraid?
4. *“Remember these things, Jacob, for you, Israel, are my servant. I have made you, you are my servant; Israel, I will not forget you. I have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist. Return to me, for I have redeemed you.”* How does God describe Israel/Jacob? Would you say you are in the same position and having the same regard from God, or better? Explain.
5. *“Sing for joy, you heavens, for the Lord has done this; shout aloud, you earth beneath. Burst into song, you mountains, you forests and all your trees, for the Lord has redeemed Jacob, he displays his glory in Israel.”* Why should heaven and earth rejoice over the Redeemer God? What then is the glory of God?

# Wednesday and Thursday

[**ISAIAH 44:24-45:13**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2044&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 [ISAIAH 44:24-45:13](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2044&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**

This is a fairly long passage but it is basically a prophecy that God will call upon Cyrus to rebuild Jerusalem. Note that at this point the Exile is nearly 200 years away.

1. *“who says of Cyrus, ‘He is my shepherd and will accomplish all that I please; he will say of Jerusalem, “Let it be rebuilt,” and of the temple, “Let its foundations be laid.”’* This came true in Ezra’s time (see Ezra 1:1-8). How does God describe himself in the context of his own claim that in time he will make this come true (see vv24-28)?
2. *“For the sake of Jacob my servant, of Israel my chosen, I summon you by name and bestow on you a title of honor, though you do not acknowledge me. I am the Lord, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me, so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting people may know there is none besides me.”* In chapter 45:1-8, God says that he will raise Cyrus to a position of global power even though Cyrus is not a follower of God. What is God’s intention?
3. *“Woe to those who quarrel with their Maker, those who are nothing but potsherds among the potsherds on the ground. Does the clay say to the potter, ‘What are you making?’ Does your work say, ‘The potter has no hands’? Woe to the one who says to a father, ‘What have you begotten?’ or to a mother, ‘What have you brought to birth?’”* In these verses, God claims complete sovereignty to do as he wills. Cyrus, not being a follower of God, clearly does not reflect God’s values and character, yet God raised him to world dominance. At the same time, Cyrus was instrumental in the rebuilding of the Temple after the Exile. Is it possible for God to make use of ungodly instruments to carry out his will?
4. *“This is what the Lord says—the Holy One of Israel, and its Maker: Concerning things to come, do you question me about my children, or give me orders about the work of my hands? It is I who made the earth and created mankind on it. My own hands stretched out the heavens; I marshaled their starry hosts. I will raise up Cyrus in my righteousness: I will make all his ways straight. He will rebuild my city and set my exiles free, but not for a price or reward, says the Lord Almighty.”* How does God answer the question above?

# Friday and Saturday

[**ISAIAH 45:14-46:2**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2045&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 [ISAIAH 45:14-46:2](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah%2045&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. *This is what the Lord says: “The products of Egypt and the merchandise of Cush, and those tall Sabeans—they will come over to you and will be yours; they will trudge behind you, coming over to you in chains. They will bow down before you and plead with you, saying, ‘Surely God is with you, and there is no other; there is no other god.’”* This is the outcome that God is looking for even as he carries out his promise to redeem Israel after allowing them to be carried into Exile. Note that this is not about power, but about integrity and power. It is a revelation to the world as to the nature of God. Do you think this is important?
2. *“For this is what the Lord says—he who created the heavens, he is God; he who fashioned and made the earth, he founded it; he did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited— he says: “I am the Lord, and there is no other. I have not spoken in secret, from somewhere in a land of darkness; I have not said to Jacob’s descendants, ‘Seek me in vain.’ I, the Lord, speak the truth; I declare what is right.”* What are God’s intentions for his Creation and how does that lead to the fact that God chooses to redeem rather than destroy? On the other hand, what is it that God would not compromise?
3. *Declare what is to be, present it—let them take counsel together. Who foretold this long ago, who declared it from the distant past? Was it not I, the Lord? And there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me. “Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. By myself I have sworn, my mouth has uttered in all integrity a word that will not be revoked: Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear. They will say of me, ‘In the Lord alone are deliverance and strength.’”* Ultimately the audience is “all you ends of the earth”. What are they to know of God from his actions to redeem Israel? What is the message to them? What can they trust God to do?
4. *“All who have raged against him will come to him and be put to shame. But all the descendants of Israel will find deliverance in the Lord and will make their boast in him. Bel bows down, Nebo stoops low; their idols are borne by beasts of burden. The images that are carried about are burdensome, a burden for the weary. They stoop and bow down together; unable to rescue the burden, they themselves go off into captivity.”* Bel and Nebo were Babylonian gods who were unable to stem the fall of the empire. At the end of the day, the will of God reigns supreme and the people of God will know deliverance and victory. How does this make you feel?

# Sunday

##### WHO THEN IS LIKE ME?

*No one stops to think, no one has the knowledge or understanding to say, “Half of it I used for fuel; I even baked bread over its coals, I roasted meat and I ate. Shall I make a detestable thing from what is left? Shall I bow down to a block of wood?” Such a person feeds on ashes; a deluded heart misleads him; he cannot save himself, or say, “Is not this thing in my right hand a lie?”*

“No one stops to think.” This has to be one of the most frustrating aspects of sinful man.

God deals with Israel as he would: he allowed the nation he formed in his name to be conquered because they no longer upheld his law. But he would not abandon them, as he promised. Just as he has dealt with Israel, and will deal with Israel, as Judge and Redeemer, so too he will deal with “all you ends of the earth”.

The One True God is “the Maker of all things, who stretches out the heavens, who spreads out the earth by myself, who foils the signs of false prophets and makes fools of diviners, who overthrows the learning of the wise and turns it into nonsense, who carries out the words of his servants and fulfills the predictions of his messengers.” God stands by his word; he stands for truth.

The One True God is the one “who says of Jerusalem, ‘It shall be inhabited,’ of the towns of Judah, ‘They shall be rebuilt,’ and of their ruins, ‘I will restore them,’ who says to the watery deep, ‘Be dry, and I will dry up your streams.’” God stands by his word; he stands for redemption and restoration.

The One True God is the one “who says of Cyrus, ‘He is my shepherd and will accomplish all that I please; he will say of Jerusalem, “Let it be rebuilt,” and of the temple, “Let its foundations be laid.”’” God will make use of Cyrus, nearly two centuries into the future, to accomplish his will, because he can. This is his word; this is his will.

And what he says, he does, and therefore, is done.

“Who then is like me?” God asks.

Can anyone imagine such a God, who is all-powerful, who keeps his word, who stands by the word of his servants, and who acts to redeem Israel? This prophecy is a wonderful revelation of God, his character, his purpose and his resolve. God invites us to wonder at such a God.

“For this is what the Lord says—he who created the heavens, he is God; he who fashioned and made the earth, he founded it; he did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited.” God intends the heavens to be inhabited. This is why he would redeem man. It was never his intention to have a perfect Creation without man.

If only man would stop to think, he would realise that God would find a way to deliver sinful man from his wrath.

*“Who foretold this long ago, who declared it from the distant past? Was it not I, the Lord? And there is no God apart from me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none but me. Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other.”*

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.