**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

[**MATTHEW 27:1-26**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2027&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 [MATTHEW 27:1-26](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2027&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. In this narrative, 5 key participants are highlighted: the chief priests and elders of the people, Judas, Pilate, and the people. All of them were involved in the fate of Jesus. What part did each of them play? What do you think was the motivation of each of them?
2. A peripheral participant, Pilate’s wife, was not present but sent a note to her husband. What was her concern? What do you think is the source/cause of the dream?
3. What do you think of Jesus’ response to his circumstances—affirming the charge of being King and silent over all the other (false) accusations?
4. Do you think the whole point of the narrative was the injustice (emphasising Jesus’ innocence), the participation of a wide cross-section of people, or that Jesus (and God) allowed things to proceed to its intended end? Explain your thinking.
5. *All the people answered, “His blood is on us and on our children!”* This line is interesting because of how Matthew phrased it. The immediate meaning is that the crowd responded to Pilate and agreed with him (carelessly) that they bear the responsibility. But instead of “crowd”, Matthew used a much broader phrase, “all the people” and their reply will echo in the heart of every Christian that their response in faith to accept Jesus’ sacrifice is also a response to bear responsibility “he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities” (Isaiah 53:5). What do you think and how do you feel about it?

# Wednesday and Thursday

[**MATTHEW 27:26-44**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2027&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 [MATTHEW 27:26-44](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2027&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. Beginning from v26 where Pilate had Jesus flogged, list down what Jesus suffered from the moment he was condemned, mostly at the hands of the soldiers. From their mocking, we know that they have some inkling of the details surrounding Jesus. Although they were not ordered to do what they did, yet they did what they did. Why? How do you feel about what Jesus had to undergo?
2. How do these details measure up against David’s [Psalm 22](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+22&version=NIV)?
3. We know who he was, and we know that God cares very much for him. “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” Why did he, and God, allow this to take place?

# Friday and Saturday

[**MATTHEW 27:45-55**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2027&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 [MATTHEW 27:45-55](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2027&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. *“Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” (which means “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”).* Why did Jesus cry out in this way? What was David expressing in [Psalm 22](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Psalm+22&version=NIV)?
2. *“And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook, the rocks split and the tombs broke open. The bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs after Jesus’ resurrection and went into the holy city and appeared to many people.”* Matthew tells of dramatic events at the point of Jesus’ death, without giving further details or explanation. What message do these events convey about the death of Jesus?
3. *“Surely he was the Son of God!”* As a dramatic narrative of the events leading to and after the death of Jesus, this was clearly the conclusion the writer wants to convey (although, to be fair, it is probably a conclusion of the narrative from chapter 1 to this point). What would it mean to draw such a conclusion about Jesus? What are the implications that the writer wants to convey from the events in chapter 27? What are you most drawn to about the Jesus you read of in this chapter?

# Sunday

**THE TRIAL AND EXECUTION OF JESUS**

*“They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand. Then they knelt in front of him and mocked him. “Hail, king of the Jews!” they said. They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him on the head again and again. After they had mocked him, they took off the robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.”*

In this telling of the trial and crucifixion of Jesus, the focus is on the people involved. Only at the pivotal moment was our attention drawn to Jesus.

Judas was apparently OK with his betrayal until he realised that the Jewish leaders intended to execute Jesus. Money was likely his motive because he expressed his remorse by returning the money he was paid. Clearly he felt nothing for Jesus nor had he any semblance of faith in his teaching.

The Jewish leaders were fastidious about the use of “blood money” within their religious context but had no such qualms about plotting to execute Jesus within the walls of the Temple that Jesus had claimed to be “my Father’s house”.

Herod knew that the issue was a religious issue and had no desire to be the Jewish leaders’ executioner. The little detail about his wife’s dream tells us that God, in his kindness, decided to warn him, just as Jesus had warned Judas. But Pilate did not want to take any responsibility either way and gambled on the people choosing to free Jesus.

The crowd, to my mind, was basically clueless and, given a choice by Pilate, the Roman governor, chose against his wishes.

The soldiers were cruel bullies, enjoying the power they had to have a little fun.

These were the people that crowded the scene of Jesus’ trial and execution. Those who loved him, the women in v55, were kept at a distance, in the periphery, in this narrative.

At the centre of the narrative is the plaintive cry of Jesus as he approached his end, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” To the people within this crass show of human injustice and cruelty, it is probably a cry of despair and defeat—victory for the devil; to us who know better, it is the moment when our guilt was laid on his shoulders.

Matthew did not leave us in despair but tells us that at the moment of death, the curtain that separates us from God’s presence was torn by God himself, and the righteous rose from the dead as the world ruptured in an earthquake. Jesus’ sacrifice had triggered God’s power to accomplish God’s will to save.

It is interesting that Matthew concluded with Gentiles proclaiming the deity of Jesus.

*When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, “Surely he was the Son of God!”*

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.