**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 28:1-4, 11-15**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2028&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 28:1-4, 11-15](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2028&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 Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb.”* When you consider the disciples’ brash vows of loyalty just before the crunch came, and only the presence of these women at the tomb after the storm of the past few days, how would you describe their (the women's) display of loyalty? How about you? Would you have been at home dealing with your disappointments or would you still seek to see what you can do for the Lord?
2. *“There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.”* In many other incidents of the appearance of an angel, for example, when the angel appeared to Zechariah, efforts were made to make sure the people were not afraid, but this time the appearance of the angel was intimidating. Why?
3. *While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, telling them, “You are to say, ‘His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.’ If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble.”* Once again we see the religious elite ignoring the evidence while manufacturing their own version of the events. Why do they do this? What do you think is the state of their heart and soul?
4. *“So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day.”* It is interesting that the account tells us that “some of the guards” went and reported to the chief priests. Clearly the guards were not hired by the chief priests but by the governor. Not everyone was corrupted and so the disciples were able to learn what happened. On the other hand, a neutral person can also say that it is equally likely that the guards' version was the truth and the story about them being bribed to tell a different version was made up by the disciples. What do you think?

# Wednesday and Thursday

[**MATTHEW 28:5-10**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2028&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 28:5-10](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2028&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. *The angel said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples: ‘He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him.’ Now I have told you.”* The angel came to open and show the women the empty tomb and to deliver a message for the disciples, emphasising that a resurrection had taken place. There is a clear emphasis that death had taken place and resurrection thereafter. Why is this important (rather than just, “he is alive”)?
2. *“So the women hurried away from the tomb, afraid yet filled with joy, and ran to tell his disciples.”* “Afraid yet filled with joy” was the description of the state of the women. How would you have responded if you were among the women?
3. *Suddenly Jesus met them. “Greetings,” he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me.”* The message was already passed on to the women and they were hurrying to tell the disciples. Why did Jesus decide to meet them at this point? What was his intention? What do you learn about Jesus from this?

# Friday and Saturday

[**MATTHEW 28:16-20**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2028&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 28:16-20](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2028&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. *“Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.”* From the accounts of Luke and John we know that many things happened between the discovery of the empty tomb and the ascension. Matthew chose to only focus on the meeting on the mountain telling us, “When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.” Worship would imply deity and so doubt is likely about the divinity of Jesus, surely a big hurdle for the monotheistic Jews to overcome. Why do you think Matthew deemed it important to tell us that not everyone was on the same page at that time on the mountain?
2. *Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.”* Jesus however clearly claimed divine authority. Once again, we see that it was important to Matthew to highlight this: In the face of doubt by some, Jesus asserted his divine authority. Do you think it makes a difference, to know that Jesus resurrected and to believe that Jesus has divine authority?
3. *“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”* Arising from his claim to divine authority (“Therefore”), Jesus commanded his disciples to build his church, a body of people who will worship him as they did. Why is his claim to divine authority necessary? The commission is “to make disciples and teach them to obey him”, rather than to “share the good news to everyone, calling on them to respond in faith”. Do you think there is a difference? Do you think as a church we are taking seriously the commission that Jesus has given to us?
4. *“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”* This tells us that the commission enjoys Jesus’ full support and the commission stands until he comes again. Do you think the commission is personal—directed to every individual disciple—or corporate—directed at the church? How would you describe your attitude towards the commission? What do you think it means in practical terms that the commission receives Jesus’ full and permanent support, or do you think that this declaration of support is not specific to the commission but intended for all individual Christians?

# Sunday

**THE GREAT COMMISSION**

*“Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted.”*

Whenever we are told of the Great Commission, specifically Matthew 28:19-20, we seldom imagine that it was delivered to a group of poorly educated men some of whom even doubted at that point in time. However, it is important that we realise this, and Matthew made sure that we do not think that everyone was all fired up and ready to conquer the world with the Gospel.

When we realise this truth we will understand that the Great Commission is about what our Lord (“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me”, something we tend to skip over as well) will accomplish through the Holy Spirit (see Acts 1:8). That we are where we are today is a testament to our Lord and King, the Holy Spirit, and God the Father of us all.

The modern church is busy with strategies and training, trying to get Christians to go and preach the Gospel and usher people into the kingdom, often ignoring the work of making disciples and teaching them to obey our Lord.

Rather than using Matthew’s account to drive Christians to go and preach the Gospel, we should use these words of our Lord to fortify our faith in him, to trust him to use us as his channels. Rather than focusing on persuading believers to do the Lord’s work, we should be helping believers to be disciples and teaching them to obey everything that our Lord has commanded us all, because it is this that will allow us all to be channels of his blessing wherever we are, wherever the Church is, because our Lord promises that wherever we may be, he will be with us, for all time.

*“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

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.