**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

[**EPHESIANS 4:1-16**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%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 [EPHESIANS 4:1-16](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%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. *“As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.”* By “calling” do you think Paul is thinking of a specific calling in terms of vocation (missionary, doctor, teacher, etc.) or he is thinking of our calling to be a Christian, or the new reality that we are called to? What do you think would be a life worthy of our calling?
2. *“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”* Would this measure up to your expectation of “a life worthy of the calling”? Do you think that if we were to succeed in being “completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love” in the course of our life that God would say “well done, good and faithful servant”, whatever else may be our accomplishments? Explain your thinking.
3. *“But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.”* There could be several ways to understand this but the simplest conclusions we can take are that a) we are empowered by Christ (grace); and b) each of us have our own journey to take (as Christ apportions). It means “a life worthy of the calling” is not the same for every Christian in terms of accomplishments but is the same in terms of character (humble, gentle, etc.) Do you agree or do you have your own way of understanding what Paul is saying? What is the implication for you?
4. *“So Christ himself gave … to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”* Finally Paul tells us that Christ provided the people who will help us to reach our goal. Does this mean that our growth and maturity is the responsibility of these people? What is my role in this matter?
5. *“Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”* The fact that Christ provides the people who will help us to succeed, and that our maturity is described in the context of the body with Christ as the head, tells us that success greatly depends on our involvement with the community of believers, the local church. How can the church help you mature as a Christian? Is it possible to mature as a Christian without the church? What do you need to do to move further in your own journey towards Christian maturity?

# Wednesday and Thursday

[**EPHESIANS 4:17-21**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%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 [EPHESIANS 4:17-21](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%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. *“So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.”* How would you describe the “thinking” of the non-Christian world around us? What makes it futile? Is it possible to live with a radically different worldview from the worldview of the world around us?
2. *“They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.”* Paul highlights 3 key factors that influence the thinking of the world: 1) their understanding is hindered; 2) they have no access to the life of God; and 3) their hearts are hardened. Would it make sense then to learn about life from the world? What is the harm in doing so?
3. *“Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, and they are full of greed.”* Paul gives an example of what such futile thinking can lead to. In our modern world what conclusions have the world come to as to how to live life when there is no God and there is no life after death and when you die you no longer exist?
4. *“That, however, is not the way of life you learned when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus.”* As a Christian, 1) you accept by faith that God holds your destiny in his hands, 2) that destiny is full of hope because Jesus decided to help you, and 3) that destiny is eternity in God’s kingdom. Do you think this should make a marked difference in the way you think about life and the way you act in life and even your goals in life?

# Friday and Saturday

[**EPHESIANS 4:22-24**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%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 [EPHESIANS 4:22-24](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%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. *“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires;”* Why is it necessary to “put off your old self”? Does it mean that our life/lifestyle needs to change totally? What must change?
2. *“ … to be made new in the attitude of your minds”* The mind, or the way the mind looks at life and the world, shapes the life. Looking at what was said before, vv17-21, why should there be a new mind, a new way of thinking?
3. *“ … and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”* A simple way to understand “like God in true righteousness and holiness” is the word “godly”. Does it make sense that if our destiny is eternity in God’s kingdom that the new self that will thrive in that kingdom should be godly? What comes to mind when you think of becoming godly? From the beginning of the chapter, how does Paul describe “godliness”? From all that has been said, how are we to be successful in living a life worthy of the calling we have received? Do you think you are on the right track to your new self?

# Sunday

**NEW REALITIES**

*“As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.”*

It is something that we seldom spend much time thinking about: when we become Christians there is a monumental shift in the reality that we acknowledge. God, the Creator of the Universe, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, is now an acknowledged reality in our life. He is no longer someone we know nothing about, someone whom we respond to however we imagine him to be. He has revealed himself as the God of Israel, moral, upright, loving, compassionate and faithful. We now know and acknowledge his wrath over sin and his desire that we walk in his ways, to the extent that he sacrificed the Son in order that we might regain the capacity to do so, to be forgiven, redeemed and empowered by the Holy Spirit.

When we become Christians, we acknowledge these truths to be true and choose to realign our allegiances so that God, and all these truths about him, will have his proper place in our minds and hearts. To live a life worthy of the calling we have received is to imbue our life with these truths, both to submit to his moral standards as well as to receive his empowerment (the Holy Spirit) to do so, and in so doing, grow in godliness.

When we did not know this God, our reality was limited to the time we have on earth—death ends everything—and our mind is shaped by “survival of the fittest”. We can choose to embrace pleasure or power, or whatever pursuit attracts us, or we can choose to be fearful of death—we can choose to live however we deem to be the best choice—because the result is the same in the end: nothing. But now that we know Him, and we believe that our reality stretches not only to eternity but also to the heavens, we must “no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking … darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts”. That has to begin by allowing this new reality to transform our mindset so that our life may be reshaped by our transformed mind.

How do we transform our mindset? We need to spend much time thinking over the truths that we have received and acknowledged and embraced. We have to replace old truths with these new truths and allow these new truths their proper place in our minds and hearts. And we have to start to make new choices in life in accordance with the new realities that we have embraced by faith.

*“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”*

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.