**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 2:1-12**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%202&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 [JOHN 2:1-12](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%202&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. *On the third day a wedding took place at Cana in Galilee. Jesus’ mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine was gone, Jesus’ mother said to him, “They have no more wine.” “Woman, why do you involve me?” Jesus replied. “My hour has not yet come.”* Jesus’ response could be translated literally as “What to me and to you?”, meaning “What has this to do with me and you?” They were all guests. Yet he added “My hour has not yet come.” What do you think he meant by that?
2. *His mother said to the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”* Clearly the mother knows the son and she knew that he was going to do something and instructed the servants. How would you describe the mother’s faith in her son?
3. *Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, “Fill the jars with water”; so they filled them to the brim. Then he told them, “Now draw some out and take it to the master of the banquet.” They did so, and the master of the banquet tasted the water that had been turned into wine. He did not realize where it had come from, though the servants who had drawn the water knew.* 120-180 gallons of water was no small amount seeing that there was no plumbing in those days. Yet they filled the jars to the brim. Did they know that it was wine they were bringing to the banquet master? They must have smelled the wine at some point. Yet they did their part conscientiously and remained in the background. We don’t know what they thought as they obeyed but their obedience sets an example for us all. How would you describe it?
4. *Then he called the bridegroom aside and said, “Everyone brings out the choice wine first and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now.”* Looking at the quality and quantity of the wine that Jesus created for the wedding, what can you say about how Jesus does what he sets out to do? Would you say that this is your experience of him as well?
5. *What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him. After this he went down to Capernaum with his mother and brothers and his disciples. There they stayed for a few days.* At this point, the writer tells us his intention in telling us this story. What is the purpose of the miracle (apart from saving the bridal couple from embarrassment), and what was its effect?

# Wednesday and Thursday

[**JOHN 2:13-25**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%202&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 2:13-25](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%202&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. *When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, “Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father’s house into a market!” His disciples remembered that it is written: “Zeal for your house will consume me.”* There are similarities and differences between this account of the incident at the Temple and that in the other Gospels. Additionally, this is placed at the beginning of Jesus’ ministry while the other at the end. The simplest approach (though not necessarily conclusive) is to treat them as two incidents. In doing this at the Temple in Jerusalem, what is Jesus claiming?
2. *The Jews then responded to him, “What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?”* The Jews (likely Jewish authorities, see John 1:19) asked for a sign of his authority, meaning that they understood his claim but thought it was a spurious claim. The writer, in the previous passage, tells us that there already was a sign and there will be more signs. What is the role of the signs?
3. *Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.”* Looking ahead, the writer in v22 explains that this sign was his resurrection and tells us, “After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.” How did the disciples respond when they recognised and understood the sign that Jesus was speaking about here? Was the writer implying that they had not believed previously?
4. *They replied, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?”* The Jewish authorities understood him literally (and perhaps the disciples too at this point) and ridiculed his response, without attempting to discern a deeper truth. How would you describe the attitude of these Jews which took them further and further away from faith?
5. *“Now while he was in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, many people saw the signs he was performing and believed in his name. But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all people. He did not need any testimony about mankind, for he knew what was in each person.”* Once again the writer links signs and faith but paints a negative view of the faith that these people expressed. Do you think it is because it is a response to signs or it is because of the nature of these people (that Jesus was aware of)?

# Friday and Saturday

[**JOHN 4:43-54**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%204&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 4:43-54](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=John%204&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 the two days he left for Galilee. (Now Jesus himself had pointed out that a prophet has no honor in his own country.) When he arrived in Galilee, the Galileans welcomed him. They had seen all that he had done in Jerusalem at the Passover Festival, for they also had been there. Once more he visited Cana in Galilee, where he had turned the water into wine.”* The two days were an interruption to his journey to Galilee from Judea, staying at the Samaritan village (see week 7). The writer also reminded us about the miracle (or sign) that Jesus performed at Cana. What was the reason for the welcome shown to him (see also John 2:23) when previously Galileans had taken offence at him (Jesus’ remark about prophets having no honour in his own country)?
2. *“And there was a certain royal official whose son lay sick at Capernaum. When this man heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and begged him to come and heal his son, who was close to death.”* Capernaum was about 20 miles from Cana. What made the man seek help for his son from Jesus?
3. *“Unless you people see signs and wonders,” Jesus told him, “you will never believe.” The royal official said, “Sir, come down before my child dies.” “Go,” Jesus replied, “your son will live.” The man took Jesus at his word and departed.* Do you think that Jesus meant his statement about signs and wonders as a complaint or as an observation? Is this about the positive response the people are giving to him now? Do signs and wonders help to instil faith or impede faith? The father asked Jesus to “come down”, meaning to go to the child, but Jesus merely told him to go home because his son lives. The writer tells us that the father took Jesus at his word, without having received any concrete evidence that anything was done. What can you learn about faith from this little exchange?
4. *While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, “Yesterday, at one in the afternoon, the fever left him.” Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, “Your son will live.” So he and his whole household believed.* Upon investigation the father realised that the healing took place when Jesus said to him that his son lives (this must be a miracle!) and the writer tells us that now he and his whole household believed. So there was faith at Jesus’ word and faith when he recognised that a miracle had taken place. Is one better than the other? How would this add to your understanding of your own journey of faith in Jesus?
5. *“This was the second sign Jesus performed after coming from Judea to Galilee.”* The writer now links this incident with the incident at Cana. What is the writer trying to show us in telling us about these signs (recall the purpose and effect of these signs)? Do you think signs and wonders are important in our journey of faith, or are they confined to the time when Jesus was still on earth?

# Sunday

**SIGNS OF FAITH**

*“What Jesus did here in Cana of Galilee was the first of the signs through which he revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him. … Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.” … After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.”*

John tells us that the miracle in Cana was the first of the signs through which Jesus revealed his glory and the healing of the royal official’s son was the second. Throughout Jesus’ life on earth, many supernatural acts were performed by him, the final of which was his resurrection from the dead. In all of these instances some people responded in belief, notably in the passages we are looking at, the disciples and the royal official and his family.

Harry Blamires, in his book “The Christian Mind” tells us that Christians readily accept the presence of the supernatural because God is supernatural. It would be odd for Jesus to claim to be divine but show no signs of the supernatural. Signs and wonders attest to the divine and they should be a part of a Christian’s reality in which the Holy Spirit indwells them, the Son intercedes for them, and the Father is pleased to listen to their prayers.

However, Jesus clearly tells us that faith that rests solely on signs and wonders is weak and one should move from a fascination of signs and wonders to being in awe of the man whom the signs and wonders reveal. Ultimately our journey of faith should lead us to walk with him, learn from him, trust him and obey him. Along the way we will experience signs and wonders because we are in fellowship with the Triune God but that will only be a part of the total experience of being with him.

It is a mistake to avoid signs and wonders, keeping our faith solely rational, because it denies an important dimension of the God we worship. It is also a mistake to let our faith be shaped by signs and wonders because we then miss the person behind the signs and wonders, who is much, much more. Moreover we must not deny the rationality of the life we live because this is the life that God created for us. It is not rational for the royal official to go home empty-handed save for the words of Jesus but he did. It is rational to check the circumstances of the healing and he did. In the rational and the irrational, Jesus did not fail him. Our response of faith is both rational and irrational because this is the reality of our God.

*The royal official said, “Sir, come down before my child dies.” “Go,” Jesus replied, “your son will live.” The man took Jesus at his word and departed. While he was still on the way, his servants met him with the news that his boy was living. When he inquired as to the time when his son got better, they said to him, “Yesterday, at one in the afternoon, the fever left him.” Then the father realized that this was the exact time at which Jesus had said to him, “Your son will live.” So he and his whole household believed.*

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.