[**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

[**JOHN 15:1-4**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=john+15&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. *I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.* This is the relationship between the Father and the Son. What is the Son’s role, and what is the Father’s role?
3. *“He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.”* Clearly what the Father does is out of love for the Son. What is the Gardener’s objective? Remember that this is a metaphor and not a description of what God does. What is the point of the metaphor?
4. *“You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.”* In the disciples’ case, there is no danger of being removed for not bearing any fruit but they must take care. *“Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.”* Try as you may, what you produce with your own resources is not the fruit God desires. What must you then be careful to do?
5. Are you careful of your relationship with Jesus the Vine? Write down a prayer in response.

# Tuesday

[**JOHN 15:1-4**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=john+15&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

[**JOHN 15:5-8**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=john+15&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. *I am the vine; you are the branches.* In the work of fruit-bearing, what is the role of the vine and the role of the branches? The fruit is the fruit of the vine (not a variety of fruit associated with the branches): what do you think is the fruit of Jesus the Vine?
3. *“If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned.”* Note the phrase “you are like a branch” meaning that once again we are dealing with a metaphor. If you are like a branch that is good for nothing else except to be burned, what situation are you in? What will result in you continuing to be in such a situation? Can you think of practical situations where this can be applied? What can the vine do about it when you have detached yourself from it? What is Jesus saying that all branches must be mindful of?
4. *“If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.”* What is this promise about in this context? Why is this truth important to us?
5. The word “remain” recurs many times. The ESV translates it as “abide”. From the whole chapter, list out what Jesus associates with “remaining”. From all that is said, what do you think are the important ingredients in our “remaining in him”? In practical terms how are these “ingredients” expressed in your daily relationship with Jesus?
6. *“This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”* What is the mark of a disciple of Jesus? Look back at your answer in question 2 about the nature of “fruit”. Would you say this is the true mark of a disciple or would you change your definition?
7. *“If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.”* Write down a prayer in response.

# Thursday

[**JOHN 15:5-8**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=john+15&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

[**JOHN 15:9-17**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=john+15&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. *“As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commands and remain in his love.”* How does this further clarify what “remaining in him” is about?
3. *“If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love.”* What are his commands? *“You are my friends if you do what I command.”* What is the significance of Jesus regarding us as his friends?
4. *“This is my command: Love each other.”* Wouldn’t this be a subset of the more general command “Love your neighbour as yourself”? Why is Jesus limiting his command to loving his disciples? In doing so is he freeing us from the obligation to love our neighbour?
5. *“I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.”* Jesus tells us that when we remain in his love we will be filled with his joy and that joy will be full. Write down a prayer in response.

# Saturday

[**JOHN 15:9-17**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=john+15&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

**LOVE ONE ANOTHER**

**Jesus is the Vine and the Father is the Gardener.** Looking at the separation of roles, it seems to me that Jesus’ role as the Vine is to welcome all who desire to be a part of him. The Church is not to play God to determine who is saved or who is not. All are welcome who wish to come. We should take people at their word.

It is the Father, who, as the Gardener, will take action and weed out the false from the true. No one will enter the Kingdom of God on false pretenses. *“He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit.”* For the rest, *“he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.”* Many preachers focus on the fact that pruning is a painful process. Whether painful or not, God desires to cut away that which is superfluous and unnecessary, as the writer to the Hebrews writes, *“let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles,”* so that we will be even more fruitful. While we as branches are affected, it is God who takes the lead.

**Jesus is the Vine and we are the Branches.** What is very clear is that if we do not belong to the Vine, if we are not a part of the Vine, then there is no way we will be fruitful. The Gardener will at some point remove us.

However, Jesus went a step further and describes Branches who are attached, who are considered a part of the Vine, but do not “remain” in him. These “are like” those dead branches. Jesus does not categorically state that they will eventually detach from the Vine completely, but it is not a situation to be complacent over. The many “if” statements tell us that “remaining in him” is crucial to our health as branches.

**Remain in me.** But how do we “remain” in him? Very clearly Jesus says, “If you remain in me and I in you”, “If you remain in me and my words remain in you”, “Now remain in my love. If you keep my commands you will remain in my love.”

These statements of his tell us very clearly that the key aspect of our remaining in him is that he is in our lives and shapes our lives. “I in you”, “my words remain in you”, and “keep my commands” leaves us in no doubt that we are to so walk with Jesus that who he is influences and shapes us.

The key to our understanding of his vision for us is in the command that he explicitly gives: “Love one another”. It is significant that he did not make “be righteous”, or “keep yourself pure”, or even “love God” or “love me” as the cornerstone of what he desires of us. This is not to say that all these are now set aside or rendered secondary issues. It is to say that this is the key: love each other. Love then the mark of a disciple of Christ. Love in essence is the fruit of the Vine. Each expression of the fruit is unique to each Branch—our Creator reveals his creativity in diversity—yet clearly, each fruit is the fruit of the Vine.

As we let his love and his word fill us, and we embrace his command to love one another, the resources of the vine flow—the power of prayer, the love of our Lord, the fruit of the Holy Spirit—so that our lives will indeed be fruitful—fruit that will last—fruit that glorifies God.

*“This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”*

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.