**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

[**REVELATION 2:8-9**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%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 [REVELATION 2:8-9](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%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. *“These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again.”* To those who are listening, what do these descriptions convey?
2. *“I know your afflictions and your poverty—yet you are rich!”* What do you think it implies—rich in what way—their salvation, or much more? What do you think is in them that makes Jesus say that they are rich? Do you think Jesus would say that you are rich?
3. *“I know about the slander of those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan.”* What do you think these people were saying about the church of Smyrna? Why were they (these people, not the church) described as “those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan”?
4. How would you describe the church of Smyrna in your own words? Would this be a description and that would be appropriate for you and your church?

# Wednesday and Thursday

[**REVELATION 2:10**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%202&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 [REVELATION 2:10](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%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. *“Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days.”* Why shouldn’t the church be afraid about the prison and persecution they were about to suffer?
2. *“Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you life as your victor’s crown.”* Does it make sense to be faithful to the point of death? But Christ promises life as a result. Is that worthwhile, to lose this life in order to gain the next?
3. From what Jesus says to this church, it is possible to be doing well spiritually (“you are rich!”) yet undergoing poverty, affliction, imprisonment, persecution, even death. Jesus did not suggest anything they should do to avoid this; only to be faithful to the end. How do you feel about this?

# Friday and Saturday

[**REVELATION 2:11**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%202&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 [REVELATION 2:11](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%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. *“Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who is victorious will not be hurt at all by the second death.”* Once again the call to hear what the Spirit says to the churches. What is the message this time? What is the second death? What would this message mean to the church of Smyrna?
2. Putting together the call to be faithful to the point of death, and the assertion that those who are victorious will not be hurt at all by the second death, is the point made that we should fear the second death and not the first or that we should fear neither? What do you think?

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# Sunday

**YET YOU ARE RICH!**

*“These are the words of him who is the First and the Last, who died and came to life again.”*

In Isaiah 44:6, God says, “I am the first and I am the last, and apart from me there is no God.” Him who is the First and the Last is the everlasting God. Here in the message to Smyrna, Jesus claimed that title and tells Smyrna that what they were about to hear are the words of the everlasting God. On top of that, he also claimed to be the One who had died and came to life again.

Jesus the Everlasting God tells the church in Smyrna that despite all that they were going through, YET they are rich! This is from the perspective of heaven; from an understanding of the sum of all life, the First and the Last.

Jesus, who died and came to life again, tells the church in Smyrna to not be afraid of what they were about to suffer. He encourages them to be faithful even to the point of death.

Finally he reminds the church in Smyrna, and all Christians (whoever has ears, let them hear), that the one who is victorious will not be hurt at all by the second death.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is not the prosperity gospel; it is not about blessing the life before the first death; the real focus is on the second death. This is not to say that Jesus desires us to be poor, afflicted, imprisoned and persecuted, like the church in Smyrna. It is that these are not the signs of whether we are rich (blessed) or not. True blessedness is found in those who are faithful.

*“Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. The one who is victorious will not be hurt at all by the second death.”*

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.