**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 9:1-3**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel%209&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 during the past day. Share with God what you thought or felt. Pray also for those he has laid on your heart.
2. Read [DANIEL 9:1-3](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel%209&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. *“In the first year of Darius son of Xerxes (a Mede by descent), who was made ruler over the Babylonian kingdom.”* It is difficult to determine who this person is in the history of the Babylonian Empire but the likelihood is that this was in the time when the Medo-Persian Empire had conquered Babylon and this man was appointed to govern it. This would put the occasion very close to the time when Cyrus announced his religious amnesty (see Ezra 1). In other words, the 70 years would be almost up. Daniel would now be an old man. What do you think of how Daniel not only survived different regimes and the fall of Babylon, but had also remained loyal to God in his old age? Why do you think this is so?
2. *“ … in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the Lord given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years.”* Daniel had kept up with his reading and comprehension of Scripture; surely this is one secret of his long term faithfulness. What did he learn this time? What is its significance?
3. *“So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes.”* Why did Daniel feel the need to do this? Wouldn’t it make more sense to rejoice and celebrate God’s impending redemption?

# Wednesday and Thursday

[**DANIEL 9:4-14**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel%209&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 9:4-14](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel%209&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. *“Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, we have sinned and done wrong.”*
*“Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame—the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, both near and far, in all the countries where you have scattered us because of our unfaithfulness to you.”
“The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him; we have not obeyed the Lord our God or kept the laws he gave us through his servants the prophets.”*
What is Daniel’s vision of God, and his vision of his people and himself? Why does he include himself? Is it necessary to do so, for example, when praying for your church and confessing her sin? What can you learn from Daniel’s prayer of confession?
2. *“Therefore the curses and sworn judgments written in the Law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against you.”
“The Lord did not hesitate to bring the disaster on us, for the Lord our God is righteous in everything he does; yet we have not obeyed him.”*Daniel made clear that God’s judgements were righteous and just, and even then, the people had not responded appropriately. Compare this with modern man’s complaints against God that he is cruel and selfish when he metes out judgement. What do you think?
3. Do you think that this attitude towards sin—the need to confess, the need to understand the righteous judgement of God, the need to set right our relationship with God—is no longer necessary this side of the cross, since we who follow Jesus as Saviour and Lord are now righteous in the eyes of God? Should we, as seemingly implied in 1 John (see 1 John 1:9), not make too much of a fuss about sin but quickly confess and get on with our lives, resting on the promise that God is “faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness”?

# Friday and Saturday

[**DANIEL 9:15-19**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel%209&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 9:15-19](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Daniel%209&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. *“Lord, in keeping with all your righteous acts, turn away your anger and your wrath from Jerusalem, your city, your holy hill.”* What is the basis of Daniel’s request for God to turn away his anger and wrath?
2. *“Our sins and the iniquities of our ancestors have made Jerusalem and your people an object of scorn to all those around us.”* What is the motivation that Daniel puts forward for God to act to forgive and redeem?
3. *““Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, Lord, look with favor on your desolate sanctuary. Give ear, our God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy.”* How does Daniel approach God? What is the posture that you sense as you read these words? For whose sake should God turn away his anger and wrath? Yet throughout his prayer he says of God, “our God”, claiming him and not letting him go. What can you learn from Daniel in his approach to God?
4. *“Lord, listen! Lord, forgive! Lord, hear and act! For your sake, my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name.”* In Daniel’s mind, when the relationship with God is right, then everything else can flow. His priority was to turn away God’s wrath so that his city and his people can once again experience the face of God shining upon them. Would you intercede for your church in like manner, not just seeking revival, but seeking forgiveness and seeking God’s grace and favour? For us, the one who intercedes on our behalf is our Lord Jesus, who sacrificed himself on the Cross for us. Would this make us more confident, more presumptuous, more humbled, more ashamed …?

# Sunday

**I PRAYED TO THE LORD MY GOD AND CONFESSED**

*“Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws. We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes and our ancestors, and to all the people of the land.”*

It seems that some time before Nehemiah broke down in tears over Jerusalem, another man prostrated himself before his God, seeking to turn his wrath away from his people.

The prayer is a wonderful example of a contrite and broken spirit, such as David prayed when he sought God’s forgiveness for his sin with Bathsheba, in Psalm 51: “My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.” We will do well to learn this posture when we come before God in repentance.

What struck me, however, is that the Bible recorded for us this prayer of a man interceding for his people. It not only tells me how valuable it is in God’s sight that his children pray and intercede but also how powerful it is because God hears and God responds. The later half of the chapter tells of how the Angel Gabriel came to deliver a response from God. All Daniel did was pray, and God responded to his prayer.

The church organises weekly prayer meetings because it believes in the power of united prayer, taking a leaf out of Matthew 18, “Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them.” The context of vv91-20 however is about dealing with the sin of a brother.

This is not to say that the prayer meeting is not a good practice, but it casts individual prayer in lesser light and it does not encourage the individuals to take the role of an intercessor.

How important it is to maintain the channels through which the love and power of God flows. How important it is to intercede on behalf of the church and to seek God’s wisdom and desires about the matters that he has put into our hearts and minds through his Word and through the encounters and events of our fellowship with the community. How important it is to call upon his justice, his compassion and mercy, his help to alleviate the suffering around us. How important it is to pray that he will work on the rocky soil, shallow soil, and soil infested with thorns and weeds, so that the seed of the Gospel might take root. There is so much we cannot do by ourselves.

Surely we must believe that in all of life, God is the One who makes the most difference. How important it is for us to be his channels, interceding for those whom he has laid on our hearts and minds. Our Lord Jesus is the chief intercessor: “Now there have been many of those priests, since death prevented them from continuing in office; but because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. Such a high priest truly meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens.” (Hebrews 7:23-26). We do well when we unite with him as another member of his team of intercessors.

*“Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, Lord, look with favor on your desolate sanctuary. Give ear, our God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. Lord, listen! Lord, forgive! Lord, hear and act! For your sake, my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name.”*

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.