**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

[**ROMANS 9:30-10:4**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%209&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 [ROMANS 9:30-10:4](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%209&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. *“What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; but the people of Israel, who pursued the law as the way of righteousness, have not attained their goal.”* We are familiar with this travesty: there are those who worked hard all their life but could not achieve the high standards they aimed for, while another person, blessed with talent, comes and grabs every prize. We think it is a travesty because we deeply believe that hard work should be rewarded. It is not fair for Gentiles, who are not trying to live under the Law, to be deemed righteous by God while Jews, who have been practising the Law all their life, were found wanting. Why is this thinking wrong?
2. *“Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone.”* Why is the error of the Jews a fatal error?
3. *“Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness. Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.”* “Since they did not know” is not about ignorance but rather, that they got it wrong, or more precisely, they got God wrong and unfortunately, there is no consolation prize. How would you describe this mistaken notion of God and righteousness? How is Christ the culmination of the Law?
4. Sometimes we are confronted with the accusation that the Gospel is flawed because it would have consigned many good people to Judgement simply because they could not respond to the Gospel while many who claim to be Christians cannot match their exemplary life and conduct. How would you respond to such an objection?
5. *“See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes people to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who believes in him will never be put to shame.”* Taking this as a response from God, what is the core point that God wishes to drive home to these people?

# Wednesday and Thursday

[**ROMANS 10:5-13**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%2010&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 [ROMANS 10:5-13](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%2010&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. *“Moses writes this about the righteousness that is by the law: “The person who does these things will live by them.” But the righteousness that is by faith says: “Do not say in your heart, ‘Who will ascend into heaven?’” (that is, to bring Christ down) “or ‘Who will descend into the deep?’” (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). But what does it say? “The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart”* The first quote is from Leviticus 18:5 and the context tells us that the Law was primarily about living in the Promised Land. The second quote is from Deuteronomy 30 and shows that God sought to make sure that his commands were not beyond the reach of the individual. What do you think is the point that Paul is making to help the Jews understand how they were wrong about the Law and why faith was always a necessary factor in God’s decrees?
2. *“ … that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.”* So how is the Gospel consistent with the way God had acted towards the Jews in the past?
3. *As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.”* In other words, it is never wrong to put yourself at God’s mercy. What does this tell you about God?
4. *For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”* Back to the whole question of the flawed Gospel: what is the mistaken assumption of those who disagree with God’s approach? Why is the Gospel of God a supreme testament to the goodness of God?

# Friday and Saturday

[**ROMANS 10:14-21**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%2010&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 [ROMANS 10:14-21](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans%2010&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, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?”* Although God, in his goodness, made the Gospel available to all without prejudice, he has made man (us) responsible to bring the Gospel to those who have yet to know the good news. What do you think is God’s intention in doing so?
2. *“And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”* Do you think you are sent? And do you think it is a beautiful thing to be sent?
3. *But not all the Israelites accepted the good news. For Isaiah says, “Lord, who has believed our message?” Consequently, faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.* The third characteristic of the Gospel (first, it is available to all without prejudice, second, man is responsible to share with fellow man) is that everyone has to respond to it. Why is it important to God that people choose to accept his Gospel?
4. *But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did: “Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.” Again I ask: Did Israel not understand? First, Moses says, “I will make you envious by those who are not a nation; I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding.” And Isaiah boldly says, “I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me.” But concerning Israel he says, “All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people.”* Therein is the sad truth, whether it is Israel, or the very good and exemplary person whom people say deserves God’s acknowledgement. God is the one who deserves acknowledgement and those who do not arrogate themselves against him. What do you think God should do for these people who refuse God’s grace and consider themselves worthy of God’s favour?
5. Summarise what you learn about the Gospel in this week’s passages. How would you respond?

# Sunday

**GOOD NEWS**

*“Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”*

The Gospel is available to everyone because, ‘as Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame.” God does not make any distinction because the most important factor in the Gospel is the Lord and “the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him.”

This is the God of the bible and the Gospel is a clear reflection of his goodness. He has designed it in such a way that we do not need to move heaven and earth to reap its reward. All the heavy lifting is done by him. Our past, our origins, our sins, our failures and our successes have no part in either qualifying or disqualifying us; all of us come to the Gospel on equal footing.

However, there are two other details about the Gospel that potentially limit the reach of the Gospel: firstly you have to place yourself under the Lordship of Jesus to benefit from it, and, secondly, Christians are responsible to preach the Gospel. While the Gospel is intended for everyone, these two details mean that not everyone will be saved.

Placing oneself under the Lordship of Jesus is as easy as a verbal confession but it implies a voluntary submission, a surrender of will, that strikes at the heart of our sinful nature. Preaching the Gospel, again, is as easy as a verbal testimony but yet again it requires a heart to love your fellow man to do so.

In response to our faith God gifts us the Holy Spirit, who takes our submission and our baby steps to love to bring about the true righteousness in our heart and soul.

Yet for all that God has done there are plenty of people who do not acknowledge his judgement and do not fear his wrath. In modern days many do not even acknowledge his existence. On the other hand, there are plenty of us who, although we know God and live in submission to his will, have yet to testify and help those who are plunging headlong into destruction and despair, to know God, his goodness and his Gospel.

Good intentions without faith are powerless because the power lies in God. Faith with no intent is false; it seeks God’s favour but rejects God’s righteousness. A person who has found God’s treasure but has no thought to share with their fellow man has yet to truly drink from the fountain of life and eat the bread that satisfies the hungry soul.

*“Brothers and sisters, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved. For I can testify about them that they are zealous for God, but their zeal is not based on knowledge. Since they did not know the righteousness of God and sought to establish their own, they did not submit to God’s righteousness. Christ is the culmination of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes.”*

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.