**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

[**EXODUS 32:1-6**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus%2032&version=NIV)**,** [**EXODUS 33:7-11**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus%2033&version=NIV)

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3. What is God saying to you? Write down a prayer in response.

**Further Thoughts**

1. *When the people saw that Moses was so long in coming down from the mountain, they gathered around Aaron and said, “Come, make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who brought us up out of Egypt, we don’t know what has happened to him.”* With the disappearance of Moses up the mountain, the people lost any sense of the presence of God and decided to invent their own. What was the god that they invented? What do you think are some modern inventions of God that can be mistaken for the God of the bible (meaning what the world thinks God is, rather than what is revealed in the bible, but also accepted by Christians, for example God as a santa-claus-like person)? Do you think it is possible that when Christians lose touch with God they will also be tempted to invent their own idea of God?
2. *“When Aaron saw this, he built an altar in front of the calf and announced, “Tomorrow there will be a festival to the Lord.” So the next day the people rose early and sacrificed burnt offerings and presented fellowship offerings. Afterward they sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.”* In celebration of their invented god, the people also invented new ways to worship. What was the hallmark of their worship? Do you think worldly ideas of worship can influence the way Christians worship God? How can we as Christians guard ourselves from bringing the world into our worship?
3. *“Now Moses used to take a tent and pitch it outside the camp some distance away, calling it the “tent of meeting.” Anyone inquiring of the Lord would go to the tent of meeting outside the camp. And whenever Moses went out to the tent, all the people rose and stood at the entrances to their tents, watching Moses until he entered the tent. As Moses went into the tent, the pillar of cloud would come down and stay at the entrance, while the Lord spoke with Moses. Whenever the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance to the tent, they all stood and worshiped, each at the entrance to their tent. The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend. Then Moses would return to the camp, but his young aide Joshua son of Nun did not leave the tent.”* This passage in chapter 33 described how the people used to respond to the presence of God. What was the hallmark of their response? Comparing this with their response to the golden calf, what do you think is the key difference?

# Wednesday and Thursday

[**EXODUS 32:7-10**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus%2032&version=NIV)**,** [**EXODUS 33:1-6**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus%2033&version=NIV)

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**Further Thoughts**

1. *Then the Lord said to Moses, “Go down, because your people, whom you brought up out of Egypt, have become corrupt. They have been quick to turn away from what I commanded them and have made themselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. They have bowed down to it and sacrificed to it and have said, ‘These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.’”* How does God describe the sin of the people? What is he focused upon?
2. *“I have seen these people,” the Lord said to Moses, “and they are a stiff-necked people. Now leave me alone so that my anger may burn against them and that I may destroy them. Then I will make you into a great nation.”* How did God respond to the apostasy of the people?
3. *Then the Lord said to Moses, “Leave this place, you and the people you brought up out of Egypt, and go up to the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, saying, ‘I will give it to your descendants.’ I will send an angel before you and drive out the Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. Go up to the land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not go with you, because you are a stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way.”* God proposed to fulfil the letter of the promise (the land) but not the spirit of the promise (the presence, in that they will be in God’s eyes his people). Why is this a merciful proposal? What is the implication to have God call you his own and allow you to bear his name?
4. *“When the people heard these distressing words, they began to mourn and no one put on any ornaments. For the Lord had said to Moses, “Tell the Israelites, ‘You are a stiff-necked people. If I were to go with you even for a moment, I might destroy you. Now take off your ornaments and I will decide what to do with you.’” So the Israelites stripped off their ornaments at Mount Horeb.”* What do you think “take off your ornaments” symbolise? How did the people respond to God’s words? Why did they respond in such a way even though they had committed apostasy? Is it possible that the golden calf was their representation of God rather than a rejection of God (‘These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.’)? What do you think they had come to realise in their own notion of God? What does this tell you about them?

# Friday and Saturday

[**EXODUS 32:11-14**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus%2032&version=NIV)**,** [**EXODUS 33:12-23**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Exodus%2033&version=NIV)

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**Further Thoughts**

1. *Moses said to the Lord, “You have been telling me, ‘Lead these people,’ but you have not let me know whom you will send with me.”* The context of Moses’ concern is God’s instructions at the top of the chapter, “I will send an angel before you and drive out the Canaanites, Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites. Go up to the land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not go with you, because you are a stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way.” If you are not coming, then who are you sending? Moses is not fixated on the outcome; to him, God is key. What about you? Would you prefer knowing that everything will turn out right, or that God will journey with you?
2. *“You have said, ‘I know you by name and you have found favor with me.’ If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people.”* Moses wants God to continue the journey with him and so he asks to be taught to do right by God so as to continue in his favour. What about you? Do you think your relationship with God requires proper maintenance or it is all up to God? Do you think we should walk with God in his ways, or we can maintain a relationship with him in the way we choose? Is your walk with God a priority?
3. *Then Moses said to him, “If your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here. How will anyone know that you are pleased with me and with your people unless you go with us? What else will distinguish me and your people from all the other people on the face of the earth?”* Here then is the crux: God’s presence distinguishes us from the rest of the people. We are his people; we bear his name and people know about him when they look at us. God has to teach us his ways, and we have to follow his ways, and this will distinguish us from the rest of the people. God was prepared to let go of the people because if they continue to do things that are contrary to the fact that they are his people, the consequences will be dire. Do you think this is true today or does the sacrifice of Jesus mean that God will accept us no matter what we do?
4. *Then Moses said, “Now show me your glory.” And the Lord said, “I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. But,” he said, “you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.”* It is interesting that while Moses asked to see God’s glory, God talked about his goodness. How do we envisage God’s glory and what does God want to be known for (see Exodus 34:6-7)? How will this impact the way we worship God?

# Sunday

**KNOWING GOD**

*“If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people.”*

To a people who have been raised in Egypt, there is a multiplicity of gods and their presence is everywhere. Every god requires some kind of sacrifice and there were exuberant religious celebrations that included drinking and dancing in Egypt. It is not difficult to imagine these descendants of Abraham turning to familiar practices when they were wondering if Moses would ever come down from the mountain.

Clearly, for all their spectacular experiences, they did not know God to be good and faithful, and jealous, and that jealousy would be fatal to those who claim Him to be their God, who seek His Presence, if they should ever stray. So God suggested, “take what I promised to give you, but it is better that I not go with you because you don’t know how to walk with me.”

“Go up to the land flowing with milk and honey. But I will not go with you, because you are a stiff-necked people and I might destroy you on the way.”

The modern church faces a slightly different problem. Jealousy is not a very acceptable word because it connotes self-centredness and a God who destroys because he is a jealous God does not sit well in our theology. However, when we lose this biblical truth (see Exodus 34:10-17), we lose the constraints of God’s character, and we indulge ourselves in His Name. The religious practices and values of the world influence us. We worship him in name, but not in spirit and in truth. We are not focused on learning and practising his ways and instead we do as we please, and we seek to attain the glory of the world in his name. We offer him sacrifices and gifts that we think are worthy of him (often gleaned from worldly practices), rather than seek humbly to do that which pleases him and glorifies him.

“Now take off your ornaments and I will decide what to do with you,” God tells the Israelites.

Moses sees the issue clearly. If the Jews were to enjoy God’s Presence and bear His Name, then they must learn His Ways in order to continue in His favour. Just gaining the Promised Land devoid of the Presence is meaningless but if there were to be Presence, then their lifestyle must reflect his glory. The glitter of the world means nothing to God.

What is the glory of God? God himself provides the answer: “The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation.”

When you listen to Moses you will see in him a deep love for God and care for the concerns of God. Even when God proposes to destroy the people and make Moses to be a great nation instead, Moses argues that God should not allow his name to be sullied. Moses was not full of himself but full of God—and God deigned to call him friend.

How about you? Are you focused on your relationship with God or are your eyes focused on what God can do for you? The land or the Presence? The glitter or the Goodness? Your interests or His pleasure?

*“My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest. I will do the very thing you have asked, because I am pleased with you and I know you by name.”*

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.