**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

[**GENESIS 18:1-15**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%2018&version=NIV)

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. vv1-5: Do you think Abraham knew that these men were not ordinary men? How could he have known?
3. vv3-8: Clearly Abraham knew that they were on their way to some place else. Why all the fuss to show hospitality?
4. Then one of them said, “I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son.” In chapter 15 the issue of his heir was raised and God had promised him a son. Now comes the good news that it will be next year. Do you think the LORD had intended all along to tell Abraham during this visit or the news was a reward for his hospitality?
5. Abraham took the news for what it is (there was no record of any reaction) but Sarah laughed when she heard. *“Is anything too hard for the Lord? I will return to you at the appointed time next year, and Sarah will have a son.”* What did Abraham and Sarah learn about the LORD that day?
6. *“Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it”* (Hebrews 13:2). It would appear that Abraham had a sense of who these men were as it would be unusual to bow low to the ground before strangers (although interestingly Lot did the same). But the honour and respect that Abraham offered, his humble demeanour, not expecting anything except the pleasure of giving, was well received. Perhaps this is something we do well to learn in our own approach to God. Write down a prayer in response.

# Tuesday

[**GENESIS 18:1-15**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%2018&version=NIV)

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

[**GENESIS 18:16-33**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%2018&version=NIV)

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. vv17-19: What was God’s intention for Abraham? What was Abraham to do? Why was the outcome of God’s promises tied to his family “doing what is right and just”? What do you learn about what it means to be a Christian from these thoughts of God?
3. *“Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?”* For Abraham to *“direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just”* he has to learn the way of the Lord. As you learn the way of the Lord as he reveals himself in the Bible, do you have the intention to “keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just”?
4. *“Far be it from you to do such a thing—to kill the righteous with the wicked, treating the righteous and the wicked alike. Far be it from you! Will not the Judge of all the earth do right?”* Abraham shared with God his thoughts on justice, thoughts that very likely we have held on many occasions, that God must spare those we deem righteous as he punishes the wicked. Romans 3 however tells us that no one is righteous and all have sinned and fallen short of God. Yet God was gracious towards Abraham. What do we learn about God in this exchange?
5. Ultimately the Gospel is the story of how for the sake of one righteous man, Jesus Christ, God provided a way for the rest of humanity to be saved from his wrath. God is not the raging and consuming fire seeking to destroy but the compassionate heart of one who seeks to save. Write down a prayer in response.

# Thursday

[**GENESIS 18:16-33**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%2018&version=NIV)

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

[**GENESIS 19:1-38**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%2019&version=NIV)

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. This is a long passage but as a narrative it is quite easy to follow. If you have any initial thoughts, write them down.
2. *“We are going to destroy this place. The outcry to the Lord against its people is so great that he has sent us to destroy it.”* What do you think of this direct act of judgement? What is the source of this outcry? What do you learn about God?
3. *“When he hesitated, the men grasped his hand and the hands of his wife and of his two daughters and led them safely out of the city, for the Lord was merciful to them.”* Why was there no sense of urgency in Lot and his family?
4. *“Then the Lord rained down burning sulfur on Sodom and Gomorrah—from the Lord out of the heavens. Thus he overthrew those cities and the entire plain, destroying all those living in the cities—and also the vegetation in the land.”* When you consider this act of judgement, utterly destroying the cities and inhabitants, what do you learn about God? How does that compare with the LORD who discussed justice with Abraham in the previous chapter?
5. *“Let’s get our father to drink wine and then sleep with him and preserve our family line through our father.”* When you read the little epilogue in vv30-38, of how Lot’s daughters committed incest with their father to bear his children, what do you think of Lot’s life, who had chosen to settle in the rich plain of the Jordan and pitched his tent near Sodom (see Genesis 13)?
6. Abraham challenged the LORD over his choices in meting out justice and the LORD decided to be merciful to Lot. But the choices of Lot shaped his life and though he escaped God’s judgement by the skin of his teeth, he did not escape the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah. Write down a prayer in response.

# Saturday

[**GENESIS 19:1-38**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Genesis%2019&version=NIV)

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 WAGES OF SIN

It is hard to decide whether this week is about God’s mercy, God’s wrath or Lot’s choices. But perhaps, in the wonderful way Scripture puts these matters side-by-side, the truth is that we cannot separate them from each other. They all have a hand in determining reality.

We are not used to God’s wrath and in the many brutal accounts in the Old Testament, we find it difficult to justify the killing of even women and children. The descriptions in Genesis 19 at least give us some idea of what prompts God to “cleanse the land”. My only advice is that we not be too quick to judge “he who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all” on matters of mercy.

But if God’s wrath is fully warranted (and surely it is many times over), then mercy is man’s only hope and God reveals to Abraham that he is indeed a just and merciful God, far more than Abraham’s idealistic ideas of justice. There were not 10 righteous men that day to avert the disaster but he went out of his way to save Lot and his family, even granting his request to spare Zoar.

But while God spared Lot, sin did not loosen its grip on him and his family. It is difficult to imagine the horror when your father offered you and your sister to the crowd bent on rape, or when your daughters commit incest with you drunk. But this was the horror of Lot’s family and unless God killed off everyone, sin will continue on.

And so when you look a little deeper you see that it is about sin—how sin causes God to do the necessary, and how sin ruined a family. But in that little, almost casual announcement about an impending birth (is anything too hard for the Lord?) that set off the long game that culminated in Jesus, the one righteous man, trading himself for the world, we catch a glimpse of how far God was willing to go to be just yet merciful.

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. Do they add anything to your own conclusions?
4. Review the past week. What concerns/joys/events occupy your heart?
5. Write down a prayer in response.