**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 4:25-29**](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 4:25-29](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. *“Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body.”* “Therefore” tells us that this follows from what was said before, specifically about putting off “your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires” and putting on “the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness”. How is falsehood related to the godless self and speaking truthfully to one another a feature of the godly self that God wants to create in us? Why is it so important that a follower of Jesus Christ must reject falsehood and embrace truth in our relationships? Does this mean that we should tell each other what we think or feel without any filter, disregarding whether we hurt or discourage them? How does this compare to what Paul said in Ephesians 4:15, “speaking the truth in love”?
2. *“In your anger do not sin”: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.* Do you think whether your anger is justified or not makes a difference in this injunction? Is it possible to be angry without falling into sin? Why is it important to deal with our anger and allow it to dissipate rather than cling on to it? Would you say then that this injunction should cover holding grudges and being unforgiving? Is this an issue for you?
3. *“Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need. Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.”* Looking at what Paul says here broadly, the new self seeks to bless others rather than take from them, whether materially or psychologically. Would you say that your presence in church or your family/neighbourhood/workplace/college is positive or negative or you have no effect on the people around you, positive or negative?

# Wednesday and Thursday

[**EPHESIANS 4:30-32**](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 4:30-32](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. *“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.”* “Bitterness, rage, anger, brawling, slander, and malice” are just different expressions of a negative spirit within our soul and may be caused by unresolved conflicts, evil desires and selfishness. Do you think it is important for Christians to deal with the negative scars and wounds and attitudes that developed in our old life? How can a Christian who has been forgiven by God through the atoning sacrifice of his Son, and who has received the Holy Spirit as the guarantee of his love and blessing, get rid of such negative attitudes and feelings that we may discover still lurk inside us? Why would our reluctance to let go of them grieve the Holy Spirit?
2. *“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”* Paul shows us the way to get rid of the negative attitudes and feelings that may still lay claim to our souls—to be kind and compassionate, ready to forgive because we have been forgiven. Note that while forgiveness is inward, Paul tells us to express forgiveness outwardly, through kindness and compassion. Is this something that the Lord is showing you to deal with?
3. Paul talks of the “new self” as being founded on truth and truthfulness, working to bless others in practical ways as well as spiritually, while being healed of inward scars, unforgiveness, grudges, selfishness and even cruelty. Would you say that these are areas that the Holy Spirit has been able to redeem and restore in you since you became a Christian?
4. What do you think happens to us when the Holy Spirit within us is grieved because we immerse ourselves in negative thoughts, attitudes and feelings and refuse to let them go? How would this affect the Christian community, the local church? Would you characterise your church as one where the Holy Spirit is empowered to act freely or it is one where the Holy Spirit is grieved?

# Friday and Saturday

[**EPHESIANS 5:1-2**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%205&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 5:1-2](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%205&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. *“Follow God’s example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”* Paul tells us that the new self is primarily one who knows that they are loved by God and by Christ, who was sent by God to rescue us by sacrificing himself to God, and in turn the new self desires to follow the example of God and Christ to embrace the way of love. Why is it important that we know that we are “dearly loved”?
2. *“ … and walk in the way of love”* Would you say that what Paul had said before about speaking the truth (in love), anger (without falling into sin), being a blessing (giving rather than taking) in our relationships, and being kind and compassionate and forgiving, are different expressions of walking in the way of love? How do you envisage walking in the way of love?
3. Do you think God and Christ have walked in the way of love in terms of “speaking the truth (in love), anger (without falling into sin), being a blessing (giving rather than taking) in our relationships, and being kind and compassionate and forgiving”? As one who has experienced their love do their examples motivate you to also walk in the way of love?

# Sunday

**SPIRITUAL FOUNDATIONS**

*“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”*

The new self, with the new mind, the one who has been forgiven by God through the atoning sacrifice of his Son, and who has received the Holy Spirit as the guarantee of his love and blessing, the Christian, must fundamentally learn to walk in truth, live lives that can contribute to the needs of people around, and relate with people positively to build them up.

In order to do this they must allow the Gospel to heal the soul and rid it of all negativeness so that forgiveness, kindness and compassion may flow from the Holy Spirit that resides within. The calling we have received is one that was established by our God who loved us while we were yet sinners, who, rather than condemn us and wipe us out, gave us his Son so as to rescue us, who continues to forgive us and deal with us in compassion and love. As the undeserving beneficiaries of his love Paul tells us that we should then let go of all “bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice” and follow God’s example and walk in the way of love. In Paul’s view, this must fundamentally be the experience of every Christian.

These are the spiritual foundations for every Christian. When Paul calls on us to “live a life worthy of the calling you have received”, he followed that up with “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.”

Our spiritual foundations are established by the Holy Spirit within us. All the resources are within our grasp, even the motive for us to discard the “futility of godless thinking” and embrace Christ and the truth that is in Christ of forgiveness and grace, are ours when we embrace the Gospel. What remains is for us to choose—flowing from the first decision to choose to follow Christ—to be kind and compassionate, and to forgive, everyday, because in Christ we have known of God’s kindness and compassion, and his forgiveness.

Most of us have been brought up to think that the basics every Christian should learn to do is worship, fellowship, prayer and bible study, and churches spend a lot of energy to make sure that the Christians in their care have opportunities to learn and practise these skills.

However, we hardly talk about sin and the effect of sin and sinful ways and attitudes on our soul. None of us are unscathed from sin as we have lived with it from young. In Paul’s view, our spiritual foundations need to be re-established and strengthened so that our lives may exude the positive power of the Holy Spirit so that we become a godly blessing to those around us. When our spiritual foundations are weak, the Holy Spirit is grieved, hindered by our refusal to choose to live godly lives.

*“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Follow God’s example, therefore, as dearly loved children and walk in the way of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.”*

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.