**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 22:1-11**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%2022&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 [PSALM 22:1-11](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%2022&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. *“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, so far from my cries of anguish? My God, I cry out by day, but you do not answer, by night, but I find no rest.”* What is the state of the Psalmist? Have you been in such a state?
2. *“Yet you are enthroned as the Holy One; you are the one Israel praises. In you our ancestors put their trust; they trusted and you delivered them. To you they cried out and were saved; in you they trusted and were not put to shame.”* The juxtaposition of the picture of anguish and the picture of God enthroned as Israel’s God, linked by the word “yet” is deliberate. Do you think the Psalmist intends to convey irony—you are on the throne, yet I am in anguish—or faith—I am in anguish and there seems to be no answer, yet I still believe and trust in you? How do you feel about God when you are in such a state?
3. *“But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by everyone, despised by the people. All who see me mock me; they hurl insults, shaking their heads. ‘He trusts in the Lord,’ they say, ‘let the Lord rescue him. Let him deliver him, since he delights in him.’”* Not only is the Psalmist going through an agonising time, he has to endure the scorn of people around him because he clings to God. Yet he continues to cling on to God. Are you capable of such strength and resolve? If the shoe is on the other foot, how can you be a friend who is supportive?
4. *“Yet you brought me out of the womb; you made me trust in you, even at my mother’s breast. From birth I was cast on you; from my mother’s womb you have been my God.”* Here is the foundation of the faith and trust of the Psalmist. Even as a child he was taught the presence, protection and care of God. Do you think it is possible for a child to know God and grow up with him? How can you facilitate this?
5. *“Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help.”* So in the end it boils down to this—the Psalmist and his God—but God’s presence is foremost what the Psalmist wants. Do you share with the Psalmist a similar faith and walk with God?

# Wednesday and Thursday

[**PSALM 22:12-21**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%2022&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 22:12-21](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%2022&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. *“Many bulls surround me; strong bulls of Bashan encircle me. Roaring lions that tear their prey open their mouths wide against me.”* *“Dogs surround me, a pack of villains encircles me; they pierce my hands and my feet.”* Bulls and lions all around; dogs and villains hunting in packs—there is no escape. While the earlier verses describe a personal agony, here the Psalmist speaks of external enemies ready to pounce. What kind of problem can you envisage that would put you in a position where you are trapped like prey?
2. *“I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted within me. My mouth is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death.”* This is how the Psalmist felt. The last line, “*you lay me in the dust of death”:* do you think “you” refers to God or someone else? What do you make of the line?
3. *“But you, Lord, do not be far from me. You are my strength; come quickly to help me. Deliver me from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dogs. Rescue me from the mouth of the lions; save me from the horns of the wild oxen.”* Yet the Psalmist continues to seek God for deliverance. Faith or folly?

# Friday and Saturday

[**PSALM 22:22-31**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%2022&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 22:22-31](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm%2022&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. *“I will declare your name to my people; in the assembly I will praise you. You who fear the Lord, praise him! All you descendants of Jacob, honor him! Revere him, all you descendants of Israel!”* It is interesting to note that when the Psalmist praises God, he does so to others around him and he calls on them to join him as well. Do you praise God silently and privately, or publicly and loudly?
2. *“For he has not despised or scorned the suffering of the afflicted one; he has not hidden his face from him but has listened to his cry for help.”* After the night comes the dawn. The Psalmist has received the response from God. While others abandon the one who is suffering, God “has not despised or scorned the suffering of the afflicted one”. While we know that we can expect personal suffering and assaults from evil, do we also expect to experience the faithfulness of our God?
3. *“From you comes the theme of my praise in the great assembly; before those who fear you I will fulfill my vows. The poor will eat and be satisfied; those who seek the Lord will praise him—may your hearts live forever!”* As God has been faithful and generous, so the response of the Psalmist is to likewise be faithful and generous. Do you respond to God’s faithfulness and generosity by also being faithful to him and generous to those around you?
4. The personal experience of God in his life causes the Psalmist to reflect on the universal nature of God and how he will ultimately be known to all. He expressed these thoughts in vv27-31. Out of your own personal experience of God in your life, how would you describe him if you were to help a friend to know God?

# Sunday

##### THE SUFFERING KING

*“My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”*

It is interesting that we come to this Psalm immediately after the two Psalms we had considered about how God blesses and grants victory to the king and how those Psalms anticipate the greater King who was to come in the person of Jesus. Even for the king/King, night is a part of their journey.

The faithfulness of God is seen and sung about in the bright sunshine but in the dark gloom of the night the king clings the faithfulness of God. However, the night, just like the Valley of the Shadow of Death, is only a passage, not a destination. God’s faithfulness can be relied upon, as we also rely on the sun to appear and warm our days again after winter.

But the most interesting aspect of this Psalm is how closely it reflects the suffering of our Lord. “Eloi, Eloi, lema sabachthani?” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”) was the cry of Jesus on the Cross before he breathed his last.

“You lay me in the dust of death” then becomes a picture of God gently letting his Son slip away into the dust of death.

Read the Psalm again, this time from the mouth of Jesus as he hung on the cross and see how he clings to God and trusts him to deliver him and raise him to life again.

The rest of the verses, from vv22-31, can then take the form of praise to our Lord and King; the afflicted one now becomes man. It is finished! He has done it!

*“Posterity will serve him; future generations will be told about the Lord. They will proclaim his righteousness, declaring to a people yet unborn: He has done it!”*

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.