



BEING WITH JESUS

A guide to a daily time of prayer
(or “Quiet Time”)

Jesus said,

*“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened,
And I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you,
And learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart,
And you will find rest for your souls.
For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light”
(Matthew 11:28-30)*

Following Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life

As a church we are focussing clearly on helping each other to grow as disciples of Jesus. There are three particular aspects to this:

- Being with Jesus,
- Becoming like Jesus,
- and Doing what Jesus did.

When Jesus first called his disciples, he called them to “be with him, and to be sent out...” (Mark 3:14). It all starts with spending time with him.

One of the keys to growing as Jesus’ disciples is to make time every day for quiet prayer and meditation on scripture. This is often called a “Quiet Time”. It helps us learn to be with him, to become more sensitive to his presence with us, and to let him change us to become more like him.

As we are all different, it is important over time to develop a rhythm of prayer that suits us. This is not an attempt to earn God’s favour – he loves us more than we can imagine already. It’s a way of learning to enjoy his presence, and to “abide” (or “remain”) in him.

Jesus said,

“I am the vine, you are the branches.

*If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit;
apart from me, you can do nothing”.*

(John 15:5)

What follows is just a guideline, a way to get started, or a way to refresh our prayer if we've got stuck. There is no need to follow it slavishly. Ask Jesus to show you how best to pray the way he has made you.

We recommend trying to set aside half an hour daily. But if that seems too much, start with 15 -20 minutes.

*Jesus said,
"When you pray, go into your room, close the door
and pray to your Father, who is unseen"
(Matthew 6:6)*

First, Decide on a Time and a Place.

It helps to have a regular time and place to be with Jesus. For many it will be first thing in the morning; for some it's better in the evening; for busy mums, we recommend the first lull of the day; some will find the middle of the day works best for them.

Choose a comfortable chair, switch off your phone or put it on "airplane" mode (better still, leave it in another room) and ask others not to disturb you.

Then follow the four parts to the prayer time suggested in the following pages. As you get used to this, let Jesus show you how to adapt it to suit you best.

“Stilling” – beginning to be still

Psalm 46:10 says, “Be still, and know that I am God”.

Take three deep breaths, and be still. Tell Jesus you want to grow closer to him. You may find a formal opening prayer helpful – John Stott’s Morning Prayer is on the back page. Some people find it helpful to light a candle, and invite Jesus to shine his light upon them.

Take a few minutes to pray a simple “breath prayer” – eg “Thankyou Jesus”, or “I love you Lord”, or “Father”, or “Come Holy Spirit”, or maybe even just “Here I am”.

Or you might prefer to praise God using the words of a hymn or song.

Reviewing the last day

Ask Jesus to help you to review the last day.

Let his Holy Spirit walk through it with you. There will be particular things to say “Thankyou” for; there will be other things to say “Sorry” for. Receive the gift of forgiveness. Thank God for it.

Ask Jesus to show you where he was particularly present, or anything that he thinks was significant in the day. Over time, you will learn to get better at discerning his presence with you, and staying close to him.

Your attention will probably drift at some point; don’t worry about that – just come back to your “breath prayer” and continue reviewing the day.

Some people prefer to do this in the evening, before going to bed – it doesn’t matter when you do this, but it is really helpful in learning to “abide” in Jesus.

Meditate on Scripture

Psalm 1 says, “Blessed is the person whose delight is in the law of the LORD, who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither – whatever they do prospers”.

Ask Jesus to speak to you through his word in the bible.

Read the passage slowly – sometimes reading it out loud can help.

See if the Lord highlights any particular verse or phrase to you. Let him speak it to you. Think about it. Be aware of any memories or emotions it stirs up in you

Read the passage slowly again. See if another verse or phrase stands out for you, or stay with the same one.

The point of this is to let God speak to you. Don't try to study the passage in this prayer time. Bible Study is an important discipline to shape our thinking and how to live our lives. But the danger is that it all stays as head knowledge. The point of this prayerful bible reading is to have a conversation with God – to let him speak to you.

Take a few minutes to reflect on the verse that he has highlighted. Ask Jesus why this verse or phrase caught your attention. What is he trying to say to you?

Pray about the thoughts that come to mind.

And be still for another minute or two.

Each week in Lent, we will give you 3 bible passages to read. We suggest you spend 2 days on each of them – though you are welcome to spend all week on just 1 of them if you prefer!

If you have been a Christian for any length of time, many of these will be familiar. Ask the Lord to speak something fresh to you. This is the advantage of taking 2 or more days on each passage – it may well be that the Lord will highlight something different each day.

Ending

Pray about the day coming up. Ask the Lord to help you to stay close to him. Ask him to use you to be a blessing to others.

You might like to close the time of prayer with the Lord's Prayer.

*Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be your name,
Your kingdom come, Your will be done,
On earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
As we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation,
But deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power and the glory,
Are yours now and forever. Amen*

Make a note in your journal or notebook of anything significant from your Quiet Time, especially anything you think God has said to you, or any particular memories or emotions.

4-mations

We all need encouragement along the way to go deeper in prayer, and to be formed to become more and more like Jesus. You can't be a disciple of Jesus on your own.

Jesus "often withdrew to lonely places and prayed" (Luke 5:16). But he also prayed with others: "Jesus took Peter, James and John with him, and went up onto a mountain to pray" (Luke 9:28).

The idea of the 4-mations is to get together in groups of 4 to help each other, and pray for each other. It is, of course, fine to have just 3 people in your 4-mation (or triplet) or even to have a 5-mation if you want!

So what do we suggest you do in your 4-mations?

Choose one of the group to be the co-ordinator of your 4-mation, and agree a time and place to meet. We suggest you plan to meet for an hour (though you may well want longer). The point of these groups in Lent is to encourage each other in your daily prayer. Using the same bible passages as each other for the week before helps. The first time you meet, tell each other what you are hoping for from this prayer journey during Lent.

Then for your weekly meeting:

- Open with a prayer for Jesus to be with you by his Holy Spirit
- Take 10 minutes each to say how things are going – are you falling asleep? How many days did you manage to take time for prayer? Are there particular things you sense God saying to you?

Then take the last 20 minutes to pray for each other – pray for one person at a time, ideally with each of you praying for them

John Stott's Morning Prayer

Good morning heavenly Father,
good morning Lord Jesus,
good morning Holy Spirit.

Heavenly Father, I worship you as the creator
and sustainer of the universe.

Lord Jesus, I worship you, Saviour and Lord of the world.

Holy Spirit, I worship you, sanctifier of the people of God.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit.

Heavenly Father, I pray that I may live this day in your presence
and please you more and more.

Lord Jesus, I pray that this day I may take up my cross
and follow you.

Holy Spirit, I pray that this day you will fill me with yourself
and cause your fruit to ripen in my life: love, joy, peace,
patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness
and self-control.

Holy, blessed and glorious Trinity, three persons in one God,
have mercy upon me. Amen.

(John Stott, quoted in Basic Christian: The Inside Story of John Stott)