**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

[**ACTS 2:42-47**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%202&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 [ACTS 2:42-47](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%202&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. *“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles.”* Two key qualities defined the community: they devoted themselves and they were filled with awe. Would these two qualities define you as a Christian disciple? Do you think your church can be described in these terms as well? Do you think these two qualities are essential for a vibrant faith and community? What can we do to be such Christians?
2. *“All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.”* There was a very tangible love and unity in that church. Is it possible for churches today to reflect such love and unity? Would “devotion and awe” make a difference?
3. *“Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God…”* “Every day” surely is not possible in the modern church but is this the key to what we saw in question 2? Would “once a week” suffice? What is the point here?
4. *“… and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”* What is the effect of this community on the neighbourhood?
5. What impresses you the most about this church? What do you think is the key to its vibrancy and authenticity? Is it possible for modern churches (and your church in particular) to likewise be so vibrant and authentic? Would you say your church is not far off the mark? When we are merely a pale reflection, is it because a) God has rejected the church; b) the Holy Spirit is not active nor present or members need to be filled with the Holy Spirit or need to express the gifts of the Holy Spirit; c) members are not devoted or even very few are actually true followers of Jesus; or d) all is good and this is the pattern of church life that God intends for modern times because life is so much more complex and crowded.

# Wednesday and Thursday

[**ACTS 3:1-10**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%203&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 during the past day. Share with God what you thought or felt. Pray also for those he has laid on your heart.
2. Read [ACTS 3:1-10](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%203&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. *“Now a man who was lame from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts.”* This was how he earned his living. What would such a person expect from life? From God? How about the people around you: what would they expect from life and from God?
2. *When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, “Look at us!” So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them. Then Peter said, “Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.”* The man asked for no more than he expected and hoped for, but this encounter with Peter gave him more than he could dream of. Do you think as Christians we actually have the capacity to make this kind of difference in a person’s life? Explain your thinking.
3. *Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.”* What is it that Peter does have? Do you have it too?
4. *“He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God.”* Here is a man revelling in what he was incapable of previously and praising God. Can Jesus make such a difference in a person’s life?
5. *“When all the people saw him walking and praising God, they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.”* What effect did this have on the people in the community?

# Friday and Saturday

[**ACTS 3:11-26**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%203&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 [ACTS 3:11-26](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts%203&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. *““Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? … By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus’ name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see.”* Peter clearly explained that what happened is solely due to Jesus, and their faith in him. Would you take this to mean that such incidents would be commonplace if we have faith in Jesus? What else might we be able to accomplish through faith in Jesus?
2. *“Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus.”* Does it surprise you that Peter did not promise power to heal and do miracles but forgiveness of sin and the fellowship of Jesus? Why doesn’t he?
3. A display of miraculous healing led to the preaching of the Gospel: Jesus’ message of forgiveness and salvation. While the Gospel promises forgiveness and salvation and the continued fellowship of the Messiah through the Holy Spirit, should we also expect miraculous displays of power through faith in Jesus when we become Christians?

# Sunday

##### THE GIVER OR THE GIFT?

*“When Peter saw this, he said to them: “Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus.”*

It is interesting that in these modern times, when science has taken much of the mystery out of life, that we are most taken by miracles. In the ancient world, God is very much a part of the fabric of life and when an unexplained occurrence happens, it is the work of God. Rarely do you see them seeking to acquire the power of God. What they were most interested in was how to be on the right side of God.

For those of us who believe that God created the heavens and the earth, science merely accentuates the majesty and glory of God and his creation; for others, science instead reduces everything to cause and effect and removes the first and most primary cause.

In modern times, many of the miracles in Jesus’ time are now commonplace: lepers healed and brought back to society; the ability to feed large crowds in rural settings; healing the sick on the brink of death; and even giving a man born lame the ability to walk again. But there is far less awe and wonder these days.

If indeed Jesus sacrificed his life so that we may have the power to do the miracles he did, it would not have amounted to much these days.

Peter’s message, and the promise of the Gospel, focused not on the gift but on the giver: “Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus.”

The witness of the Apostles, and the witness of the community of believers, certainly contained many miraculous elements. But much more substantial was the transformation that took place before the eyes of the Jewish community: their devotion to God and their love for one another. As instructed by Jesus, they obeyed his command to abide in him and to love one another and this created a powerful witness to the truth of the message they carry.

It is unwise for us to tell the Holy Spirit how to do his work—that he should perform more miracles so as to attract people’s attention; that he should make us love each other better; that he should lead us to a church that is more vibrant and exciting—when we should be focused on our work—to obey; to love; to be devoted to his word; to love him; to be in awe of him; to focus on what we have rather than on what we do not have.

*“Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.”*

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.