**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

[**MARK 2:1-12**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=mark+2&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. *“... and he preached the word to them.”* A large crowd came. Teachers of the law were there. Some people brought a paralysed man to be healed. This was probably early in Jesus’ ministry. How was Jesus perceived at that point? Who do people think he is?
3. *“When Jesus saw their faith…”* What do you think Jesus saw in these people who found a way to get their friend to the feet of Jesus, that he attributed to faith? *“... he said to the paralyzed man, “Son, your sins are forgiven.””* Do you think this is an indication that our faith can bless another person? How so?
4. *“Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk’?”* No one can tell whether the first statement came to pass, but everyone will see if the second statement fails. Which do you think is easier to say? In making both the statements, what is Jesus challenging the crowd to deal with in their perception of him?
5. What about you? Which aspect of Jesus challenges your faith the most? Why? What do you think Jesus wants to be to you in your life?
6. Write down a prayer in response.

# Tuesday

[**MARK 2:1-12**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=mark+2&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

[**MARK 2:13-17**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=mark+2&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. The pattern repeats: a large crowd, and Jesus began to teach them. Clearly the crowd wants to listen and Jesus wants to teach. Why do you think this is so? Do you think people around you want to learn the truth of God?
3. *“While Jesus was having dinner at Levi’s house, many tax collectors and sinners were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him.”* When Jesus called Levi to follow him, many others also responded, fellow tax collectors and sinners (those shunned by the religious society). Why do you think there was such a response from these people to Jesus, who would usually steer clear of religion? How does Jesus appear to them? What is the perception of your friends about Jesus? Do you think they are avoiding religion or Jesus or they are the same?
4. *“Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?”* Once again the question of perceptions: What do these Pharisees want him to be? Yet in inviting Levi the tax-collector to follow him, what does Jesus choose to be?
5. *“It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”* In Mark 1, we are told that Jesus proclaimed *“The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”* In teaching the crowd about God, calling Levi the tax-collector to follow him, pronouncing forgiveness on the paralysed man, what is Jesus doing? What does the religious establishment prefer him to be doing? Do you think “this Jesus” would be interesting to your friends?
6. There is a difference between “playing religion” and being truly religious. One obeys the rules and values of the establishment while the other obeys God. Which are you? Write down a prayer in response.

# Thursday

[**MARK 2:13-17**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=mark+2&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

[**MARK 2:18-28**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=mark+2&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.

*Fasting and Sabbath. Behind the issues raised is the question of following the Law of Moses, which is the basis of Jewish practice, as required by God.*

1. Jesus implied that the presence of the bridegroom is a game changer. Who is the bridegroom?
2. The new reality requires new structures/rules, otherwise the mismatch will cause conflicts. What is new here, and what is the old?
3. *“The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”* The rule was for the good of man, rather than man was created to obey the rule. Was Jesus setting aside the command to keep the Sabbath holy? What do you think he means?
4. Jesus taught that a radical change has taken place with his coming onto the scene. The old notions of spirituality, of being restrained by rules and regulations and constrained by harsh discipline and denial, will give way to a new freedom under his lordship. Is your spiritual life characterised by the old or the new?
5. Write down a prayer in response.

# Saturday

[**MARK 2:18-28**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=mark+2&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

##### A NEW REALITY

Right from the outset Jesus had to battle being pigeonholed. He is not there to teach people how to be better; how to be more compliant with the Law. Something new has happened. The bridegroom is here. A new reality has arrived. But people keep making reference to the old.

At the centre of this new reality is forgiveness and Jesus quickly got people asking, “Who can forgive sins but God alone?” Exactly. But who can say to this man “Get up, take your mat and walk” and make it happen?

The currency of this new reality is faith, and so we are told, when he saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

Jesus sought to help people understand that this new reality means that the old paradigm must change. When forgiveness can be offered to a person who is just lying there, paralysed, not having done anything yet, then the old paradigm of law and punishment, sacrifices and offerings, has been preempted. But it is a change that is very difficult to accept because we have long accepted the notion that man must be restrained; if set free sin will abound. And if man has sinned, then he must pay for his sin. Nothing can change that.

And this is what we need to ask ourselves too, whether we are guilty of pouring new wine into old wineskins. Whether our spirituality is characterised by harshness and discipline; whether our Christian faith is a joyless restraining from sin rather than a passionate expression of love and righteousness; and whether church is listening to a series of things we must do and we are taught to constantly confess our failure to do so.

If this is the case for you, then it is time to listen to Jesus: “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.”

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.