[**TIME ALONE WITH GOD**](http://timealonewithgod.org/)

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

[**LUKE 1:1-25**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=lk+1&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. *“With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught.”* Note the phrases “I myself”, “carefully investigated everything from the beginning”, “orderly account”, “so that you may know the certainty”. What can you say about Luke’s intentions in writing his Gospel? Immediately after saying so, Luke began to write about angels’ visitation, miraculous births and prophecy—events that are hard to believe! Why would he do this?
3. Why does Luke emphasise the fact that Zechariah and Elizabeth were good, righteous people, and that it would be quite impossible for them to have a child now? *“Do not be afraid, Zechariah; your prayer has been heard.”* What do you think of the fact that even at this age Zechariah still prayed for a child? *“He will be a joy and delight to you.”* What do you think that this was the first thing that the angel told Zechariah about his child-to-be, before telling him about God’s plans for him? What were God’s plans for him?
4. *“How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is well along in years.”* What is Zechariah’s problem? Do you think being made dumb is punishment for his question or a sign that indeed he and his wife will be capable of siring a child? Was the conception and birth of John a miracle?
5. *“The Lord has done this for me,” she said. “In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people.”* Was John an answer to the prayer of a righteous man, God’s intervention in human life to further his own plans, or his generosity and mercy towards Elizabeth as she said? Write down a prayer in response to God as revealed here.

# Tuesday

[**LUKE 1:1-25**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=lk+1&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

[**LUKE 1:26-38**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=lk+1&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. *“Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you.”* We are told nothing about Mary prior to this, except that she was a virgin; not even a general statement that she was a righteous woman. Yet the angel greeted her as one highly favoured. How is it that she is highly favoured? Do you think Mary could have been any of the many virgins in the area?
3. *“You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.”* After this announcement Mary asked, *“How will this be, since I am a virgin?”* Do you think this was essentially the same problem of disbelief that Zechariah had? From the angel’s answer *(“The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God”)*, what would you understand Mary’s question to be? What do you think are the significant details of the angel’s answer?
4. *“He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob’s descendants forever; his kingdom will never end.”* Please refer to 1 Chronicles 17:10-13 (a passage we looked at in 2021 Week 33). This is the fulfillment of God’s covenant with David. Do you think Mary would have known this? *“For no word from God will ever fail.”* What is the angel reassuring her about in the wake of her question about her virginity?
5. *“I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.”* What kind of situation do you think Mary is submitting herself to, having a child with no father? How would you have responded? Why? (Perhaps this is a good place to revisit question 2.)
6. Write down a prayer in response.

# Thursday

[**LUKE 1:26-38**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=lk+1&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

[**LUKE 1:39-56**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=lk+1&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. *“Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month.” (Luke 1:36)* Mary took the hint from the angel and visited Elizabeth. What happened when they met? Who was behind all this commotion?
3. *In a loud voice she exclaimed: “Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!”* Describe the relationship between Elizabeth, her child, Mary and her child, that Elizabeth (the much older relative) was proclaiming when filled with the Holy Spirit.
4. In her song, what did Mary praise God for? List out the different aspects mentioned. What impresses you the most?
5. *“Mary stayed with Elizabeth for about three months and then returned home.”* What do you think it means to Mary to be able to stay with Elizabeth for the 3 months (Elizabeth would be delivering soon)? Why do you think she did not stay for the whole of her pregnancy? What do you think was happening to Joseph at this time (see Matthew 1:18-25)?
6. *The angel answered, “For no word from God will ever fail.” “I am the Lord’s servant,” Mary answered. “May your word to me be fulfilled.”* Write down a prayer in response.

# Saturday

[**LUKE 1:39-56**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=lk+1&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

**NO WORD FROM GOD WILL EVER FAIL**

Two pregnancies, one received with joy, the other accepted in submission.

God is often multi-layered in his intentions. Elizabeth’s story is fundamentally a story of God's kindness to a pious couple who had been childless. *“He will be a joy and delight to you”* reflects the grace and generosity of God's heart. At the same time, this child is also God's messenger to announce the beginning of God's plan for the reconciliation that was prophesied by Malachi just before the years of silence commenced. *“Many will rejoice because of his birth”*—God's grace and generosity towards a nation and ultimately, the world.

For Mary, the news was daunting: I am a virgin; I am betrothed to Joseph; what are you asking of me? The angel was quick to reassure her that no one else is involved; the child will be a miracle child without a father, born of the Holy Spirit. Even then, to be with child before her own marriage is finalised carries the stain of scandal. What would Joseph think?

In answer to Mary's question, the angel told her as a conclusion, after revealing that God’s covenant with David will be fulfilled in the child, *“For no word from God will ever fail,”* basically reassuring Mary, ”Don't worry, this is the word of the Lord! Everything will be alright.” Mary's response, *“May your word to me be fulfilled”* was to submit to God's word that will never fail. *“I am the Lord’s servant,” she said.* Nothing more, nothing less. No fuss, no bargaining.

We all know the rest of the story, but for Mary, waiting with Elizabeth for Joseph’s response to her pregnancy, this is a test of faith that the Lord, in his gentle mercy, provided Elizabeth and Zechariah to both shelter and encourage her. Only they were in the position to understand and believe her.

No word from God will ever fail. This was the assertion by the angel. As we wait in the midst of situations that are yet to be resolved, will we be inspired by the faith of Mary, blessed mother of our Lord, and submit to the sure word of God, as all God’s servants should?

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.