



*7 different templates
for spending time with God*

Personal Time With God

How do you spend time with God daily? Sometimes our relationship can become a little stale and we need some variety. The following seven templates give different frameworks for spending time with the Lord. It may be that doing something different and having a clear format to follow will set you off on a new course and bring new vitality to your walk with the Lord.

Perhaps you would like to use these templates as a weekly guide and approach each day with a different approach. You of course can also create your own templates to add to the variety.

The following templates, in no particular order, will need a focused time and we encourage you to spend as much time as is available to you. At least one hour but ideally two hours. Each has its own theme and includes three parts: a beginning, a main part, and an end.

If you use these templates as a regular weekly guide, you may want to add in a reading schedule so that you are working your way through the bible or a book. You may want to focus for example on a gospel and each day spend some time in meditation. (Lectio Divina or divine reading/meditation – see in template 1 The Bible).

Create your own rhythm of spending time with God hopefully receiving some inspiration from the following pages.

Write Your Own Template

Take time to think through how you would like to give shape to your time with God. What are you looking for? Which activities will you pursue? What do you especially need in this season of your life?

Your template does not have to include a beginning, main part, and closure, but be sure to write your ideas down for yourself, so you have a plan to follow. Then do it!

1. Bible

Beginning: We are encouraged to “Give thanks in everything.” As you come to the Lord, think of things to thank the Lord for. Give thanks for at least 10 things but if there is a flow, keep going. This actually is a great way to start every morning and often it’s helpful to write them down as well.

Main Part:

Option 1: You may want to spend time on something devotional or meditative. The ‘Lectio Divina’ (Divine reading) approach can be very helpful. Choose a passage or take the current day from your bible reading schedule:

- **Read:** Read the passage through attentively. What word or phrase stands out to you?
- **Reflect:** Read the passage again. Think about the phrase or sentence that strikes you and focus on this statement. What, exactly, does this sentence say? What is in it? As you keep reading it, meditate on it, and enter into a dialogue with God. What does he want to speak to you through this passage? If it is narrative, place yourself into the scene to gain new perspective.
- **Respond:** Read the passage again. This time think through what your response should be. Is there an application to make? A prayer? A commitment? An action of some kind?

Option 2: You may want to opt for some serious digging on a particular issue. Turn to a relevant passage and read it several times. Start marking things you notice and write down your thoughts. What do you not understand? How can you restate the text in your own words? What are the implications for your topic or issue of interest? What new understanding or insight do you receive? What is the Holy Spirit speaking to you?

Closure: Make sure you preserve your conclusions and what you feel God has been speaking in writing. You may also want to write a formal resolve or commitment in response to your reflections. It is also useful to turn your meditations into proclamations with what God is saying to you.

Proclamation: Words are creative and powerful. Speak out the verses that God has underlined with confidence and authority over your life or the people and the context you are thinking about. Feel free to elaborate on the verses, paraphrasing them, or adjusting them to make them fit your circumstances.

2. Journal

Beginning: A breath prayer is a pre-formed prayer so short that you can speak it in one breath. A few examples: “Jesus, have mercy on me,” “Holy Spirit, come and fill me,” and “Father, show me what you are doing.” Start by creating and praying a breath prayer of your own. Keep repeating the same prayer as you seek to focus on God and to find peace inside. As you return to this exercise repeat your breath prayer at least twenty times as you sit before the Lord.

Main Part: Choose a short passage from the Bible, for instance your favourite verse or a passage that has recently become important to you, and go through the following steps:

- Sit down with paper/journal and a pen.
- Thank God that he is here with you and that he is leading you during this time.
- Start by writing down the full text of the verse(s) you chose. Once done, continue to write whatever comes to your mind. Let God lead you and trust that he is “leading your pen.” Don’t stop writing, keep going. If nothing comes any more, write the verse again, but don’t stop. For example:

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice” (Phil. 4:4). Lord, you call me to rejoice. I don’t feel like rejoicing at this moment. I feel rather heavy. But you call me to rejoice. So it sounds like a command and is not dependent on how I feel. Lord, even though I don’t feel like rejoicing I choose to rejoice. But what does rejoicing look for me in this moment? ...

- Keep writing for at least 20 minutes. Don’t stop to reflect on what you have written.
- Once you are done, lay down your pen. Now read what is written on your paper several times. Reflect: What has God been sharing with you? Is there anything important about him? About you? Anything you are challenged to do or to change?
- Write down if there are any practical steps you are to do, for example:
God is calling me to rejoice more in this season. I am not to follow my feelings, but to rejoice by being grateful. God is challenging me to focus on what is positive right now. For the next seven days I will consciously take five minutes during my time with the Lord to thank him in a specific way for this season (and for what he is doing).

Closure: Spend the final minutes in thanksgiving and praise. Thank him for his speaking, for who he is, and what he is going to do. It may help to change posture or location at this point. One possibility is to go on a short walk or find a place with a view.

3. Contemplation

Beginning: Take a journal or a piece of paper and begin by writing down whatever crowds into your mind: things you still need to do or would like to do, worries, concerns – thoughts that keep you from focusing. In this way, you let go of distractions, but if you think of anything important you need to take care of, you won't forget and you can take care of it later. Once you are done, invite the Lord to fill you with his peace, his presence, and his love.

Main Part: Contemplation is the direct experience of God's presence. Read this passage from Brother Lawrence, *Practicing the Presence of God*. It is the first letter included in this book. Read it thoughtfully and respond to what you read by telling God the thoughts, feelings, and questions that come to you as you read.

How the habitual sense of God's Presence was found.

Since you desire so earnestly that I should communicate to you the method by which I arrived at that habitual sense of GOD's Presence, which our LORD, of His mercy, has been pleased to vouchsafe to me; I must tell you, that it is with great difficulty that I am prevailed on by your importunities; and now I do it only upon the terms, that you show my letter to nobody. If I knew that you would let it be seen, all the desire that I have for your advancement would not be able to determine me to it. The account I can give you is:

Having found in many books different methods of going to GOD, and divers practices of the spiritual life, I thought this would serve rather to puzzle me, than facilitate what I sought after, which was nothing but how to become wholly GOD's.

This made me resolve to give the all for the All: so after having given myself wholly to GOD, to make all the satisfaction I could for my sins, I renounced, for the love of Him, everything that was not He; and I began to live as if there was none but He and I in the world. Sometimes I considered myself before Him as a poor criminal at the feet of his judge; at other times I beheld Him in my heart as my FATHER, as my GOD: I worshipped Him the oftenest that I could, keeping my mind in His holy Presence, and recalling it as often as I found it wandered from Him. I found no small pain in this exercise, and yet I continued it, notwithstanding all the difficulties that occurred, without troubling or disquieting myself when my mind

had wandered involuntarily. I made this my business, as much all the day long as at the appointed times of prayer; for at all times, every hour, every minute, even in the height of my business, I drove away from my mind everything that was capable of interrupting my thought of GOD.

Such has been my common practice ever since I entered into religion; and though I have done it very imperfectly, yet I have found great advantages by it. These, I well know, are to be imputed to the mere mercy and goodness of GOD, because we can do nothing without Him; and I still less than any. But when we are faithful to keep ourselves in His holy Presence, and set Him always before us, this not only hinders our offending Him, and doing anything that may displease Him, at least willfully, but it also begets in us a holy freedom, and if I may so speak, a familiarity with GOD, wherewith we ask, and that successfully, the graces we stand

in need of. In fine, by often repeating these acts, they become habitual, and the presence of GOD is rendered as it were natural to us. Give Him thanks, if you please, with me, for His great goodness towards me, which I can never sufficiently admire, for the many favours He has done to so miserable a sinner as I am. May all things praise Him. Amen.

Alternatively: There are many things and areas of life to contemplate. Choose something that interests you. For example:

- an article or paragraph of someone's writing as above;
- a characteristic(s) of God or descriptive name(s) of God;
- an aspect of the life of Jesus;
- the seasons;
- a scene or view;
- a picture you have seen;
- an aspect of creation;
- a worship song;
- your response to God;
- a character quality; ...

Closure: Write your own psalm expressing your adoration of God. If you need some help to get you going, start by reading Psalm 8 a few times. Then it is your turn.



4. Nature

Beginning: Start by sitting somewhere with a view or go for a short walk. If you live in the city, perhaps there is a park you can walk to. Or perhaps you have a place in your home where you can create a nature corner with plants to appreciate. Even if you can breathe the air and look up into the sky to get a fresh glimpse of our Creator God. Praise God for what you experience. Praise Him for creation, for what he has given to us – for us to enjoy and be refreshed.

Main Part: Formulate a question for which you are seeking an answer or regarding which you desire God to speak to you. Continue outside or in your creation corner and ask God to speak through something you see, smell, hear, taste or are able to touch. You may want to pick something up and feel and handle it – a leaf, a stone, a flower, a feather or whatever draws your attention.

I have been blessed to live close to the beach or in the country these last 15 years and it is often walking in creation where I feel the closest to the Lord. Expect God to speak to you. Look around for something that you connect with or that captures your interest; then enter into conversation with God about it, integrating what you have seen or noticed into this conversation. Make sure you ask him how it gives light on the question you started with.

Closure: Think of a symbolic action to bring closure to this time, or hold the object you picked up which stands for an important insight you have gained. How can this lesson, thought or mediation be brought into today. Turn your thoughts into a prayer.



5. Prayer

Beginning: Start with worship, speaking out characteristics of God, for example: “Father, you are holy, you are the God of peace, the creator ...”

Then stop for a few minutes and ask the Lord, “What are you saying to me today?” Get your pen and paper ready to write down what the Lord says to you. This can be like a personal prophecy and it will be for your strengthening, encouragement and comfort (1 Cor. 14:3).

Main Part:

Option 1: Take time for intensive prayer or intercession for certain issues, either related to events taking place in the world or things you are personally involved in. Start off with taking time to be quiet and listen to what God has to say. Or first take some time to dream: imagine (and perhaps try to write down) what might be God’s desire for the situation. Then take time to intercede. Remain sensitive to how the Holy Spirit might lead you in your praying.

Option 2: Take time for a prayerful review of your schedule and goals. Take time to pray for each item and also to wait and listen if God has something to say on it.

You may like to create a chart like the one below with the 7 aspects of our life. First put a dot or cross at the level of satisfaction in each area. Then think and pray through which is the priority to focus on right now. As you take the priority issue to the Lord, ask for his blessing in this area of your life. Ask the Lord what will take you from your present level (eg 2) to the next level (eg 3) for this aspect of life. Then think through specific action points that you feel the Lord is asking you to put into application.



Closure: Give thanks for this time and for what God is about to do.

It may be that God calls you to continue to lift up one (or several) of the issues you prayed for in the next season. Think about how you will include this into your personal times with the Lord or how else you will continue to lift this up.

Or write down the specific actions you want to follow through on somewhere you can see to remind you of how God is challenging you. Perhaps share with someone for accountability.

6. Cleansing

Beginning: Our lives so easily become cluttered and stressed and we pick up pollution as we journey. Allow God to come and cleanse and wash away all that is not of him. Start by reading a Psalm slowly.

Main Part: Take a good amount of time in each of the simple activities below. When you are tempted to stop or feel you have done enough, push through a little more and extend the time.

Rest: Open your heart up to the Lord. What are you feeling, knowing that God is present with you and always has been? Express what you feel: words of joy, sadness, trust, disappointment, thanks....

What would you say is stealing your peace? What are some of the strains, struggles and stressors in your life right now? What are some de-stressors that you could incorporate into your day?

Silence: Pause and be aware of the Holy Spirit of peace, present now with you, coming to give light and life. You may be so caught up in your own feelings or busyness that you have forgotten the special presence of God or the gift of His guiding Spirit. Take time to welcome that light and peace into your life. Take time to rest in his presence. Drink him in. Enjoy his embrace.

Offer your life: Take up a relaxed position, ideally lying down. Slowly bring every aspect of your body to God as an offering and for his blessing. If you can think of a verse connected with that aspect that is helpful. Eg Lord I bring my mind to you and take every thought captive and make it obedient to you. Lord may my eyes be fixed on Jesus, may I see what you are doing every moment today. Continue with your nose, mouth, ears, shoulders, arms, hands, etc... Bring your body as an offering to the Lord. Bless and speak health and perhaps healing to each part. (more details on the next page)

Speak in tongues: Take time to use your prayer language to connect with God. Seek to extend the time you worship in this way. Dwell on the person of the Father, Jesus or the Holy Spirit as you speak.

Closure: Take time to bring adoration to the Lord. Speak words of praise and worship from your heart. Give yourself to him wholly. Love and adore him.

Jesus asks us the question that he asked Bartimeaus in Mark 10:49-52 "What do you want me to do for you?" Respond to him with your hearts desire and finish with the blessing below from Numbers.

"Lord, please bless me, keep me, and guard me. Lord, make your face shine upon me and be gracious to me. Lord, lift up your face and presence upon me and give me your peace. Numbers 6:24-26

6. Continued - Offering your body to the Lord

Here are some examples of how we can prophesy to the members of our body and cover each part with the blood of Jesus. (Taken from Prayers & Prophesying by Atef Meshreky)

Start with the heart: 'It will not be a proud heart but a humble and meek heart. It will not be an anxious or disturbed heart, but a calm and quieted heart. The Lord will give me a new heart and will put a new spirit in me.

Mind: I shall be given thoughts of faith and love; thoughts of humility and peace. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard my heart and my mind in Christ Jesus. The Lord my God shall light my darkness so I receive the wisdom that comes from heaven.

Eyes: The scales and all that blurs the eyes shall fall off, and every plank shall be exposed and shall be burnt. So my eyes shall be opened and enlightened.

Ears: I shall hear a word behind me saying: this is the way, walk in it, whenever I turn to the right hand or whenever I turn to the left.

Mouth: Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips. My words which I have put in your mouth, shall not depart from your mouth nor from the mouth of your descendants, not from the mouth of descendants' descendants. My tongue is the pen of a ready writer that proclaims the glory of God, praises his name and talks of his righteousness all day long.

Neck: So every yoke shall be destroyed and I shall take upon me the yoke of Christ, for His yoke is easy and His burden is light.

Shoulders: You have removed the burden from my shoulders. Heal me from the aftereffect of the burdens and sufferings.

Hands: The work of my hands shall be established and the will of the Lord shall prosper in my hands. I have put my hands to the plow, I shall not look back. So my hands shall be filled with blessing and strength and shall be accompanied with authority.

Feet: He set my feet upon a rock and established my steps. He will go before me and make the crooked places straight.

7. Examine

Beginning: Begin with 5 minutes of complete silence. Wait on God, and think of nothing but his presence during this time.

An alternative: just sit for some minutes in peace, laying down your thoughts. I often imagine an altar of stone in front of me; if thoughts crowd my mind, in my imagination I lay them on this altar.

Main Part: Choose an area of life (e.g. your walk with God, relationships, a ministry responsibility, finances) or a particular time period (a week, a month, a year) and ask some of the following questions in relation to this area or period. (If you have used these templates for the last week, you may want to use this examine to debrief the week.)

1. Light

- What am I most thankful for?
- When did I feel the most energized?
- When did I feel the presence of God?

2. Darkness

- When did I feel the most dissatisfied or restricted?
- What is something that bothers me?
- What do I lack?
- When did I fail?

3. Response

- How do you respond?
- What would you like to change?
- What do you need to receive? Forgiveness, love, peace, joy....
- Allow space for God to speak to you and for his presence to surround you.

Closure: Based on your response, write a prayer you would like to pray daily in the days (or weeks) to come. It may be related to the change you desire, so express what you need to receive from God, or confess your surrender to him. For the time you set, pray this prayer daily.