**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

[**PSALM 103:1-5**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%20103&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 [PSALM 103:1-5](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%20103&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. *“Praise the Lord, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits.”* The mind is speaking to the soul, reminding the soul to praise God and remember the goodness of God. What do you think is the “soul”, that David wants his “soul” to join his “mind” in gratitude and praise? Do you think such integrity in worship is important, where the whole self is united and surrendered to God? Do you think we are capable of this?
2. *“ … and forget not all his benefits.”* Many practices, rituals and festivals were instituted in the bible to remind people of what God had done. It tells us that God is aware of our tendency to forget and lose our awe and gratitude, and neglect our responsibilities. Why is it important to remember? What practical steps can we take to help ourselves remember? What is the danger when we forget what God has done for us?
3. *“—who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.”* Here is a useful list of those benefits that David had compiled. Can you remember the details of God’s involvement in your life in any of these areas? Do these memories lead you to gratitude or do you suspect that God does not really make much of a difference to your life thus far?

# Wednesday and Thursday

[**PSALM 103:6-19**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%20103&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 [PSALM 103:6-19](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%20103&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**

While the first 5 verses are focused on the self, these verses have a much broader perspective—how God acts towards people in general.

1. *“The Lord works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed.”* In a world where injustice abounds, can we believe this of God? Why is it important for us to acknowledge this of God?
2. *“The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.”* In vv8-12, David elaborates on how this truth is the key to our salvation. It is amazing that long before the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, David is able to discern this truth in God. What does this mean to you in your day-to-day walk with God?
3. *“As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him; for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.”* David describes God’s relationship with us as a father towards his children. In David’s mind, who does God regard as his children? In your mind what would it imply about God’s attitude towards you if indeed you are his child?
4. *“The Lord has established his throne in heaven, and his kingdom rules over all.”* Finally, David describes God as sovereign over all; nothing escapes his authority and rule. What would that mean in your day-to-day walk with him? Does this truth give you confidence or are the realities in your life more fearful?
5. Go over the different attributes of God again. Which is most meaningful to you and why?

# Friday and Saturday

[**PSALM 103:20-22**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%20103&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 [PSALM 103:20-22](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%20103&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. *“Praise the Lord, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word.”* The first call to worship is to the angels who do God’s bidding. Do you believe in angels who do God’s bidding in our world?
2. *“Praise the Lord, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will.”* The second call is to the Creation and to us who were created to be stewards of his Creation. Do you believe that all of the reality that we know of was created by God? Do you believe that our purpose is to be God’s servants to do his will, just like the angels?
3. *“Praise the Lord, all his works everywhere in his dominion.”* The third call is to everything else that exists. Do you think that beyond our Creation, other Creations exist as well and are also under his dominion?
4. In these verses, David calls on angels, Creation and its inhabitants created to serve, and all other Creations elsewhere, to praise God. How do you envisage this activity of praising the One who is your Creator—is it to use words of praise, have feelings of awe and wonder, or to joyfully serve as we are created to and for?
5. *“Praise the Lord, my soul.”* In David’s mind, this is who God is, God over all the spiritual beings, God over our Creation and us, God over all other Creations that may exist. This is he that David calls his soul to respond to in worship and praise. Spend some time thinking about it. Is it more awesome that you are a part of these heavenly beings that worship God? Who is this God whom you pray to? How should you respond to him?

# Sunday

**PRAISE THE LORD, O MY SOUL**

*“Praise the Lord, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits.”*

This psalm is a wonderful example of the mind educating the soul about God.

When we are not “mindful” in worship, the tendency is for our God to become small and local. We bring him near to us rather than us entering into his Presence. He then revolves around us, serving our needs, allaying our fears, satisfying our desires. We are at the centre of our universe.

What David did was to speak to his soul, reminding himself of who God is, what he has done, and urging himself to praise and worship God as a small (and recalcitrant) member of the universe in which God dominates.

In worship, the mind must lead the soul.

David led his soul in this journey of worship, beginning at the most personal, most intimate.

God forgives you, heals you, redeems you, affirms you by loving you, satisfies you with what is good, and refreshes you so that once again you can rise above your circumstances.

However, he does not stop there, but encourages his soul to look outward, beyond the personal, to understand the reality that we are in.

God shores up our decaying culture, working to ensure that righteousness and justice remain to protect the oppressed. He is the one holding us up and slowing our inevitable descent into the hell of unrestrained selfishness and evil.

As he revealed himself to Moses and Israel, God is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He is not intent on destruction even though we are a terrible cancer corrupting the Creation he has entrusted us to care for. He understands that we are not able to overcome; this is what we have become—selfish and evil beings. And so his love chooses to preserve and redeem those who would turn to him.

And this is why we must praise and worship him. Every time we do so we are choosing to turn to him instead of allowing the selfishness and evil in us to dominate. This is why the mind must lead, and not the self. This is why we must let God, who rules over all, to rule over us (mind, body, soul), because only he can save us from ourselves.

*“Praise the Lord, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word. Praise the Lord, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will. Praise the Lord, all his works everywhere in his dominion. Praise the Lord, my soul.”*

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.