**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

[**LUKE 17:11-19**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%2017&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 [LUKE 17:11-19](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%2017&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 he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us!”* Why did the lepers keep their distance? What did they want from Jesus?
2. *When he saw them, he said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were cleansed.* It seems that Jesus did not heal them immediately and only asked them to show themselves to the priests (as they should if they were already healed). The healing only took place as they went. Why did they obey his instructions rather than ask Jesus to heal them there and then? Do you think asking them to go to the priest before actually healing them is a test of their faith?
3. *One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan.* Why was the fact that this one leper who returned to thank Jesus was a Samaritan noteworthy? What was the point that Luke, the writer, wanted to make?
4. *Jesus asked, “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?” Then he said to him, “Rise and go; your faith has made you well.”* Jesus noted the fact that only one person out of the 10 (and a Samaritan at that) returned to give praise to God. What does this tell you about Jesus’ expectation? What was the point that Jesus made? Do you think we should be conscientious about our gratitude for God’s hand upon our lives? Is it just a matter of needing to say thanks? Did this one leper gain anything more than the other 9 for his actions? Do you think the other 9 remained healed?

# Wednesday and Thursday

[**LUKE 19:1-10**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%2019&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 [LUKE 19:1-10](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%2019&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 entered Jericho and was passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.”* Why would a rich man climb up a tree just to see Jesus pass by? Why not force his way to the front of the crowd?
2. *When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.” So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.* We are not told how Jesus knew Zaccheus’ name (perhaps he asked but it was not recorded) but clearly they had not met before. Why did Jesus invite himself to Zaccheus’ home?
3. *All the people saw this and began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.”* How did the crowd view Jesus’ actions? Why? What was the reasoning behind the crowd’s disapproval?
4. *But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”* Note that Jesus had not said anything significant at this point (or at least we were not told). What do you think motivated Zaccheus to do what he did? Note the contrast with the “rich young ruler” in Week 31.
5. *Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”* How did Jesus respond to Zaccheus’ announcement? How did he address the concerns of the crowd? What is the key point that Jesus’ made?
6. Why do you think Zaccheus was so eager to see Jesus?

# Friday and Saturday

[**LUKE 5:27-32**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%205&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 [LUKE 5:27-32](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%205&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. *After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. “Follow me,” Jesus said to him, and Levi got up, left everything and followed him.* Jesus’ disciples were mostly working class people and in this case, he called a tax collector, who is despised by the community, to follow him. Do you think Jesus’ choices were random or deliberate? If deliberate, do you think there is a motive for him to choose uneducated, working class people who have little to do with the religious elites, including this tax collector, or was he choosing specific people who just happen to come from this strata of society?
2. *“Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them.”* It would seem that Levi threw a dinner party and invited his friends. Mark tells us in 2:15 that “there were many who followed him”, meaning that many of these “outcasts of society” friends of Levi followed Jesus. Why do you think these people were drawn to Jesus? (On a separate note, what do you think of this idea of throwing a dinner party to tell friends and family about your decision to follow Jesus and to introduce him to them?)
3. *But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?”* The religious elite, who were not invited to the party, questioned Jesus’ presence among these outcasts of society, since he carried himself as a religious teacher with disciples. Who would you classify as “tax collectors and sinners” in your society? Why do the Pharisees think this was not something Jesus should do? Do you think the concerns of the Pharisees are an issue in Christian circles today?
4. *Jesus answered them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”* Does Jesus mean that he has no interest in the religious community and the “good and upright people of society”? What do you think Jesus means? How would this shape the company you would choose to keep?
5. Why do you think the modern church is usually filled with “good and upright people of society” and rarely have those “on the fringe of good society” in their midst?

# Sunday

**THIS MAN, TOO, IS A SON OF ABRAHAM**

*They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us!”*

They were mandated, either by custom or law, to keep their distance from the general population as they may be contagious. If, however, they were fully healed, they must present themselves to the local priest to be certified healed.

These outcasts led barren lives as they could not work and they were fully dependent on the charity of others.

While other outcasts may be better off, it must still be difficult to endure society’s rejection and scorn, and the isolation that society imposes.

Tax collectors were seen as colluding with the Roman authorities and often they themselves abuse their position to gouge those under their jurisdiction. Prostitutes were despised for living off immoral activities, although often their clientele do not suffer similar scorn. These were deemed morally compromised people and the religious community would usually avoid them.

Common folk certainly did not experience such stigma but they would unlikely be invited to move around with the elites—those with impeccable pedigree, the rich and powerful, as well as the religious leaders. In our context, think of hawkers and foreign workers, people working in markets, manual labourers, and, to some degree especially in Asian cultures, those involved in “dubious” establishments like casinos, pubs, and entertainment outlets.

It would be wrong to say that Jesus discriminated against the elites; certainly among his followers were people like Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. We were also told of an incident where he had dinner at the home of Simon the Pharisee.

But one cannot escape the fact that not only did he surround himself with fishermen, tax collectors and others in the lower ranks of society, his teachings were mostly addressed to the general public and he spent most of his time with them.

The religious elite cared about appearances; Jesus cared about people. Their faith was wrapped up in the rituals of the Temple and their strict adherence to the demands of the Law; the Gospels bear witness to a Jesus who moved freely with the common folk and those who were rejected by society, and spent much time with them rather than in the Temple and in religious debates with rabbis.

He had compassion on “the crowd” and responded to their needs by teaching them, healing them, casting out demons and assuring them that God’s grace is available to them. He cared about what they genuinely needed from him, whether it be freedom from the terrible scourge of leprosy, affirmation of their spiritual renewal, or acceptance that they too are human beings who may sit at the table with him. Indeed, stripped of the pretensions of society, these are the people who saw more clearly who Jesus was, and were drawn to him.

As people who have come to Jesus without pretensions and found forgiveness, we too must care about people, not appearances; relationships, not religion; making sure that the witness of our lives and our church express the spirituality of Jesus and not the Pharisees and the religious elite.

*“Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?”*

*“Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”*

*“It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”*

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.