

Alone With God

A Guide for a Personal Time of Prayer

Preparation:

Find a quiet place where you will be away from distraction and make yourself comfortable. Bring a bible and notebook. If music helps you to focus your attention on the Lord - you may want to use music at certain intervals during your time with the Lord - but don't stay plugged in all the time! Silence is very unusual - and uncomfortable - for us, and it takes lots of time to quiet ourselves and just let the voice of Jesus penetrate. This is a time to practice being quiet. It won't be easy - that is why we need to practice. During your time you will find yourselves getting distracted ... when your mind wanders, just go and get it and bring it back and carry on!

Plan:

Having a plan helps us to make our time not just one of silence and solitude - but also of focus on the Lord Jesus Christ. Here is a pattern you can follow for time with the Lord - whether it is a half hour or a whole day - and some practices you can use.

Each section includes a scripture portion - these are suggestions - the theme of each section is the main thing and you can choose scripture portions accordingly. In between each section you may want to take a break, have a snack or go for a walk. For a half day of prayer you may want to plan about a half hour for each segment. This is just a guide! - pay attention to what the Lord is saying and how you need to listen and respond, and be free to linger over anything that you need to.

The Invitation

Read Isaiah 55:1-13 and notice what stands out to you. Read it again ... what is the Spirit of God inviting you into for this time with God? When you read it, pay attention to what you desire from God for this time.

There are 4 different sections in this chapter that form the pattern for this time with the Lord:

Look! Paying Attention to God (Isaiah 55:1-5)

Turn Around! Repentance and Forgiveness (Isaiah 55: 6,7)

Listen! Hearing the Word (Isaiah 55:8-11)

Walk! Participating in life with God (Isaiah 55:12,13)

I. Look!

Paying Attention to God

God is always at work - always first. Our part is to pay attention to Him and to respond to Him.

Scripture: Read Psalm 100. What stands out to you? Read it a second time.

Spiritual Practice: Thanksgiving

Write down ten things for which you can thank God. Be specific! They can be anything - they don't have to be "spiritual"! Take a short break, then list ten more... then ten more. What does your list tell you about the Giver?

Take one or more of those things and write a "berekah" - a blessing. The *berekah* is a common form of prayer in the Old Testament. They begin with the words, "Blessed be the Lord" or "Blessed are You, O Lord" and declare his character and his works, often ending with a prayer related to that aspect of his character. Here are two examples:

"Blessed be the LORD who has given rest to his people Israel, according to all that he promised. Not one word has failed of all his good promise, which he spoke by Moses his servant. The LORD our God be with us, as he was with our fathers. May he not leave us or forsake us, that he may incline our hearts to him, to walk in all his ways and to keep his commandments, his statutes, and his rules, which he commanded our fathers. Let these words of mine, with which I have pleaded before the LORD, be near to the LORD our God day and night, and may he maintain the cause of his servant and the cause of his people Israel, as each day requires, that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God; there is no other.
I Kings 8:56

"Blessed Be the Lord, the God of Israel, who alone does wondrous things. Blessed be his glorious name forever; may his glory fill the whole earth. Amen and Amen!"
Psalm 72:18-19

Write your blessing in your notebook... (you may want to share your blessings later in your group ... read your blessings aloud and after each one, everyone says together "Blessed are You, O Lord")

II. Turn Around!

Repentance and Cleansing

Scripture: Read Psalm 32

Spiritual Practice: Confession

Invite the Holy Spirit to show you where you may be resisting the grace and love of God, where you are trying to find life on your own terms rather than receive it from Him.

Our tendency is to do one of these things with sin:

- ...to excuse it
- ...to feel guilty
- ...to lower the bar
- ...to try harder

None of those things are God's solution - His solution is to confess (1 John 1:9). Remember that confession is to agree with God about your sin: that sin is death AND that it is forgiven through Christ's death on the cross for us.

Read 1 Peter 2:24, 25 and give thanks that Jesus has carried your sins - and the sins of others against you - to the cross so that you can be free.

III. Listen!

Hearing the Word

Scripture: Psalm 119:1-16

Spiritual Practice: Contemplative Scripture Reading

Here is one way to practice the four steps that make up contemplative Bible reading that can be used by both individuals and groups.

Reading/Listening: Choose a short passage of Scripture and read it aloud. As you read, listen for the word or phrase that speaks to you. What is the Spirit drawing your attention to?

Meditating: Read it again. Repeat aloud the word or phrase to which you are drawn. Make connections between it and your life, between this word and what God is doing in you and in the world. What is God saying to you by means of this word or phrase?

Praying: Read it again. Now take these thoughts and offer them back to God in prayer, giving thanks, asking for guidance, asking for forgiveness, and resting in God's love. What is God leading you to pray in response to this word?

Contemplating: Read it again. Rest in God's presence. Stay open to God. Listen to God. Remain in peace and silence before God. How is God revealing himself to you?

Use one of these passages (from *The Message*) to try - or choose a passage you have read or studied recently and want to go back to.

"Watch what God does, and then you do it, like children who learn proper behavior from their parents. Mostly what God does is love you. Keep company with him and learn a life of love. Observe how Christ loved us. His love was not cautious but extravagant. He didn't love in order to get something from us but to give everything of himself to us. Love like that." Ephesians 5:1,2

Be prepared. You're up against far more than you can handle on your own. Take all the help you can get, every weapon God has issued, so that when it's all over but the shouting you'll still be on your feet. Truth, righteousness, peace, faith, and salvation are more than words. Learn how to apply them. You'll need them throughout your life. God's Word is an indispensable weapon. In the same way, prayer is essential in this ongoing warfare. Pray hard and long. Pray for your brothers and sisters. Keep your eyes open. Keep each other's spirits up so that no one falls behind or drops out. Ephesians 6:13-18

IV. Walk!

Participation with God

Scripture: Read Psalm 23

Spiritual Practices: Discernment, Obedience, Intercession

- Invite the Spirit to guide you into what He is inviting you to do. Are there things that you need to put into practice as a result of what you have heard or experienced today? Something that needs to be put right? A command that you need to obey?
- Who do you need to pray for now? What is God doing and how can you participate in it?
- What is God's calling for you today? What grace do you need from Him in order to do it well?

Write down the insights and prayers from the day in your journal.

*"So you'll go out in joy,
you'll be led into a whole and complete life.
The mountains and hills will lead the parade,
bursting with song.
All the trees of the forest will join the procession,
exuberant with applause.
No more thistles, but giant sequoias,
no more thornbushes, but stately pines—
Monuments to me, to God,
living and lasting evidence of God."*

Isaiah 55:12,13

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