**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

[**MARK 10:17-20**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark%2010&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 [MARK 10:17-20](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark%2010&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. *As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. “Good teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?”* What does the act of kneeling communicate? Would that be consistent with his calling Jesus “Good Teacher”? What do you think the Jewish man was seeking and why was he asking Jesus?
2. *“Why do you call me good?” Jesus answered. “No one is good—except God alone.”* Interestingly, Jesus did not answer his question immediately but focused on how the man addressed him. What do you think is implied in Jesus’ remark? Why was it important for the young man to think about how he addressed Jesus and the fact that God alone is good?
3. *“You know the commandments: ‘You shall not murder, you shall not commit adultery, you shall not steal, you shall not give false testimony, you shall not defraud, honor your father and mother.’” “Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.”* Jesus gave him the standard Jewish answer—obey the Law. The man said that he has done so since young. Was the man seeking validation (yes you have eternal life) or was he implying that he feels it is not enough?

# Wednesday and Thursday

[**MARK 10:20-22**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark%2010&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 [MARK 10:20-22](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark%2010&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. *“Teacher,” he declared, “all these I have kept since I was a boy.” Jesus looked at him and loved him.”* How would you interpret this picture of Jesus looking at the man who has been faithfully obeying the Law since young, and now on his knees seeking to know the answer to secure his destiny? Did Jesus love him as he loved all man, or loved him as someone sincere and faithful to God’s teachings, or loved him as someone who was able to sense that something was missing and taking the initiative to find out?
2. *“One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.”* Clearly Mark wants us to know that this instruction came from a place of love. Jesus, in love, told him that he still lacked something and pointed him in the direction where he could find what he lacked. From Jesus’ answer, what do you think the man lacked?
3. Do you think Jesus’ instruction (to sell everything and give to the poor) was specific to the man (this is what you lack), or that everyone who wants to have treasure in heaven (and eternal life) must sell everything and give to the poor? What do you think is the essence of Jesus’ answer that can be applied to all?
4. *“At this the man’s face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.”* From Jesus’ response (including the part about “good”), what did the man need to learn about God, Jesus, and himself?
5. *Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!” The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”* Note that this was not about the fact that we cannot save ourselves—Jesus was specifically talking about those who consider themselves rich. Why was Jesus emphasising how hard it is to enter God’s kingdom? Surely if he wants people to respond to the Gospel he should help them see how easy it is (this is how we often share the Gospel)?

# Friday and Saturday

[**MARK 10:23-31**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark%2010&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 [MARK 10:23-31](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark%2010&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. *Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!” The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.” The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, “Who then can be saved?” Jesus looked at them and said, “With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God.”* Note that this was not about the fact that we cannot save ourselves—Jesus was specifically talking about this man (and those who consider themselves rich). Why was Jesus making it so difficult to enter God’s kingdom? The disciples considered Jesus’ instruction to “sell everything and give to the poor” and felt that no one would be willing to do so but Jesus did not make it cheaper, but says that when God is in the picture, then all things become possible. Do we look at God or do we look at man when we seek to bring someone to be saved? Do we attempt to make evangelism and salvation possible in our eyes by watering down the Gospel, or do we share a Gospel that only God can make possible?
2. *Then Peter spoke up, “We have left everything to follow you!”* So, it is possible! Think about your own faith and discipleship: are you following Christ and fully trusting him or is Christ just another companion in your journey? Have you “left everything” to follow Christ? Is our Lord specifically pointing out something that is hindering you from following him?
3. *“Truly I tell you,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”* Jesus says that what we give up to trust him and follow him completely as Lord and God, is incomparable to what we receive, both in this life and the next. God will never let us lose out by choosing to stand with him. Do you believe him?
4. Do you think the man ultimately became a Christian?

# Sunday

**CHILDREN, HOW HARD IT IS TO ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD!**

*Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, “How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!” The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, “Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.”*

It is quite amazing that this Jewish man, who had scrupulously kept the Law from young, cared enough to seek Jesus out to learn how he could have eternal life. We are not told what he imagined to be eternal life but surely it is related to the life in the hereafter and the presence of God. We are told that he was rich and yet he was aware of his own spiritual poverty and yearned to be right with God. There surely was something special about this man and we are told that Jesus loved him.

That the man did not dispute with Jesus nor tried to bargain with him tells us that Jesus’ pointed challenge hit home and hit hard. While he “loved God” and sought to be right with him, he had not “loved his neighbour” and opened his heart (and purse) to them. He was ready to be a follower of Jesus, kneeling at his feet and acknowledging him as teacher, but he was not ready to be “good”, yet Jesus clearly placed this hurdle between them both.

Why do you call me good? No one is good—except God alone.

Was Jesus suggesting that if he believed Jesus to be good then he must believe Jesus to be God? Or was he saying that if he wanted to be right with God he must keep the Law in such ways that express God’s goodness—not just following the letter of the Law but expressing and embracing the spirit of the God who gave the Law? Or was he pointing out the ambivalence within the man: kneeling and asking to know eternal truths, yet not going beyond addressing Jesus as “Good Teacher”?

Whichever it may be, Jesus’ next few words forced the man to think hard about who Jesus is. “One thing you lack,” he said. “Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” There is only one view of me that will lead you to do what I ask. This is the one thing you lack.

The way I understand it, Jesus’ instructions addressed the man’s “one thing you lack”. I don’t think that we are all required to sell everything to have eternal life; but all of us need Jesus to be Lord of all our life.

Jesus tells us that “the kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field” (Matthew 13:34). The man sold everything he had to buy the field and legally (rather than steal) possess the treasure. He was happy to do so. Where your treasure is, there your heart lies. It would seem that the man who encountered Jesus wanted eternal life but had little idea of what it entails; he had little idea of God. He was a rich man and his treasure was on earth and in truth, there his heart lay.

*How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!* Jesus made it clear that to follow him one must deny oneself and take up the cross. You leave everything on the table. But Jesus assures us that when we leave everything on the table, God will return our faith with more than we can imagine. The church, on the other hand, tries very hard to convince people that it is easy to become a Christian: Just say these few words in prayer and the deal is sealed.

Jesus makes it very clear that it is hard to enter the kingdom of God, perhaps even impossible in our eyes; but if we are willing, God makes it possible. If our Gospel is easy, under the mistaken notion that since Jesus has “paid it all” then it costs us nothing, it is likely fake. The truth is that it costs nothing to enter the kingdom because Jesus paid for our passage with his life, but in entering you renounce your life; you lose your life to save it.

*Then Peter spoke up, “We have left everything to follow you!” “Truly I tell you,” Jesus replied, “no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”*

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.