**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 and Tuesday

[**JAMES 1:1-8**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=james+1&version=NIV)

Please go to this page, [New Format](http://timealonewithgod.org/new-format/), where I explain the rationale for this new format. Let me know whether you find the changes helpful or not. Thanks.

Remember this is your time alone with God. It is a time to tell God what is on your mind (thinking back over the past day), listen to him speak to you (reading and meditating on a bible passage), and finally, to respond to him (prayer). The questions are there to help you do this. Ignore them if they do not help. If your time is limited, I suggest that you don’t do everything in one go but spread them over the two days.

1. Take time to be quiet so you can focus on your time alone with God. Recall and briefly write down any significant things that happened or occupied you during the past day. Share with God what you thought or felt. Pray also for those he has laid on your heart.
2. Read [JAMES 1:1-8](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=james+1&version=NIV). Write down what you think the passage is about and what it says to you. Feel free to use the questions in “Further Thoughts” to help you think over the text.
3. What is God saying to you? Write down a prayer in response.

**Further Thoughts**

1. *“Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.”* What would you consider to be the trials (of many kinds) that James is talking about here? What would qualify to be considered a trial? Would you include the pain you go through as you fight temptation, for example, sexual sin, jealousy, anger, addiction? Is James telling us that trials are good and to be sought? Is he saying that trials come from God?
2. *“Consider it pure joy …”* The idea here is not “be happy or be ecstatic” but rather “value the maturity that results when you persevere through trials.” What good can trials do for a Christian? What does persevering imply? How is it that persevering is an important prerequisite to maturity? In what ways can these experiences complete you as a Christian?
3. *“If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.”* Why would you need wisdom when you are undergoing trials? Is it as simple as just asking God to help you figure out the good and bad of what is happening to you and therefore how you can respond to the situation you are in? Why would God help you figure things out? Why don’t we instead ask him to pull us out of the problem, change our circumstances, or grant us victory?
4. *“But when you ask, you must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord. Such a person is double-minded and unstable in all they do.”* Doubt here is described by James as being double-minded, sometimes this, sometimes that, like a wave tossed by the wind—not undecided but rather deciding in opposite directions now and again—not the doubt that arises because we do not know enough. You are in doubt about God, about his character, about his intentions and his goodness, because of what you are going through. *You must believe and not doubt.* Why is this important (think of what James says is potentially yours to gain)?
5. Do these words of wisdom from James bring you any comfort?

# Wednesday and Thursday

[**JAMES 1:9-12**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=james+1&version=NIV)

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1. Take time to be quiet so you can focus on your time alone with God. Recall and briefly write down any significant things that happened or occupied you the past day. Share with God what you thought or felt. Pray also for those he has laid on your heart.
2. Read [JAMES 1:9-12](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=james+1&version=NIV). Write down what you think the passage is about and what it says to you. Feel free to use the questions in “Further Thoughts” to help you think over the text.
3. What is God saying to you? Write down a prayer in response.

**Further Thoughts**

1. *“Believers in humble circumstances ought to take pride in their high position.”* Seeing that James speaks of the rich in the next verse, humble circumstances would likely mean financially poor; those in the lower income group. In what ways could they view themselves as undergoing trials? What wisdom does James share with them? What do you think it means?
2. *“But the rich should take pride in their humiliation—since they will pass away like a wild flower. … In the same way, the rich will fade away even while they go about their business.”* While in becoming a Christian the believer who has been a social outcast gains in status, the believer who is socially well-endowed and powerful loses as both find that in Christ there is no distinction (“There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.” Galatians 3:28). Why should the rich take pride in their humiliation? What is the “trial” of being rich when you become a Christian? What wise perspective does James share with them?
3. *“Blessed is the one who perseveres under trial because, having stood the test, that person will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him.”* Looking at what James has to say about the contrasting trials of the poor and the rich, what can you learn about what James means about “persevering under trial”? If the poor Christian, in his poverty, can take pride in their elevation, and the rich Christian can take pride in his humiliation, what kind of person, in heart and mind, will each become?

# Friday and Saturday

[**JAMES 1:13-18**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=james+1&version=NIV)

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1. Take time to be quiet so you can focus on your time alone with God. Recall and briefly write down any significant things that happened or occupied you the past day. Share with God what you thought or felt. Pray also for those he has laid on your heart.
2. Read [JAMES 1:13-18](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=james+1&version=NIV). Write down what you think the passage is about and what it says to you. Feel free to use the questions in “Further Thoughts” to help you think over the text.
3. What is God saying to you? Write down a prayer in response.

**Further Thoughts**

1. *“When tempted, no one should say, “God is tempting me.” For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone.”* The context is still trials but this time the believer is inclined towards sinful means to overcome. James warns that the inclination towards sinful behaviour comes from their sinful self, not from God; don’t bluff yourself saying God is tempting you. If acted upon it will open the believer to sin. What is the wisdom that James imparts here to the believer considering a sinful response to his circumstances?
2. *“Don’t be deceived, my dear brothers and sisters.”* James gives clear teaching about God, warning believers not to be deceived. What does James teach us about God? What is the implication of the fact that God does not change, in this context? How could we mistakenly believe otherwise about God as we go through trials?
3. Desire gives birth to sin; sin gives birth to death. God chooses to give us birth through the word of truth so that we might be among those who will enter the kingdom of God. Two very different destinies. As you go through trials, how would you recognise what is the will of God and what is the temptation/deception of the sinful self?

# Sunday

##### WISDOM AND TRIALS

*“If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.”*

We should note that James does not say that the trials he speaks of are only the ones that originate from God. In fact he goes out of his way to say that he is talking about “trials of many kinds.” He is not calling us to welcome them or seek them out. He is not telling us to enjoy the experience but to see in these trials the opportunity to mature as we persevere. When we go through adversity our faith is tested and this testing will teach us things we cannot learn when the going is easy.

In any situation where we are tested however, we can go wrong. But James tells us that God wants us to succeed. And so, “If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.” He will generously teach us and help us to know the right and the wrong, the good and the bad, and the loyal goodness of God that we can rely on.

However—and this is lesson number one—we must believe and not doubt. Not so much believe whether God will answer our prayer for wisdom, but about the character and nature of God. If the moment things go wrong we start questioning God’s love and God’s commitment to us, how is he going to teach us anything? James says, “That person should not expect to receive anything from the Lord.”

There are other pitfalls. The Christian needs to realise that the values in the kingdom of God may be very different from those of the world. Poor and rich for example may be very different once you step into God’s kingdom. You need God’s wisdom to be able to see things in clearer light.

As we go through adversity, the temptation to resort to sinful means may be a reflexive response. The Christian may deceive themselves, saying these ideas are from God. Once again, wisdom is needed to know who God is and to recognise his hand, and by contrast, the hand of our sinful desires.

Life throws many things at us and we need wisdom to navigate our way. James tells us that as we are able to navigate the challenges and pitfalls of life with the wisdom that God gives generously, we are blessed and in due course we will receive the crown of life, being among those we read of in Revelations, “To the one who overcomes” (NASB). This is what God chooses for all of us.

*“He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.”*

1. Review the answers/thoughts you wrote down in the past week. Read the short sharing above. Does it add anything to your own thoughts?
2. What is God saying to you? Write down a prayer in response.