**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

[**1 TIMOTHY 4:1-5**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Timothy%204&version=NIV)

Remember this is your time alone with God. It is a time to tell God what is on your mind (thinking back over the past day), listen to him speak to you (reading and meditating on a bible passage), and finally, to respond to him (prayer). The questions are there to help you do this. Ignore them if they do not help. If your time is limited, I suggest that you don’t do everything in one go but spread them over the two days.

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 [1 TIMOTHY 4:1-5](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%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. *“The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron.”* This is a clear prophecy. Paul does not tell us how this came to be known but from his words it is clear that this is well-known. “Later times” can be understood as the last days, the period before his second coming, yet the modern church does not act as if we are under such a threat. Do you think that this is true for our times? Would “hypocritical liars” imply that such teachings are from within the church?
2. *“They forbid people to marry and order them to abstain from certain foods, which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and who know the truth.”* In other words, the Christianity that they teach is one marked by prohibition and disengagement from the world. Why is this wrong?
3. *“For everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer.”* Rather than reject the world, Paul points to the theological truth that God created the world and deemed it good. Why does Paul place a caveat, that we can enjoy God’s creation if we “receive it with thanksgiving and consecrate it by the word and by prayer”? Why the need for this and what does it really mean?
4. In Paul’s time the heresy that threatened the church is the notion that true spirituality is expressed by abstinence and disengagement from the world. Do you think such heresy still threatens the church today? Do you think there are other teachings from within the modern church that are leading Christians to “abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons”?

# Wednesday and Thursday

[**1 TIMOTHY 4:6-11**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%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 [1 TIMOTHY 4:6-11](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%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. *“If you point these things out to the brothers and sisters, you will be a good minister of Christ Jesus, nourished on the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed. Have nothing to do with godless myths and old wives’ tales …”* How can we be “nourished on the truths of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed” and not be led astray by “deceiving spirits and things taught by demons and hypocritical liars”? If you are a leader and teacher in church, how can you ensure that you do well? What may tempt you to avoid pointing out these things to your fellow brothers and sisters?
2. *“... rather, train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come. This is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance.”* We can understand “godliness” simply as living out the truth of God’s Word instead of being led astray by people and their lies, by myths and superstition. Paul basically says that there is no downside to living as Scripture teaches. It is well worth our priority and effort. Do you think so? Is it possible to embark on such an approach to life?
3. *“That is why we labor and strive, because we have put our hope in the living God, who is the Savior of all people, and especially of those who believe.”* What is Paul’s rationale for such an approach to life?
4. *“Command and teach these things.”* Beyond training ourselves to be godly, Paul says that we should make sure that every Christian understands that this is fundamental to our faith. This is true spirituality. Would you say that the modern church has lived up to this and if not what has taken its place? What constitutes “true spirituality” these days?

# Friday and Saturday

[**1 TIMOTHY 4:12-16**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%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 [1 TIMOTHY 4:12-16](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%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**

In this section, Paul addresses Timothy directly as a leader and minister. Even if we do not have official positions in church we still have locus standi as a member of the body. The context is the present discussion, arising from the Holy Spirit’s warning that the devil will spin deception and lies to divert people away from the truth that saves.

1. *“Don’t let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity.”* In saying “Don’t let anyone look down on you”, is Paul telling us to demand that people pay us attention, or is he saying that we should let our lives do the talking? What if we are still ignored?
2. *“Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching. Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through prophecy when the body of elders laid their hands on you.”* Gifts are special blessings that enrich the church (see 1 Corinthians 12:7). How can the exercise of his gift help Timothy in his role as leader and minister? What is he to devote himself to in his role as leader and minister? “Until I come” implies that Timothy was not to directly address the controversial issues but instead to ground the people in the Word and to bless the community by the exercise of his gift. What do you think of Paul’s instruction to Timothy?
3. *“Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.”* “Give yourself wholly to them”, meaning to fully believe that these are the best and most effective things to pay attention to. Paul tells Timothy “If you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers”. Describe what Paul is instructing Timothy to be diligent about and to persevere in? Why is this so important? Do you agree that the best way to deal with lies and deception that lead Christians astray is to ground them in God’s Word and live out that teaching as a testimony?
4. *“Train yourself to be godly”, “Set an example for the believers in speech, in conduct, in love, in faith and in purity”, “Watch your life and doctrine closely”* — to live out the truth of God’s Word. Paul says that this has value both in this life and in the hereafter and when we persevere in this we will save both ourselves and those who recognise the truth in our lives and follow likewise. How will knowing this affect you?

# Sunday

**GODLINESS**

*“For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.”*

The bible can be likened to a compass that points to true north; it teaches us about God and about us and about how Jesus had sacrificed himself to save us from the wrath of God. When we live the truth of what the bible teaches, we live godly lives.

The Spirit warns that the devil will try to wean us away from the bible and feed us lies and deceptions, myths and “old wives’ tales”. He will do so by infiltrating our ranks, compromising people who cling to their own agenda rather than submit to the authority and truth of Scripture.

In Paul’s time, one worldly view of true spirituality is to stay away from things that will contaminate us: certain foods, and sex, even sex within marriage. Paul however is very clear that this runs contrary to the truth as revealed in the bible, that God created the world and found it good. So even when we are trying to be godly (in our eyes), we become ungodly because we live contrary to the truth of Scripture that tells us “everything God created is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with thanksgiving, because it is consecrated by the word of God and prayer”. As Jesus clearly taught, things entering our lives do not contaminate us; rather, it is the evil in our hearts that contaminates and so Paul tells us to respond to the things of the world with thanksgiving, in the context of our relationship with God. Christianity is not ascetic and isolationist; rather, it draws us into joy, thanksgiving, love, peace and fellowship.

Today, however, the world has completely owned the word “godly”. We understand “godly” to be one who is pious, devout and committed to the practices of their religion. Furthermore, “godly” is now rarely something that is desirable. The modern church is more focused on evangelism, worship (the activity), prayer and bible study—organisational activities rather than life.

Yet Paul tells us “Godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come” and “Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers”.

Godliness—true spirituality—is living out the truth of Scripture, living life mindful of the God that is revealed in Scripture, consonant with all that Scripture teaches us about what this God has done and continues to do, humbly accepting his grace, mercy and compassion as revealed in Christ, and being joyful in the light of our pardon, our adoption and the gift of the Holy Spirit who now resides in us.

*“Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that everyone may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers.”*

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.