**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 2:12-13**](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 2:12-13](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 has the sharp, double-edged sword.”* In those days, what would a man wielding a sharp, double-edged sword represent? Hebrews 4:12 says: “For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.” Do you think this picture of the word of God is relevant to what Jesus is saying to the church in Pergamum?
2. *“I know where you live—where Satan has his throne. Yet you remain true to my name.”* It would seem that they are in Satan’s stronghold and yet remained true. Would you describe the place where you and/or your church is located in the same way? Has your location, or even the company you keep, been a pressure on your spiritual life? Have you been holding up well?
3. *“You did not renounce your faith in me, not even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city—where Satan lives.”* The church in Pergamum lived in a time when one of their members was put to death for his faith. How did the church in Pergamum respond to the pressure on them? In these days, what would be the pressure on you to renounce your faith? How are you holding up?
4. Do you know of churches (perhaps in other countries) who suffer persecution from their society? How do you feel about that? What can you do for them?

# Wednesday and Thursday

[**REVELATION 2:14-16**](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 2:14-16](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. *“Nevertheless, I have a few things against you: There are some among you who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to entice the Israelites to sin so that they ate food sacrificed to idols and committed sexual immorality. Likewise, you also have those who hold to the teaching of the Nicolaitans.”* (See Numbers 31:16 on Balaam.) The basic strategy is that if you cannot defeat them head on (the church remained true to Jesus despite one of their members being put to death), you compromise them by tempting them to take part in activities contrary to their faith; some have fallen while others turned a blind eye. The food offered to idols and the sexual immorality were in the context of religious practices in the city. In what ways did some members of the church in Pergamum compromise? In what ways may we compromise our status as Christians as we live and rub shoulders with those who worship other gods? Is it possible to be “in the world but not of the world”? What are the challenges?
2. *“Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.”* “Them” would be those who have compromised. What do you think is meant by “fight against them with the sword of my mouth”? Is the call to repentance for these people or for the whole church? Why?
3. These issues were what the church in Ephesus did well to overcome and were commended for. But they fell into the trap of lacking in love and forgiveness. How to walk the fine line between not compromising our faith, yet being forgiving and loving towards each other? Is it possible?

# Friday and Saturday

[**REVELATION 2:17**](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 2:17](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. To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give that person a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it.”* Once again the call to hear what the Spirit says to the churches. What is the message this time?
2. Manna was what God provided as food to the Israelites when they were in the wilderness. As food that God gives, what do you think receiving manna from God would imply? How would this contrast with food sacrificed to idols and sexual immorality?
3. Whatever the white stone may represent, having a new name implies a new identity. Looking at what has been said so far, with the Spirit telling the churches that whoever overcomes will eat from the tree of life; will not be hurt by the second death; will receive food from God; and will have a white stone with a new name on it. What do you think it implies?

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# Sunday

**YET YOU REMAIN TRUE TO MY NAME**

*“I know where you live—where Satan has his throne.”*

Pergamum was one of the centres of emperor worship. It is interesting that Jesus described it as a place where Satan has his throne—a place where the power of evil is strong and focused. Here in this city the church stood strong, remaining true to the name of Jesus even when one of their own was martyred.

It is difficult for us to imagine that such a church is possible. Yet even in our time, wherever there is strong opposition to the Gospel, churches somehow take root and we often hear that in such difficult conditions the Gospel thrives. This is testament to the enduring power of the truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Yet, as the church makes inroads into enemy territory, the enemy attempts to make inroads into the church. As Christians focus on the big issues, resisting the pressure to renounce the name of Jesus and deny the fundamental theological truths that are foundational to the Gospel (“yet you remain true to my name; you did not renounce your faith in me”) the smaller issues of day-to-day relevance, cultural and social norms and practices, may often be overlooked. Food sacrificed to idols and sexual immorality (with temple prostitutes) were a common part of the life in those days.

These clashes of culture will unavoidably expose the church to compromises in matters that are not merely cultural but also against the values of God and the church in Pergamum were beginning to let down their guard. The problem was not merely in practice, but practice based on teaching. Such teachings were making inroads into the church and some people had begun to live their lives based on these wrong teachings.

The church was not crumbling at this point: “Yet you remain true to my name. You did not renounce your faith in me, not even in the days of Antipas, my faithful witness, who was put to death in your city—where Satan lives.” However they were in a dangerous position and Jesus says that if they do not redress the false teachings and wrong practices, then he will come and do it for them: “Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.”

Jesus, in his prayer in John 17 puts it succinctly: “They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.” To sanctify is to set apart for holy purposes.

As Hebrews 4:12 tells us, “For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.”

In a very real sense, the church lives in tension at all times. They are to be in the world, but they must be distinct from the character and practices of the world. Taken too far and the church alienates itself. Taken too zealously and the church becomes judgemental, even within its own people, as was the problem of the church in Ephesus. Taken too loosely and the church becomes largely Christian only in name and in ritualistic practices.

The only solution is to know and be true to the word of God, to be quick to repent when we stray, and to love and forgive one another as Jesus commands us, and to remain close to God, led by the Holy Spirit.

*“These are the words of him who has the sharp, double-edged sword.”*

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.