**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

[**ISAIAH 54:1-8**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=isaiah+54&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 [ISAIAH 54:1-8](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=isaiah+54&version=NIV). Write down what you think the passage is about and what it says to you. This chapter is God’s love letter to Israel, in the context of the destruction of Jerusalem as a result of God’s judgement. Coming just after the prophecy in chapter 53, which speaks vividly of our Lord and his sacrifice, one may see the Church in the distance as you read of God’s compassion and redemption in chapter 54. 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. *“Sing, barren woman, you who never bore a child; burst into song, shout for joy, you who were never in labor; because more are the children of the desolate woman than of her who has a husband,” says the Lord.”* Israel, rejected and judged by God for her sins, is seen as a barren woman, a desolate (bleak and alone) woman, a woman without a husband to care for her. In those days, what would it mean to have become such a woman? Do you think as a Christian you could ever be in such a state in relation to God?
2. Though the external conditions have not changed, God tells Israel that it is time to rejoice. What has changed? Do you think God’s attitude towards you, his promises to you, are reason enough for hope and joy even though circumstances remain bleak?
3. *“Enlarge the place of your tent, stretch your tent curtains wide, do not hold back; lengthen your cords, strengthen your stakes.”* God’s message to Israel is not merely that the period of judgement will be over soon, but that blessings will abound. Once again we see that movement from forgiveness to mercy to grace. Why do you think God’s attitude towards Israel is such that Israel’s past sin does not hold him back from blessing her? Do you think God has the same attitude towards you?
4. Read vv4-8 and imagine a husband speaking to his wife whom he has forgiven. (Bear in mind Jeremiah 32:30-35 which we looked at last week, where God outlined the sin of Israel.) What stands out for you about God as he speaks here to Israel? Do you think that this truly reflects him and his thoughts and feelings? How does that make you feel?

# Wednesday and Thursday

[**ISAIAH 54:9-10**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=isaiah+54&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 [ISAIAH 54:9-10](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=isaiah+54&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. You can read the story of Noah in Genesis 6-9, which began with the observation *“The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time.”* and ended with the promise, *“Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds … This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth.”* and led to God establishing a covenantal relationship with Abram in Genesis 12. Although God says he will not destroy all life he remains implacably opposed to sin (the wrath of God). What was the intention of that relationship with Abram (which ultimately resulted in the establishment of Israel)?
2. Israel’s destruction was preceded by God’s damning indictment in Jeremiah 32 and ended with God’s promise in today’s passage: *So now I have sworn not to be angry with you, never to rebuke you again. Though the mountains be shaken and the hills be removed, yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor my covenant of peace be removed,” says the Lord, who has compassion on you.* Once again we must not see this as a willingness to tolerate sin. What do you think this promise of God led God to do next?
3. *“What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.” (Romans 8:31-34)* God’s compassion for us costs him because he cannot set aside his wrath against sin. The bible tells the story of God’s judgement and God’s compassion, ultimately leading to God making the sacrifice of his Son. How does our God move you?

# Friday and Saturday

[**ISAIAH 54:11-17**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=isaiah+54&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 [ISAIAH 54:11-17](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=isaiah+54&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. *“Afflicted city, lashed by storms and not comforted, I will rebuild you with stones of turquoise, your foundations with lapis lazuli. I will make your battlements of rubies, your gates of sparkling jewels, and all your walls of precious stones.”* How do these verses describe God’s intentions for Jerusalem?
2. *“All your children will be taught by the Lord, and great will be their peace. In righteousness you will be established.”* What is the plan to deal with sin?
3. *“This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and this is their vindication from me,” declares the Lord.”* What will Israel now enjoy from God, now that he will reaffirm his relationship with Israel?
4. Many of these promises will find their ultimate fulfilment in Christ and through Christ. As someone who has accepted all that Christ offers, through faith and obedience to him, you too enjoy these promises that God made, and this relationship that God established with Israel. Which of these is most meaningful to you?

# Sunday

##### THIS IS THE HERITAGE OF THE SERVANTS OF THE LORD

*“For your Maker is your husband—the Lord Almighty is his name—the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer; he is called the God of all the earth.”*

It is quite amazing, really, that God would commit himself to Israel as a husband to his wife. It is quite amazing that he would be the husband who would forgive even though the wife has humiliated him to such a degree as Israel had.

No, God is no weak, henpecked husband. He is fully aware of Israel’s infidelities and he did not withhold judgement. Yet he returns to Israel with compassion and kindness.

No, God is no blind lover, willing to overlook the sin of Israel. He commits himself to solving the problem of Israel’s sinful nature, in order to be her source of blessing and joy. He will establish their righteousness; he will personally teach them; he will restore their glory, that was lost through sin, and indeed, glorify them even further.

If God is so committed to Abraham’s descendnts, as a result of the covenant he made with him, imagine how he regards us, born out of Jesus’ sacrifice, redeemed by his blood, who now calls him our King. Again we must not view him as weak and willing to compromise for our sakes—far from it! But he was willing to sacrifice his Son and to send to us his Holy Spirit, in order that sin may be defeated without our deaths.

For those of us who long to be on the side of God, he demonstrates to us his willingness to go all the way for us to succeed. As Paul asked rhetorically, “how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?”

*“This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and this is their vindication from me,” declares the Lord.*

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.