

ALONE WITH GOD

Walking Daily with the Real Jesus

MICHAEL WARDEN



Ascent Books & Media

An imprint of the Ascent Coaching Group, Inc.

Alone With God

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Published by Ascent Books & Media, an imprint of the Ascent Coaching Group, Inc., 9901 Brodie Lane Suite 160, Austin, Texas 78748. www.ascentcoachinggroup.com

ISBN 978-0-615-24417-4

Printed in the United States of America

What Readers Are Saying about ALONE WITH GOD

*Rarely have I read a book that plumbs the depths of our humanity, while offering to us the truth that we can take Christ all the way into our souls without it seeming trite or like a quick fix that never has a lasting effect. I was refreshed and delighted by Mike's book, *Alone with God*. I go back to it again and again not only for encouragement, but also to delve deeper into my love for Christ.—*
Kate Gleason, Colorado

*With a deep simplicity reminiscent of Oswald Chambers in "My Utmost for His Highest," Michael Warden writes of Christ's love and grace, encouraging us to apply God's Word in ways that challenge and free us. I found myself pierced to my soul with Warden's insights; my copy of this devotional now bears copious underlined sentences and myriad dog-eared pages for future reference. I highly recommend this devotional to anyone who craves a more intimate walk with God!—*Lisa Lauffer, Colorado

*This little devotional is loaded with simple, yet profound insights into God's character and the amazing ways He relates to His beloved children. Even though each days' reading is only a few short paragraphs, many of them are so compelling I have to STOP and take time to chew on what I've just read! I think every believer will be challenged and encouraged by this book to draw closer to God in both maturity and intimacy.—*Mark Furaus, Idaho

*Good Devotional Books are intended to help the reader reflect. They help us step outside of the seemingly mundane rhythm of our lives and see the "strong hand of love, hidden in the shadows," to quote a favorite songwriter of mine. Mike Warden's *Alone with God* is such a devotional book. Think of it like a daily guide to a place of reflection and contemplation—a sacred place (like the title offers) to be alone and intimate with God. Drink deeply of these words.—*Tim Pynes, Colorado

*Now the Lord is the Spirit,
and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.
But we all, with unveiled face,
beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord,
are being transformed
into the same image from glory to glory,
just as from the Lord, the Spirit.*

2 Corinthians 3:17-18, NASB

Passion

*I hear your harps strum
above the world;
so fly me there, carry me
and hum as you cradle me
I lift my eyes and watch your gaze
consume me
in the passion of your love
Remake me in your image,
O Ancient of Days
The songs you sing are my life and hope
Your eyes are all my heart's satisfaction
Build me here
as an altar in your inner chamber
that I may ever bare my heart to you
and always know the sweetness
of your shaping*

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Jesus answered, "The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent." (John 6:29)

WE are always trying to add something to Jesus' equation for following God. It's not comfortable for us to simply believe like children; we'd rather believe a little, then finish up the task with our own efforts. The flesh (a.k.a. our old nature) will always resist the life of faith, because believing requires us to give up having control, or taking credit for our own victory.

The work of God is literally "God's work." It's not your work, but God's work in and through you. By definition, it is a supernatural work, and cannot benefit in the slightest from your efforts in the natural to make it happen. All that is required of you is your absolute, continual surrender, and a faith that compels you to keep your heart intensely focused on Jesus.

"Do you mean I must simply sit in my room and pray, and wait for my food to be cooked, and my bills to be paid?" No, but you must learn to walk as Jesus did: *"I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does"* (John 5:19-20). You are in Christ as Christ is in the Father. Jesus is the hand; you are the glove. The glove can do nothing by itself; it can only do what the hand is doing.

To believe in Jesus means to abide in Him, and to allow His life to manifest through you. That is the work of God. It is not about you or your ideas or your plans or your efforts. It's about Jesus. To accomplish God's work, you must follow Jesus—and Jesus alone.

DAY 2

If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him? (Luke 11:13, NASB)

GOD the Father has made provision for you every day...provision in grace, in direction, and in all you need for life. Knowing this, it seems odd that we so often demand that God continually lay His provision out in plain sight before we will really trust in it. “Oh, I know God will provide for my need; I’d just feel so much better if I could just see some sign of His provision.” It’s one thing to know the truth, but it is quite another to believe in it. Once we rest in the truth that God Provides for Us, we no longer need to see proof to believe it is true. It simply is. Unshakeable. Fact. There is a great deal of rest in that sort of faith.

Do not get in the habit of trusting in what you can see. What you see circumstantially can be deceiving. All such things are passing—one moment here, the next moment gone. But God’s Word is not deceptive. It is always true, unchanging, and can always be trusted. Does God love you? Yes. Does God command the storehouses of heaven? Yes. Then will He not use all that is at His disposal to care for you? Of course. So relax—you can trust Him.

When you are hungering in need, do not think that God has abandoned you. He never will. God’s desire for you, and His command, is that you rest and believe. Let your Father care for you in the way He has chosen. His way is best, regardless of what your intellect tells you. And stop demanding in your heart always to see what’s in God’s hand for you. Jesus wants us to be simple. He wants us to learn to trust Him. Don’t just know the truth intellectually—believe it. Then no circumstance can keep you from walking in peace—because you know your provision in God is sure. “*Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven*” (Matthew 18:4, NASB).

DAY 3

He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord.
(Deuteronomy 8:3, NASB)

IT is within the providence of God to allow us to be in need. He does not do this to punish or forsake our hearts, but rather to refine us. He longs to set your heart free. He knows there are things in you that will rise up to doubt Him when difficulties come. So come they do, that He may reveal the darkness in you, and provoke you to bring it into the Light.

What do you hunger for? The hunger you face is for your learning, nothing more. You need not doubt that He will meet the need. He will. But first He will see what is in your heart. He knows there is still darkness in you and uses your need as a refining fire that separates the impurities from your soul.

Jesus loves you more than life itself. It is never His heart to hurt you, or leave you in need forever. But these things must happen for you to be free. More than anything, Jesus is determined that you be free. Believe in Him, whatever your need. Work with Him, and do not doubt. Then, together, you will remake your heart.

DAY 4

They [Israel] turned their backs to me, and not their faces; though I taught them again and again, they would not listen or respond to discipline. They set up their abominable idols in the house that bears my Name and defiled it. (Jeremiah 32:33-34)

IT is possible to lose the Promised Land once it is gained, but in only one way—by being seduced to idolatry. Idolatry is worshipping anything other than God. Such idols take many forms—family, career, entertainment, comfort, money, pleasure, education, religion. Even pride is idolatry—the worship of self.

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The Promised Land is gained through battle, and it is kept through vigilance and humility. That is why the Scripture rightly says, “*Watch over your heart with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life*” (Proverbs 4:23, NASB). Of course, you do not guard what cannot be stolen, but what *can* be stolen. The springs of abundant life are not in the external world. They are within you. And they can be stolen if they are not guarded. But how do I guard my heart from idolatry? By staying humble in everything, actively listening to the Spirit, and learning to resist the enemy wherever he appears.

Idolatry is an issue of the heart long before it becomes a matter of behavior. You can look perfectly holy on the outside, and still embrace an abominable idol in your soul. Therefore, be diligent to guard your heart. Pursue humility in all things. Recognize that you have an enemy. And regularly submit yourself totally and completely to God. This is your best defense. Stay true to the course God has set before you. Do not let yourself be easily distracted.

Fight for what is yours in the Lord. And stand guard over what you have gained.

DAY 5

But we are not of those who shrink back to destruction, but of those who have faith to the persevering of the soul. Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. (Hebrews 10:39-11:1, NASB)

YOU are made of better stuff than you think. When the trial arises, most people generally give up far too easily. One small sting hits your heart, and you throw up your arms in despair, ready to abort your race. You forget who you really are. But God does not forget you. He knows the stuff you are made of. He knows your limits, and your capacity for faith. And so He allows the sting to come.

It is the Father’s heart to structure life in such a way that we may become truly wise only by choosing to live as children do. This childlike way of life is not too difficult for any of us. God has created it for us, and us for it. But we do have need of endurance.

We will gain the daily strength we need in one way only—by looking to God as a child looks to a father. There is great confidence in God’s face. *“Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame”* (Psalm 34:5).

Then the trials inevitably come. In the struggle, our childlike focus is diverted from God, and we allow circumstance to direct our lives. But following circumstance is mindless—it cannot direct you to life, only to survival. Keep your focus on Jesus. He is your True Shepherd. Listen to His Word, watch His movements. Stay close to Him, as little children do. Though you walk through threatening circumstances, you will not fall. Remember, high places may appear treacherous to some, but they can be lovely to those who trust in Jesus as their Guide.

When the sting comes, persevere and don’t waver in faith. Don’t look down. Rather, look at your hand held tight in Christ’s, and look at the view from the heights He has brought you to. This, too, is His gift to you.

DAY 6

Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.
(1 John 3:2-3, NASB)

WE are not changed by the strength of our will, or the depth of our desire. We are changed by seeing God—the One True Reality. One of the great definitions of reality is this: That which is permanent and eternal. God is real. His love for you is real. His Word is real. Your relationships with other believers are real. But almost nothing else is. The rest is temporary illusion. See that house, or that mountain? In time it will disappear as though it never existed.

Contrary to popular belief, the physical world does not define reality—rather, it is only a shadow of what is truly real. The mountains provide hints of grandeur. The oceans, hints of depth.

The sky, stars, and clouds show us hints of glory. But none of these shadows will last forever. None of them are real in that sense.

We, as people, on the other hand, are real enough. Our spirits are eternal. But for the most part, we don't live like it. Too often, we fall into the common belief that we are part of this "shadow" world, and so we define ourselves by it.

When you begin to look to God as the One True Reality, however, something wondrous happens. Your eyes open. Your ears unplug. For the first time, you begin to truly see Jesus as a present reality, living right here in this moment with you—and you are changed. You cannot sit in the presence of God and not be changed. You begin to transform your mind, and understand that you are not a shadow. You are real—an eternal being living in a temporal world. And you have a story that is as real and priceless and eternal as you are.

Once you begin to see God as the One True Reality, all the things around you that are not real suddenly become obvious. You see that it does no good at all to put your hope in money, or possessions, or marriage, or the strength of your own soul. All of those things are illusions—shadows that do not exist in the eternal reality of God's presence. Instead, you must fix your eyes on Jesus, and hope boldly in Him. It is this purposeful looking at God that ultimately transforms us into the image of Christ.

DAY 7

Can a woman forget her nursing child, and have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you! Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of My hands; your walls are ever before Me. (Isaiah 49:15-16, NASB)

THERE is desire for "home" in all of us. It is that hard-to-define ache that continually tells you that there is something more for you somewhere; that you have not yet arrived at your goal. I'm not talking about the longing for heaven, but rather the longing for fulfillment on earth. The longing for a place to belong, to love and be loved, to be free—here, in this world. I think this longing is hard-wired into our souls. It's part of being human.

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God knows all about your longing, of course. He knows more about it than you ever will. And He is guiding you to your desired haven. You are not forsaken; He cannot forget you. Together, you are always moving toward the land of your inheritance. Step by step, you are occupying the Kingdom.

But here is the part where we often get confused. Too often, we think this longing is solely for something “out there,” something circumstantial. A successful career, a wife or husband, a family, an array of pricey possessions. We get lost looking for outward changes, and forget that the kingdom of God must first transform *you*—in the secret places of your soul—before any outward change will satisfy. Once the Kingdom is established *within* you, then it will spill over into the external world around you.

Therefore, it does no good to focus on the external things—changing careers, changing friends, getting married, getting more money—without first dealing with the internal things of the heart. Who are you in Christ? What does Jesus love about you? What does it mean to walk in constant communion with God? Jesus wants to deal with those matters first. Once His kingdom is established within you, you will find that the external things will take care of themselves.

DAY 8

When Peter saw him, he asked, “Lord, what about him?” Jesus answered, “If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that you? You must follow me.” (John 21:21-22)

EVERY man and woman has a path set before them by God. The paths are as varied as the people the Lord made them for, but they all lead to Christ. Your path is before you now, though you may not see it clearly. Don’t worry about it. Each step will be made clear by the Word of God and His Spirit within you. Like all paths in Christ, yours is a path of richness and intimacy and good fruit.

But it isn’t the only path before you. There are others laid before you every day, paths created from your own desires or from the desires of others. And some that come straight from the pit of

hell. God has allowed it to be this way, to give you the free will to choose the path you wish. Do not think that you can walk through the day without choosing. Stop yourself from saying, “I will follow you Lord; but not yet, not in this moment. Just let me do this one thing, then I am yours.” In that moment, you have already chosen a path away from your deepest longing.

There is no option as to whether you must choose; only in what you will choose. If you do not choose God’s path by a conscious act of your will, then you will choose a lesser path by default.

Beware of choosing the path that goes along with the crowd—even if the crowd is full of Christians. Only Christ knows the specific path He has called you to follow. No other person has known it, because it was not designed for anyone but you. Your path in Christ may not be like the paths of your brothers or sisters. So it will profit you nothing to compare your life with theirs. Each person’s path is his or her own, and cannot be judged or discerned by another. “*If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me.*” The truth path of God for you is the way of His Word, and of His Spirit living within you. Follow that path faithfully, every moment, and stop trying to make it look like everyone else’s. Be true to Christ’s way *in you*.

DAY 9

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. (Hebrews 12:1)

THIS is a sobering command. It is the Lord’s will for you to give yourself exclusively to one purpose—to shake loose any obstacles that hinder your way in God, and run freely with abandon down the path He has chosen for you. Such freedom requires a long, steady obedience in a singular direction. It is not just a neat idea. It is not just a philosophy. It is God’s heart, and His will for your life.

To live this way narrows your daily options. From the rising of the sun until it sets, your awareness of the world around you, your intelligence, your responsibilities, your daily tasks—all of these are continually submitted to God. When you do this, you will find that your life becomes wonderfully simple. “I desire, Lord, to do your will”—nothing more, nothing less. And His response to your prayer becomes your only motivation in the natural realm. In this abandoned place of intimacy, He becomes the beginning and the finishing of everything you do. He truly becomes your all in all.

DAY 10

What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish that I may gain Christ. (Philippians 3:8)

WHEN you obey God’s will to this degree, you find you can no longer say, “Oh, I will take up the cause again tomorrow. For now, I will give in to my old ways.” The old ways are dead. You have chosen a more exact course now. You are committed. How can a runner expect to finish the race if he continually wanders off the track?

To reach such a place of abandoned freedom may take two years of consistent obedience to His will for your life. It may take one, or five, or twenty. But such a harvest as you are looking for cannot be rushed. So it’s best not to be in a hurry.

Do you dare to obey the Lord God to such an extreme degree? If you do, then take these truths to heart. They will strengthen you to finish the course:

- ❖ Recognize that you are living as an alien in a foreign land. This is not your home.
- ❖ You have an enemy who is set against you. God’s is not the only will at work in your life.
- ❖ Meditate daily on truths regarding your true identity in Christ.

- ❖ Practice living consciously in God’s presence. Make Him your sole audience for life.
- ❖ Bring every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. One stray thought can throw off your whole day.
- ❖ Surround yourself with people who bear the Christlike qualities you wish to gain.
- ❖ Recognize that freedom is a process of sowing and reaping. Be patient with yourself, and enjoy the journey!

DAY 11

But He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time onward until His enemies be made a footstool for His feet.

(Hebrews 10:12-13, NASB)

JESUS received the promise from God, and He acted in obedience to it. Since then He has been waiting for God to bring about the fulfillment of the promise. In the same way, we must also at times wait on God to do what He has promised. God places a promise into your spirit—a promise that He confirms through His Word and through other believers—and you act in obedience to it. But nothing happens immediately. And so you wait, hoping God will someday bring the fulfillment of what He has promised to you.

“Hope deferred makes the heart sick” (Proverbs 13:12, NASB). Since God makes us all wait, does that mean He wants us all to be sick at heart? No. He never intended that we wait in hope, but rather that we wait *in faith*.

Hope can only say, “I hope this happens” or “I am praying for this to happen.” But if God has really spoken to you, and you are confident of His voice, then you must do more than hope. You must believe. *“Faith is the assurance of things hoped for”* (Hebrews 11:1, NASB). Faith says, “I know this will happen; I am confident in God.” Faith knows that the fulfillment of the promise God has spoken has come already—it’s just a matter of time for it to come to your present reality. Hope aches, but faith rests.

It is in the waiting that your faith is purified. So commit yourself to wait patiently. Take it easy—the Lord is faithful to His promises. Don't become discouraged when you round a bend and don't see your fulfillment right away. It will come. He makes everything beautiful in its time (Ecclesiastes 3:11). For now, enjoy the journey. Revel in the moment and let the waiting stretch your faith. Walk in faith for tomorrow, but enjoy the gifts God has already brought today.

DAY 12

Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith...so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.
(Hebrews 12:2, 3)

IT'S easy to forget yourself and operate in the mundane. Life becomes merely functional, a series of tasks and duties strung together without meaning. You survive, but you are not really alive. True life is a choice, and you must make it every day, through the passing of each moment. It is not an easy thing to do. Merely surviving is far easier. But you were made for greater things.

True living requires great discipline and focus. It takes a heart committed to live deliberately, and to fiercely defend against unimportant distractions.

If “surviving” is analogous to clinging to the rocky ledge of a high and dangerous cliff, then truly living means we must daringly let go and fall, purposefully choosing to place your safety and future in God's hands rather than trying to cling to life in your own strength. From our point of view, it is a far more dangerous way to go. But, in the end, it is the only way that leads to any sort of real life at all.

Jesus is Life. To truly live, you must “fix your eyes on him”—His ability, His will, His love for you. It is a choice. And if you fail to make it deliberately each day, then you will choose a lesser path by default. Therefore, choose life—even if it seems to cost you everything. The fact is, it always will.

DAY 13

For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.
(1 Peter 1:23)

THE mind, the will, the emotions—the soul—is born of the world. Nothing that is born of this world is able to overcome the world. Only that which has been *reborn*—not of the flesh, but of the Spirit through faith—can overcome the world. In fact, whatever is born of God is destined to overcome the world. It is inevitable, just as light must overcome darkness.

There is only one way this rebirth happens in our lives—through the process of the Word. The Word is born of God, and it alone carries the power to redeem the darkness in our lives, and cause us to become reborn out of the Spirit to a new and living way. The way of the Word is the way of a seed planted in the soil. It is God's way...the law of sowing, nurturing and reaping.

We receive God's Truth implanted (as a seed) through faith. Then we must nurture the truth by providing light and water. The light is the Word of God, the authority by which all truth must be measured, tested, and proven. Meditating on the Word provides life—giving light to God's truth planted in your soul. The water is the Holy Spirit. Without the watering of the Spirit, any seed of truth within us will die. But wherever Truth and Spirit are brought together, new life—overcoming life—is born.

The process of the Word is a discipline of the Christian life. It may not always be a pleasant process, but those trained by it will reap an abundance of peace and righteousness. Plant God's truth deep in your soul, then nurture it faithfully. Lay aside your old ways, and rely on God's Spirit to accomplish whatever concerns you. Then wait patiently for the Word to be reborn in your heart. Only in this way will you overcome the world.

Let the one who has my word speak it faithfully... “Is not my word like fire,” declares the Lord, “and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?” (Jeremiah 23:28, 29)

GOD’S Word is powerful. And He has planted His Word deep within you—it will not fail. Because God knows His truth is within you, His glory rejoices over you. The Word that shines forth through you is greater than the glory of kings or queens. You are His trueborn child. You need not worry...about anything. *He is the Lord.*

Don’t become discouraged or let your heart become weighted with doubts or the pressures of the day. Know that the life of God within you will spring forth today—His Word is sure.

Stand faithful in joy. For you are running a course with God that will not fail. True life has come, and it will have its way in you. So be confident. Victory doesn’t depend on your ability. Your fulfillment rests fully on the sureness of God’s Word. And His Word cannot fail.

“You will go out in joy, and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands” (Isaiah 55:12).

Rise up in the grace God has provided for you today. Stand on the sureness of His Word in your heart.

AN INVITATION TO HELP

IF you have been inspired by this sample and its message, you may have already thought of some people you'd like to forward it to. That's great—please do! In addition, here are some other ways we would really appreciate your help in spreading the word:

- ❖ Buy the book! For yourself and your friends.
- ❖ If you have a website or blog, consider sharing a bit about the book and how it impacted your life.
- ❖ Write a book review on Amazon.com.
- ❖ If you own a shop or business, consider buying some books to resell to your customers.
- ❖ If you know people who are in a position to promote the book to wider audience, buy them a copy and encourage them to consider promoting it to others.
- ❖ Go through the book together in your small group Bible study.
- ❖ Encourage your pastor to use the book as a discipleship tool in your faith community.
- ❖ Buy a set of books to donate to prisons, church bookstores, women's shelters—anywhere people might be encouraged by its message.
- ❖ Talk about the book on email lists or online forums you belong to, or other online communities you frequent.

Thanks! Word of mouth makes all the difference in helping a book like this gain visibility to a wider audience.

And please do visit us online to find more resources to help you experience the abundant life God has dreamed for you:

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