**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

**2 SAMUEL 11:1-27**

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. The passage is long but easy to read and digest. If you have any initial thoughts, write them down.
2. *David the king committed adultery with the wife of Uriah Heep. A pregnancy occurred. He tried to cover the evidence of his adultery by getting Uriah Heep to sleep with his wife but the loyal soldier would not. So the king arranged to have him killed and when the deed was done, David took Bathsheba as his wife.* How could the king have avoided the first sin after seeing Bathsheba bathing herself? Could he have responded differently? Why didn’t he?
3. *“I am pregnant.”* What are the options available to the king when he received the news? Is it a mitigation for his choices that he was trying to protect Bathsheba? What should he have done?
4. *“The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, and my commander Joab and my lord’s men are camped in the open country. How could I go to my house to eat and drink and make love to my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!”* There is a clear contrast between the king and the soldier. What did each person care about? Why couldn’t the king recognise the state of his own heart at this point?
5. *“Put Uriah out in front where the fighting is fiercest. Then withdraw from him so he will be struck down and die.”* This was David’s response. Notice that at this point the consequence has reached beyond the king and his adulterous lover, to the unborn child, the loyal soldier and the army commander. How could this happen? Why did David choose to escalate his adultery to murder? How did he persuade himself that this is the best option?
6. *“But the thing David had done displeased the Lord.”* Why is this matter God’s business?
7. The heart is desperately wicked, even within seemingly righteous people loved by God. At so many points David had opportunity to do the right thing but instead he chose to dig an even deeper hole for himself. Jesus teaches us to pray, “Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil.” Write down a prayer in response.

# Tuesday

**2 SAMUEL 11:1-27**

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

**2 SAMUEL 12:1-31**

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. The passage is long but easy to read and digest. If you have any initial thoughts, write them down.
2. Following from the previous chapter it is obvious that Nathan’s story is about David’s adultery. The story however is quite generic about a man who has plenty but continues to rob the poor. In what other scenarios can we be the guilty party in Nathan’s story?
3. *“You are the man!*” How is it that David could see and respond with anger and disgust to the sin of the man in Nathan’s story but could not see his own sin?
4. *“Why did* ***you despise the word of the Lord*** *by doing what is evil in his eyes? … Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because* ***you despised me*** *and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.”* David’s actions were not directed against God yet God took it personally. How is this so?
5. *“Now, therefore...”* Nathan prophesied that there will be further consequences to David’s sin. The last few verses of the chapter showed that David had earned the contempt of his army commander, and cheapened his kingship. What are some natural consequences of David’s actions, from adultery to dereliction of duty to murder? What are spiritual consequences?
6. *“The Lord loved him; and because the Lord loved him, he sent word through Nathan the prophet to name him Jedidiah.“* The marriage was born out of adultery and murder but God did not consider everything that resulted from the marriage as evil. He even loved the child subsequently conceived. What can you learn from this about God?
7. Write down a prayer in response.

# Thursday

**2 SAMUEL 12:1-31**

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

**PSALM 51:1-19**

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. David’s sin was pure evil: he arranged for a man to be murdered to save his own reputation (and that of his partner-in-sin) and ultimately married the murdered man’s wife. Yet he could write this poem as a prayer to God for forgiveness. Do you think God was right to forgive David?
3. What attitudes did David get right, in this prayer for forgiveness?
4. What did David get right about who God is? What was the basis of David’s plea for forgiveness?
5. As king, David promised to return to his twin roles as teacher of God’s truth and as in ensuring the continued success of the nation. In our contrition over our sin, how can we look forward, beyond the circumstances of our wrongdoing?
6. The consequences of David’s sin remained (forgiveness does not mean the removal of consequences) and his later years brought him much grief. But God accepted his prayer and forgave him and moved forward in his relationship with him. God is not one to hold a grudge or a hurt. How do you feel about this?
7. How about you? Would you likewise forgive yourself and others?
8. Write down a prayer in response.

# Saturday

**PSALM 51:1-19**

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

**SIN AND FORGIVENESS**

*For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. Matthew 15:19*

Not many of us would have murdered a man because we slept with his wife, but Jesus tells us that we all have that capacity in us. Society’s norms and laws, the lack of opportunity and capacity restrict us but when you have no such restrictions because you are king, in a country where war and death is the normal reality, the ugliness of the heart is on full display. But God did not allow David that excuse. He applied David’s own standards and David himself found himself guilty. That is the sad state of man.

How could this happen? We have asked the same question on many occasions. Yet somehow the truth that the heart is desperately evil catches us by surprise.

Perhaps it is time we stop being naive and start listening to what the Bible tells us. David, beloved of God, man after God’s heart, writer of so many poems that captivate our soul — after committing adultery with a man’s wife, David murdered him and then married his widow.

*“The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?” Jeremiah 17:9 (NKJV)*

Perhaps it is time we understand why Jesus teaches us to pray: *Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us. And lead us not into temptation. But deliver us from evil. (Luke 11:4, adding the last phrase from Matthew.)* We desperately need to be vigilant and seek God’s protection to guard our hearts.

Yet, as so often is the case in the Bible, the story of David’s evil finds redemption in God. The blight of his sin would stain the rest of David’s days but in the birth of Solomon, named Jedidiah (Beloved of God) by God, hope was restored to Israel. God chooses to love and that choice is our hope and redemption.

*"The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness” Exodus 34:6.*

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.