**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

**MATTHEW 5:1-4**

1. Take time to be quiet, until you can focus on being in the presence of God. Read the text until you can understand what it says. If you have any initial thoughts, write them down.
2. VV1-2: Jesus saw the crowds, he went up on a mountainside and “he began to teach them”. Mark 6 tells of another incident: “When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.” What is it that the crowd lacks and what is Jesus trying to achieve by teaching? Do you have a similar awareness of the spiritual needs of the people around you?
3. V3: When we say “This person is truly blessed” usually we are not talking about a person’s achievements, or his wealth. What do you think Jesus meant by “blessed”? What does a blessed person enjoy?
4. What do you understand to be a person who is "poor in spirit"?
5. Why does a person mourn?
6. In terms of our relationship with God, what does it mean to be a person who is poor in spirit and a person who mourns? Why does Jesus say such a person is blessed?
7. Write down a prayer in response.

# Tuesday

**MATTHEW 5:1-4**

1. Take time to be quiet, until you can focus on being in the presence of God. If you have any initial thoughts, write them down.
2. Read the passage. Review the answers/thoughts you wrote down yesterday. Is there anything that you need to respond to?
3. Review the past day. What concerns/joys/events occupy your heart?
4. Write down a prayer in response.

# Wednesday

**MATTHEW 5:5-7**

1. Take time to be quiet, until you can focus on being in the presence of God. Read the text until you can understand what it says. If you have any initial thoughts, write them down.
2. Meekness connotes a lack of self-pride and expresses itself in being teachable and having a willingness to put others first. It is patient under suffering, calm and controlled in dealing with others, often described as gentle. How would you rate yourself on the meekness scale ? Why is this so?
3. “Righteousness” is often only described as without sin but it is truly the opposite of sin. For example, if “murder” is sin, then righteousness is heal, redeem, revive, create, grow. What would righteousness be in terms of “bearing false witness”, “adultery” and “coveting”?
4. To be in a position to show mercy, you have to be in the position of power, either by strength or by being legally or morally right. What would you want to achieve if you have the power? What does it mean to show mercy?
5. What does hungering and thirsting imply? Would you hunger and thirst to be meek, righteous and merciful?
6. Write down a prayer in response.

# Thursday

**MATTHEW 5:5-7**

1. Take time to be quiet, until you can focus on being in the presence of God. If you have any initial thoughts, write them down.
2. Read the passage. Review the answers/thoughts you wrote down yesterday. Is there anything that you need to respond to?
3. Review the past day. What concerns/joys/events occupy your heart?
4. Write down a prayer in response.

# Friday

**MATTHEW 5:8-12**

1. Take time to be quiet, until you can focus on being in the presence of God. Read the text until you can understand what it says. If you have any initial thoughts, write them down.
2. Pure connotes uncontaminated. The pure in heart is not double-minded nor harbours ulterior motives. There is integrity. Would you say you are usually pure in heart? Why do you say so?
3. If something is the right thing to do, but you do not want to do it, should you nonetheless do so? Why?
4. “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.” The two most glorious acts of God are creation and salvation and both reveal the heart of God who glories in creating, building, redeeming, reconciling, restoring. Peacemakers share that same heart and rightly will be called “children of God”. Do your words and conduct tear down or build up? Do you share God’s heart in building bridges or are you focused on keeping yourself separate and distinct?
5. In complete contrast are those who seek to destroy that which is righteous. To those who remain righteous even in the face of persecution, Jesus specially recognises them and calls them out for special blessing. It is not easy to not conform and maintain righteous behaviour in the face of opposition but Jesus specifically says you are blessed if you do. Are you in situations where the pressure is to conform?
6. Write down a prayer in response.

# Saturday

**MATTHEW 5:8-12**

1. Take time to be quiet, until you can focus on being in the presence of God. If you have any initial thoughts, write them down.
2. Read the passage. Review the answers/thoughts you wrote down yesterday. Is there anything that you need to respond to?
3. Review the past day. What concerns/joys/events occupy your heart?
4. Write down a prayer in response.

# Sunday

**THE MAN AFTER GOD’S HEART**

We think of righteousness as uncontaminated by bad behaviour. Or even righteousness as doing the right thing. But Jesus teaches that righteousness is the God-shape of the heart. He describes to us the kind of people who are blessed, meaning that these are the people who are loved by God; with whom he is pleased. At heart they are humble, they bemoan their sinfulness, they patiently endure even as they long to be righteous. They don't clutch at their rights or abuse them but are gracious and forgiving. They are people of integrity, not hypocritical or false. They are people who are hospitable, warm and generous, seeking to bring peace, to make peace.

Even though they may suffer for being such people, they are blessed because God upholds them.

The world teaches otherwise. Such people are weak; they will be servants, not masters. They will never be wealthy or successful or amount to very much. The question we face is whether we prefer the commendation of the world or the commendation of God.

Transformation of heart however is an ongoing process and in the interim there will always be situations where there is a dichotomy between our unsanctified heart and the right actions that the Bible teaches. In such times we must allow right actions to lead us to the right heart. There will be other times when the Word so inspires us and our heart is resolved to do what is good and right. Here the sanctified heart leads the way to right actions.

The path to righteousness is difficult as it involves moving the centre of our being from self to God and our neighbour. But that is a journey all of us must embrace.

May all of us be blessed to hear the sweet voice of our Father affirming us and declaring his pleasure in who we are.

1. Take time to be quiet, until you can focus on being in the presence of God. If you have any initial thoughts, write them down.
2. Review the answers/thoughts you wrote down in the past week. What conclusion can you draw from the passages of Scripture you have been considering? Is there anything that you need to respond to?
3. Read the short sharing above. Does it add anything to your conclusion?
4. Review the past week. What concerns/joys/events occupy your heart?
5. Write down a prayer in response.