**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

[**2 TIMOTHY 3:1-9**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Timothy%203&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 during the past day. Share with God what you thought or felt. Pray also for those he has laid on your heart.
2. Read [2 TIMOTHY 3:1-9](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Timothy%203&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. *“But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days.”* “The last days”, mentioned a few times in the New Testament, refers to the period between the first and second coming of Christ (see [this webpage](https://www.rethinknow.org/are-we-living-in-the-last-days-in-the-bible/) to look at these New Testament references), meaning we are living in the last days. Looking at what he says in this chapter, why does Paul tell us that these would be terrible times? Would you agree?
2. *“People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people.”* When you read Paul’s description of how people will be like, would you say that this is descriptive of your time? Why do you think people would be like this? Do you think he is talking about non-Christians, Christians, or both, in general?
3. *“They are the kind who worm their way into homes and gain control over gullible women, who are loaded down with sins and are swayed by all kinds of evil desires, always learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth. Just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so also these teachers oppose the truth. They are men of depraved minds, who, as far as the faith is concerned, are rejected.”* Truth is no longer the important issue. What would people prefer in the place of truth? It would seem that there will be teachers who claim to be Christian but will take advantage to tell people what they want to hear, in exchange for control or advantage. Do you think this is happening in today’s churches?
4. *“Have nothing to do with such people. … But they will not get very far because, as in the case of those men, their folly will be clear to everyone.”* Why would these peddlers of “non-truths” not get very far? What does Paul tell Timothy to do about such false teachers? Is this something easily done? Is Paul saying that we can safely ignore this situation (note that he describes these last days as “terrible times”)? How can we protect ourselves in these “post-truth” times?

# Wednesday and Thursday

[**2 TIMOTHY 3:10-17**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Timothy%203&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 [2 TIMOTHY 3:10-17](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Timothy%203&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. *“You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured.”* There is a clear contrast between Paul as teacher and those “deceiving teachers” he spoke of before. Can you elaborate the contrast between godly teachers and deceiving teachers? What is truth for Paul? How does he teach it?
2. *“Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them.”* What was Paul’s experience of truth? What do you think would be the experience of “deceiving teachers”? Why is it that experiences of suffering and persecution may follow the teacher of truth while deceiving teachers may experience success in the world’s eyes, such as having many followers and wealth? Wouldn’t it be that God would protect and bless his servants? Or would you suppose that the fact that God rescued Paul validates him and those who are not rescued and died from persecution are imposters? How would you know a godly teacher from a false one?
3. *“In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, while evildoers and impostors will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.”* How does this fit into your thoughts in question 2? What does Paul tell Timothy to expect? Why should we expect things to get worse? If so, what should we do?
4. *“You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them.”* Do you think this kind of teaching, or mentoring, is important for the church today? Do you think it is possible to implement this? What can you do to contribute?
5. *“But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus.”* How is Timothy to respond to the challenges of the times that Paul anticipates? Notice that the strength of Timothy’s education and convictions also rests on the people who taught him (you know those from whom you learned it). Apart from learning from the lives of faithful Christians, what is the other factor that Paul highlights? Do you think it is important that teachers in the church should be mainly people we know and can observe, who are moulded by Scripture, or they should be people who have been trained in seminaries, or prominent teachers who have published popular books? Who would you choose to learn from?
6. *“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.”* Much of the teaching and preaching from the pulpit these days are shaped into doctrines, theology, methodology, concepts, ideas, human wisdom, scholarship and even points of view. Would these be different from what Paul is saying here about teaching the Scriptures and using Scripture to teach, rebuke, correct and train in righteousness? What do you think it means that a person knows “the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus”?
7. Paul talks about Timothy’s education in terms of mentoring, where a younger person learns from an older person not just by teaching but by the sharing of life (fellowship). He talks about how Timothy grew up with godly Christian examples (“you know those from whom you learned it”, and Paul mentioned Timothy’s grandmother and mother in chapter 1), and he talks about Timothy being trained to be familiar with the Scriptures and gaining wisdom from it, and finally tells him that he should make use of Scripture to teach, rebuke, correct and train. Would you say that the church is providing the teaching and training that you should devote yourself to to grow as a disciple, “thoroughly equipped for every good work”? Should you seek them elsewhere if the answer is “no”?

# Friday and Saturday

[**2 Timothy 4:1-8**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Timothy%204&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 [2 Timothy 4:1-8](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Timothy%204&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. *“In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.”* How would you understand what Paul is telling Timothy here? In the context of all that we have considered in chapter 3, what do you think is Paul’s charge to Timothy? Why is this so important?
2. *“For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.”* Do you think we are already in such times? What is the basis for your conclusion? What is so “terrible” (to quote Paul in chapter 3 verse 1) about this?
3. *“But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.”* What is Timothy to do in the light of the problems that Paul described? What do you think Timothy can do to help himself “keep his head” and discharge his duty to the Word of God faithfully and not be swayed by what happens around him?
4. *“For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.”* What is the occasion for Paul’s solemn charge to Timothy? Do you think Paul’s handing over the torch to Timothy is specific to Timothy (or others with a special calling), or it is a torch that all of us Christians should pick up, in that all of us have a responsibility to propagate the truth as fully and faithfully and widely as we are able?

# Sunday

**GUARDIANS OF TRUTH**

*“For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.”*

The term “post-truth” became widely used in the late 2010s when established sources of truth—Government, Science, logic and rational thought—were challenged and millions sought alternative views and held onto facts that were rarely backed by data. People sought to legitimise their perceptions rather than mould their perceptions to the data they have. People even sought to challenge and cast doubt on established data sources.

When you destroy the established guardians of truth, then people can just make up their own truth, or choose the truth they prefer to follow, or choose their own basis for judging right and wrong.

In the church, we have prominent Christian pastors and leaders who claim authority based on their success in attracting followers, success in accumulation of wealth and the power that comes with it, success in being able to wield the power of God in healing, in miracles and in the ability to predict the future.

Paul however tells Timothy that he is a trustworthy teacher because he is transparent, practising what he preaches, and TImothy knows how he lived, how he practised the Word he taught, how he was willing to endure and suffer to hold true to the Word. Paul had no qualms in commending to Timothy others who were equally faithful to the Word and most of all, Paul commended the Word itself to Timothy, so that he may be thoroughly equipped. In his life and ministry the reward that Paul looked forward to in his long and faithful obedience to God was “the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day.”

There are people who seek to deceive and there are people who are ready to be deceived. There are people who want to control and people who can never think for themselves and prefer to give control away. There are people who are given over to their own sinful emotions and desires, who are selfish, greedy, hateful, conceited and hedonistic, and seek to justify their sin.

Yet, instead of devoting ourselves to learning and practising God’s truth, Christians become consumers, seeking entertainment, interesting ideas to tickle the mind, or we listen only as is the practice of church life but we never take the preached word seriously and we discard and forget the word once the sermon is over. Worst of all, we no longer are taught by the Word regularly, preferring to be comforted by random verses that promise much but do not remind us of our responsibility to truth.

These days, the Word of God is being diminished, corrupted, distorted and rendered ineffective by our careless attitude to it.

Scripture is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, Paul tells us. Thus responsible teaching of the Holy Scriptures must be from teachers who are examples to the congregation of how Scripture may impact their lives, so that members may become “wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus”, moulded by the word they are taught.

*“You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings—what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them.”*

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.