**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

[**MATTHEW 13:31-35**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2013&version=NIV)

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 [MATTHEW 13:31-35](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2013&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. *“The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.”* In this parable Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to a mustard seed, whose size (very small) belie its potential (very large and strong). The point is that when you look at a seed and a tree, it is difficult to imagine that the tree was once a seed. So too when you look at the kingdom of heaven. Do you think that in this case, “the kingdom of heaven” refers to your experience of the Christian life, or to the Church as the body of Christ, or to God’s vehicle (plan) for our salvation? Would you agree that in each of the possibilities, the beginnings are unimpressive? Why would you believe in spite of this that (your salvation, the Church, God’s Salvation Project) will become even greater than you anticipate?
2. *“... so that the birds come and perch in its branches.”* This little detail says that “the kingdom of heaven” (your salvation, the Church, God’s Salvation Project) will grow to be a source of blessing, shelter and nourishment to others around. Would you like that? How can your life be such a source of blessing?
3. *“The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into about sixty pounds of flour until it worked all through the dough.”* Here the picture is how something that is small and insignificant (the yeast) can significantly transform that which is large and potentially inexorable. Do you think that (your salvation, the Church, God’s Salvation Project) is like that, able to significantly transform even that which seems inexorable and impossible?

# Wednesday and Thursday

[**MATTHEW 13:44-46**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2013&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 [MATTHEW 13:44-46](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2013&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. *“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field.*” What would it mean to you to chance upon wealth untold? You did not earn it; you found it. What would you give to have it, to make it yours?
2. *“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls.”* What would you consider to be something of real worth? A wife who is your soulmate? The gift to heal? To write a novel or a piece of music that can touch a person’s soul? What will you give to make it yours?
3. *“... sold everything he had and bought it.”* And it would be the best thing he had ever done. It would be the smartest thing he had ever done. Jesus says, this is how to understand the kingdom of God. Do you understand the kingdom of God?

# Friday and Saturday

[**MATTHEW 13:47-58**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2013&version=NIV)

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 the past day. Share with God what you thought or felt. Pray also for those he has laid on your heart.
2. Read [MATTHEW 13:47-58](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%2013&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. *“This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.”* In this parable Jesus tells us that the kingdom of God (the Church, God’s Salvation Project) is free and available to all but in the final accounting false believers will be weeded out from among the true believers. What is the warning to us all?
2. *Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. “Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?” they asked.* What did the people see in what Jesus did and taught?
3. *“Isn’t this the carpenter’s son? Isn’t his mother’s name Mary, and aren’t his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? Aren’t all his sisters with us? Where then did this man get all these things?” And they took offense at him.* Here is an example of a group of people who did not understand the kingdom of God. From all that Jesus taught in this week’s passages, where did they fail?
4. *But Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his own town and in his own home.” And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.* Do you think that their lack of faith impeded Jesus or that Jesus chose not to do many miracles because of their lack of faith? Do you think it was to their disadvantage in that they knew Jesus as a child and knew his family? What do you think was the problem? Why did they choose to take offence that Jesus could perform miracles and taught with wisdom? What do you think “lack of faith” implies in this context?

# Sunday

##### UNDERSTAND

*“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field.”*

In these parables, Jesus teaches us to understand the kingdom of heaven. It is important that we understand because then we will respond to it correctly.

Firstly, you have to see beyond its appearance and realise that the power is in the one who is behind it. The mustard seed can become a tree because God had made it so. The yeast could work its magic on that huge amount of dough because of the special properties that God had built into it. Whether you are looking at yourself as a Christian (and seeing how weak and inconsistent you are even in resisting sin in your life), or you are looking at the Church (with all its internal problems) or you are figuring out God’s Plan of Salvation for the World, you would fail to understand if you fail to see the one behind it all.

Secondly, once you realise that this is the work of God, you must know that this is the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. You must know that nothing you have up till now can compare to this work of God that is offered to you for free. Nothing must stand in the way of your acquiring and making the kingdom of God your experience.

Finally, you need to understand that for now those who reject Christ and those who embrace Christ will live under God’s benevolence. But at the end God will embrace those who embraced him and reject those who rejected him. Moreover, there are going to be true ones and false ones even in your midst. But again, at the end, they will be weeded out. What it means is that you cannot judge the kingdom of God by looking at the outcome of the lives of those who embrace Christ and those who reject Christ. And you cannot gain the kingdom of God with false pretences. The truth will be apparent at the end.

What we need to understand is that God will judge us, rather than we judge God. The kingdom of God is God’s project for us to be among those who will come under God’s mercy and grace and receive his blessings. When we understand it, we will respond to it correctly and in doing so will experience the miracle of God’s seed growing and working its magic in our hearts and minds.

But when we act like we are the judges, like the people in Jesus’ hometown who judged Jesus unworthy, we fail to see our need and fail to reach out to the one who can truly help us. We fail to understand and honour God’s gift to us all.

*“And he did not do many miracles there because of their lack of faith.”*

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.