**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

[**LUKE 9:1-9**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%209&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 [LUKE 9:1-9](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%209&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 Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.”* What were the disciples of Jesus tasked to do? Do you think they were two different tasks? Why proclaiming and healing? What did the disciples receive from Jesus? How would this shape your view of your own mission as a disciple of Jesus?
2. *He told them: “Take nothing for the journey—no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra shirt. Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. If people do not welcome you, leave their town and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.”* Why these instructions? Do they have a bearing on the way you should approach your own ministry for Christ? What do you think about the instruction to just leave those who do not welcome them? Would this apply to our evangelistic efforts? Explain your thinking.
3. *“Now Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was going on.”* Very likely not just about the exploits of the disciples as they were sent out, but about Jesus. He “tried to see him” but apparently failed. Why would Jesus avoid someone who wants to know more about him? How would this inform your thinking about your evangelistic efforts?

# Wednesday and Thursday

[**LUKE 9:10-17**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%209&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 [LUKE 9:10-17](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%209&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 the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done. Then he took them with him and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida…”* What was the intent of Jesus?
2. *“… but the crowds learned about it and followed him. He welcomed them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God, and healed those who needed healing.”* Why did Jesus respond to the crowd but did not respond to Herod, and even set aside his plans for the disciples? What do you think the crowd wanted? What did Jesus do for them? What lessons can you draw from this about evangelism?
3. *He replied, “You give them something to eat.”* Here is further training for the disciples, to consider the option of actually meeting the needs at hand. On that occasion, it took a miracle by Jesus. Do you think we have the luxury of considering the option of meeting needs that are clearly beyond our capacity? Explain your thinking.
4. *“They all ate and were satisfied, and the disciples picked up twelve basketfuls of broken pieces that were left over.”* What conclusions can you draw from this observation? How can this inform your own thinking about ministry, mission and evangelism?

# Friday and Saturday

[**LUKE 9:18-22**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%209&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 [LUKE 9:18-22](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke%209&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. *Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him, he asked them, “Who do the crowds say I am?”* The text began with “Once when …”, telling us that it was not an incident following the feeding of the five thousand. But the author has placed the story there and so we should consider this in the context of mission and evangelism. The crowd would be the five thousand and other such crowds. How would you answer the question, thinking of “your” crowd? (It may be an interesting exercise to find out how true your own impression of the crowd is.)
2. *“But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”* Take time to answer this, bearing in mind that who you think he is influences what you think the outcome of your life—both in this life and in the next—would be: it influences your sense of ministry and mission; it influences the message you bear in evangelism; it influences the conviction you lend to that message; it influences your relationship with the world around you. “Who do you say I am,” asks Jesus.
3. *“Jesus strictly warned them not to tell this to anyone.”* Would you say that this is because of their immediate context? Does this mean that there might be situations where you should refrain from telling people about your convictions about who Jesus is? Explain your thinking.
4. And he said, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.” The disciples did not grasp the import of what he was saying (see v45) but you do. How does this truth shape the way you view your Christian life, ministry and mission (bearing in mind that Jesus’ life, ministry and mission did not end at “he must be killed” but goes on to be raised to life.)
5. Our text this week began with Jesus calling his disciples to a mission to proclaim the kingdom of God and ends with Jesus telling his disciples that his own mission will go through the valley of the shadow of death, but will emerge victorious on the other side. What is God saying to you?

# Sunday

##### THE CHRISTIAN’S LIFE, MINISTRY AND MISSION

*“When Jesus had called the Twelve together, he gave them power and authority to drive out all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick.”*

When Jesus invited us to be his disciples, offering to us the saving grace that comes with it, what does he intend us to be and to do?

The “being” aspect we know from his discourse with his disciples in John 15 and 16. We are to be his branches, abiding in him, drawing his life and bearing his fruit, in the context of his command to love one another. In doing so we receive two resources: the power of answered prayer, and the power of the Holy Spirit.

This chapter gives us a preview of what we are to do: to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. In addition to what we have already received as branches, we have the added power and authority of his name; in other words, we go in his name.

Jesus tells his disciples “Take nothing for the journey—no staff, no bag, no bread, no money, no extra shirt. Whatever house you enter, stay there until you leave that town. If people do not welcome you, leave their town and shake the dust off your feet as a testimony against them.”

The most immediate consequence of this is that his disciples must depend on the kindness of the people they are sent to. The mission is not to go from a position of strength but from a position of dependence. This gives us an idea how we are to be in relation to the people we are called to reach out to. We are firstly to establish a relationship of dependence, where we are indebted to these people we are called to reach out to and minister to.

In what way can you express a dependence on the kindness and welcome of the people whom you are to minister to? Surely it cannot be to arrogantly proclaim your message whether or not you are welcome. Surely it cannot be out of a spirit of judgement and condemnation. Surely it cannot be to be rude, to be disrespectful of culture and even gods. How can we reach out to people from a posture of dependence on their kindness and welcome? The church needs to meditate on this much more.

The second is to accept rejection as the rejection of Jesus and to move on, upholding the dignity and sovereign will of our Lord. We are not to take rejection personally, nor should we respond to rejection personally, because we represent our Master. Jesus tells his disciples, if people do not welcome you, leave. I don’t think it means never to return; at least Jesus did not spell it out to that extent. I don’t think it means stop doing good to them (e.g. healing). But the kingdom of God is not for those who are too proud, too self-sufficient or too full of themselves and we must not debase Jesus’ name and grovel.

Paul in Acts 13:46 said this to the Jews who rejected them: “We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles.” Here is a sensitivity to whom the Holy Spirit is leading us to.

The key point, I think, is that rejection of Jesus, and the Gospel of Jesus, is a reality that we must accept.

For that to happen, Jesus’ disciples will have to be transparent as to who they are and what they stand for—perhaps in word; perhaps in deed; perhaps in cultural observances and practice—people must know who they represent. In our hearts and minds we must know who we go in the name of. That is most fundamental, most crucial.

*“But what about you?” he asked. “Who do you say I am?”*

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.