[**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

[**MALACHI 1:1-5**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=malachi+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. *“I have loved you,” says the Lord. “But you ask, ‘How have you loved us?’”* The use of the present perfect tense indicates that we are talking about actions in the past. God is not declaring his love but saying that he has been truly loving towards Israel. God’s love is not a concept or principle or mere words, but grounded in actions. Are you aware of how God has demonstrated his love towards you? Write down some recent examples.
3. *“Was not Esau Jacob’s brother?” declares the Lord. “Yet I have loved Jacob, but Esau I have hated.”* Once again, God is talking about actions, not feelings. Esau (Edom) experienced no special treatment, unlike Jacob (Israel). Edom’s sin was punished (as deserved) but Israel received mercy (undeserved). Do you accept that God’s grace and mercy towards you as a Christian is a reflection of his love?
4. *Edom may say, “Though we have been crushed, we will rebuild the ruins.” But this is what the Lord Almighty says: “They may build, but I will demolish.”* Ultimately this is the sin of Edom: arrogance towards God. There is no repentance, no soul-searching, no attempt to understand why God has chosen to crush them. Perhaps this is an apt description of the sin of the world today. *“You will see it with your own eyes and say, ‘Great is the Lord—even beyond the borders of Israel!’”* But God will triumph in the end. How should Edom have responded instead? What about you?
5. As you look at your own Christian life, do you think God treats you as he treated Jacob or Esau? God says he has loved you. Are you asking “how have you loved me” or are you well aware of the truth of God’s love towards you? Write down a prayer in response.

# Tuesday

[**MALACHI 1:1-5**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=malachi+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

[**MALACHI 1:6-9**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=malachi+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. *“If I am a father, where is the honor due me? If I am a master, where is the respect due me?” says the Lord Almighty.* How do you express honour and respect for God: in word or action, or both? Do you think what you do befits the God you know?
3. *“When you offer blind animals for sacrifice, is that not wrong? When you sacrifice lame or diseased animals, is that not wrong? Try offering them to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you?” says the Lord Almighty.* Do you think God is aware or cares about what you give or do in his name? In what way? In the things that we do for God or in his name, is there a way that dishonours him, and a way that honours him? Do your offerings (money, time, effort) honour the God you know?
4. *“Now plead with God to be gracious to us. With such offerings from your hands, will he accept you?”—says the Lord Almighty.* Clearly it is not a question of “buying” God’s favour but a matter of their attitude towards God that Malachi says begs the question whether God will listen to their prayers. Do you think it matters? Aren’t God’s promises unconditional? Do you think this applies to you?
5. It boils down to this: if we are careless, cheap and disrespectful in the things we do in respect to our service and worship of God, can we expect God to nonetheless treat us as if there is nothing wrong with our relationship? Or do we think that God should be “the bigger person” in the relationship and overlook the way we trivialise him? Write down a prayer in response.

# Thursday

[**MALACHI 1:6-9**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=malachi+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

[**MALACHI 1:10-14**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=malachi+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. *“Oh, that one of you would shut the temple doors, so that you would not light useless fires on my altar!”* It pains God that those he chooses to love has instead chosen to make light of him and take his love for granted. Are you a joy to God, or is he grieved by you?
3. *“And you say, ‘What a burden!’ and you sniff at it contemptuously,” says the Lord Almighty.”* Is your relationship with God burdensome? Do you prefer to be somewhere else, doing something else than being in his presence, studying his word, or doing his will?
4. *“My name will be great among the nations, from where the sun rises to where it sets. In every place incense and pure offerings will be brought to me, because my name will be great among the nations,” says the Lord Almighty.”* Is your heart one of these places? Write down a prayer in response.

# Saturday

[**MALACHI 1:10-14**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=malachi+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

**MUCH LOVE AND LITTLE LOVE**

*“I have loved you,” says the Lord. “But you ask, ‘How have you loved us?’”*

It is amazing that God even answers the question! As he says, and we know, *“For I am a great king,” says the Lord Almighty, “and my name is to be feared among the nations.”* Any other people would have incurred God’s wrath. But Israel has a covenant relationship with God, just as we Christians have a covenant relationship with God. God’s patience with us underlines his love towards us.

Perhaps even more amazing is that Israel has the impertinence to ask such a question. I doubt if we would dare. But more likely the prophet was voicing out an unspoken question—a question expressed in the actions of the Jews. And here we need to think deeply about ourselves.

In Luke 7, Jesus explained to Simon the Pharisee, *“Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.”*

How you respond reflects what you think you have received. There is a hint, however, in Jesus’ words, “Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven” that there is a relationship between our response and our receptivity—our inability to open our hearts to God also results in our inability to receive God’s blessings. Malachi adds a further element to this: How you respond reflects what you think of God, but consider, how should God respond to you then?

Perhaps this is an opportune time for you to examine how you have been responding to God; the things you have been doing, the attitude you have towards matters related to God, and the care (or lack of) you take in honouring him in your life.

Do you have a case against God? Has he loved you? God is ready to answer. Does God have a case against you? Do you have an answer?

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.