**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 9:22-26**](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 9:22-26](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. *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.”* Starting from the fact that Jesus describes himself as “the Son of Man”, meaning that he identifies himself as a part of the human race, describe the life, ministry, mission and destiny of Jesus from these words of Jesus. What word (or words) would you choose to characterise Jesus’ life?
2. *Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.”* We should understand this as flowing from his earlier statement about himself. In other words, this is who I am, and whoever wants to be my disciple should know who they must be (or simply, however you think you must be, it must be because you see this in me as well). In that light, how would you understand “deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me”? In the sense that you have just described, would you be able to use the same word (that you used for Jesus) to describe your view of the disciple’s life?
3. *What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self? Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.* Clearly we are to understand that following Jesus implies letting go of the “whole world”. How does that sound to you; something possible, acceptable? In the context, being ashamed of him and his words means rejecting the invitation to be his disciple. What is the consequence of rejecting Jesus in favour of following the world?
4. Taking what Jesus said about becoming his disciple as a whole, are you clear about your decision to be a disciple of Jesus?

# Wednesday and Thursday

[**LUKE 9:27-36**](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 9:27-36](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. *“Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.”* When Jesus began his ministry, his message was “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!” (Mark 1:15). What do you think is meant by “the kingdom of God” that some of his listeners will experience even before they die?
2. *“About eight days after Jesus said this, he took Peter, John and James with him and went up onto a mountain to pray.”* Luke tells us that the event being described happened eight days after Jesus spoke about the kingdom of God. How would you understand the vision of the transfiguration of Jesus in the light of the kingdom of God?
3. *“As he was praying, the appearance of his face changed, and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning.”* Jesus was transformed before the eyes of Peter, James and John in all his glory. What does this communicate to the disciples?
4. *“Two men, Moses and Elijah, appeared in glorious splendor, talking with Jesus. They spoke about his departure, which he was about to bring to fulfillment at Jerusalem.”* Representing the Law and the Prophets, these men spoke of what was to come as fulfilment. What does this communicate to the disciples?
5. *A voice came from the cloud, saying, “This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him.”* What does this communicate to the disciples?
6. How does the transfiguration of Jesus, and all that it communicates, underline these words of Jesus, “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, and yet lose or forfeit their very self? Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels. Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the kingdom of God.”

# Friday and Saturday

[**LUKE 9:37-45**](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 the past day. Share with God what you thought or felt. Pray also for those he has laid on your heart.
2. Read [LUKE 9:37-45](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. *“The next day, when they came down from the mountain, a large crowd met him.”* Coming down from the mountain where they had their vision of the transfiguration of Jesus, they came to the crowd (remember the crowd from last week’s questions). In your mind, what would the mountain represent, and what would the crowd represent? Where do you think your life as a Christian should be lived?
2. *A man in the crowd called out, “Teacher, I beg you to look at my son, for he is my only child. A spirit seizes him and he suddenly screams; it throws him into convulsions so that he foams at the mouth. It scarcely ever leaves him and is destroying him. I begged your disciples to drive it out, but they could not.”* When you listen to the problem of this man in the crowd, how do you feel? When the man highlighted the disciples inability to overcome the situation, how do you feel? This is the reality of where we spend much of our life and ministry, facing needs and issues that are beyond our abilities. Does the mountain, and all that it says and means to you, leave you helpless and frustrated when faced with the realities of the crowd, or it lends you hope?
3. *“You unbelieving and perverse generation,” Jesus replied, “how long shall I stay with you and put up with you? Bring your son here.”* Jesus himself expressed frustration at the speed with which people lose faith when things don’t go their way. But he still ministered to the needs of the man. Where do you stand in your own journey of faith? Do you have experiences that affirm who your Lord and Master is? Are you bogged down in the quagmire of unbelief, and the impotence that it brings? Are your frustrations centred on God or on the unbelieving and perverse generation you are in?

# Sunday

##### FOLLOWING JESUS

*“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.”*

Isaiah describes our Lord as “a man of suffering, and familiar with pain” and that blends very well with Jesus’ description of himself here. It is not the description of a man who seeks out suffering, or causes others to want to harm him, but the path he walks is one of sacrifice in service and obedience. Here is where I think we should understand the phrase “deny themselves and take up their cross daily” because if we are to follow him then we too will walk the path of sacrifice in service. It is not sacrifice, or denial, or letting the needs of others take priority, in themselves, that is desired for a disciple, but in the course of service and obedience.

However, we must also understand that the destiny of the Son of Man, the Master whom we follow, is to be raised by God to life. In other words, his sacrifice and his obedience in service enjoys the power of God to defeat the power of evil, sin and death. We must know that as we follow our Master on the same path, our sacrifice and obedience will likewise not be in vain.

And that promise, that destiny, was what Peter, James and John caught a glimpse of on the mountain when Jesus was transfigured before their eyes. Moses and Elijah were on hand to attest to the truth that Jesus’ destiny was a fulfilment of their own vision, and to seal it all, a voice from heaven came, saying “This is my Son, whom I have chosen; listen to him.”

If this is the whole picture, I think faith would not be too difficult. However, we live, not on the mountain, but in the valley, where the crowd is, and that crowd, as Jesus describes, is “unbelieving and perverse.” Even he expressed frustration!

This is where we need to be careful and realise that the problem is not on the side of God, but on the side of man. In this world we will have trouble, but we rejoice because our Master has overcome the world. Will we still be able to follow the path of our Lord, in sacrificial service and obedience, as we experience the frustration of ministering to the crowd? This is the challenge.

To do so, our vision of Jesus must be crystal clear; our sense of destiny must be unwavering; and our acceptance of the aptness of what Jesus said to his disciples, and to us, must shape our life:

*“I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you. Very truly I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, nor is a messenger greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know these things, you will be blessed if you do them.” (John 13:15-17)*

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.