**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

[**JOHN 3:1-2**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%203&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 [JOHN 3:1-2](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%203&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. *“Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. He came to Jesus at night …”* Why would he choose to see Jesus at night?
2. *“Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him.”* In saying “we”, do you think he was representing a group of people seeking answers or was he using “we” in a very general sense but mostly meaning himself? How was he convinced that Jesus had God on his side? Do you think this was enough grounds for him to believe Jesus was really sent by God?
3. Clearly Nicodemus sought Jesus as a teacher, convinced that he was someone sent by God. He thinks Jesus may have answers to eternal questions yet he preferred his meeting to be in the anonymity of the night. What does this tell you about Nicodemus?
4. Is it possible that Christians also do the same, accepting him as their Saviour and yet not ready to obey him as Lord (can he be Saviour and not Lord?)? Do we play it safe with Jesus, controlling the outworking of the relationship so that there are no unintended consequences?

# Wednesday and Thursday

[**JOHN 3:3-8**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%203&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 [JOHN 3:3-8](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%203&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 replied, “Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again.”* Either Nicodemus had asked his question or Jesus went straight to the point of his visit. Nicodemus did not deny the direction of Jesus’ answer: salvation. With the benefit of hindsight, how would you understand Jesus’ reply?
2. *“How can someone be born when they are old?” Nicodemus asked. “Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother’s womb to be born!”* Do you think Nicodemus took Jesus literally or was he alluding to the fact that no one can turn back time and start all over again?
3. *Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, ‘You must be born again.’”* Clearly Jesus was saying that there must be two births—physical and spiritual—while Nicodemus was only thinking of one. In what way does this solve the problem that Nicodemus raised, that no one can erase their past and start over again? Again, with the benefit of hindsight, how would you interpret Jesus’ answer?
4. *“The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit.”* What do you think Jesus is telling Nicodemus with that little observation about the wind’s actions? Is he saying that nobody knows who would be saved because it is up to the Spirit, or that the work of the Spirit and the inner workings of spiritual birth will always be outside our ability to grasp and control but it does not make it any less real and true, or he means something else? How does that make you feel about Jesus’ answer and explanation?

# Friday and Saturday

[**JOHN 3:9-15**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%203&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 [JOHN 3:9-15](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%203&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. *“How can this be?” Nicodemus asked. “You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and do you not understand these things? Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony.”* Jesus spoke of “you” and “we”: who are “you” and “we”? What qualifies the testimony of “we” to be accepted? What was the failure of the “you”? What holds “you” back from believing? Do you also hold back?
2. *“I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man.”* At this point, Jesus clearly describes himself, not as a man appointed by God, but as someone who came from the presence of God. What is his challenge to Nicodemus? Why do you think Jesus revealed himself so clearly to Nicodemus but refused to entertain the Pharisees when they asked for a sign?
3. *“Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.”* Now Jesus plainly tells Nicodemus God’s plan of salvation, the very question he came to ask. This is how a person is born again. How do you think Nicodemus responded to Jesus’ revelation? What about you; do you accept the gift but mistrust the Giver?

# Sunday

##### BELIEVE

*“Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things?”*

Nicodemus came to Jesus wanting to know. But he struggles to understand. “You are Israel’s teacher,” said Jesus, “and do you not understand these things?”

The problem with Nicodemus, I think, is that he is a scholar and is interested in knowledge but not in letting that knowledge shape his mind, heart and life. And so he knows, and seeks to know even more, and yet still does not know because he fails to embrace what he already knows. “Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God”, he tells Jesus, yet instead of openly engaging him, he comes to him in the night. So does he really know that Jesus is a teacher who has come from God?

Yet Jesus generously tells him what he wants to know, and helps him to understand what will happen with a reference to an incident in the past: “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.” The people spoke against Moses and God sent snakes and many died from their poisonous bites. But after he interceded for them, God instructed Moses to construct a snake on a high pole and anyone bitten needed only to look at the snake lifted up to be saved (Numbers 21).

But Nicodemus still has to undo the knot that is in his mind and heart; he has to decide whether to trust the One who has told him answers he would never know (or even understand) otherwise. He still has to embrace Jesus or he will never know.

This is the question that all of us must also deal with constantly. Believing is nothing if it is only a mental tick in the head. To truly believe, one must respond appropriately. Without the appropriate response you still remain where you are and you remain who you are; that is as good as not believing. Believing is not a one time action; it sets the direction, the agenda, the context, and the focus of the rest of your life. The Gospel proclaims that God has now made powerful forces available to you: Jesus your King; the Holy Spirit who will birth you into the Kingdom; and God the Father, who now loves you as his child; but you still have to surrender yourself to Jesus as King, the Holy Spirit as your Guide and God as your Father, in order for you to move from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of light. This is what it means to believe.

*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God’s one and only Son.*

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.