**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 5:3-7**](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 the past day. Share with God what you thought or felt. Pray also for those he has laid on your heart.
2. Read [EPHESIANS 5:3-7](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. *“But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people.”* How would you describe sexual immorality? Do you agree with the Bible’s attitude towards sexual immorality? Paul also adds greed (financial immorality) and hints at immorality as taking something good and tainting it with something bad (any kind of impurity). What would be an area in your life that can fall under this broad definition of immorality?
2. *“Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving.”* Do you consider “obscenity, foolish talk and coarse joking” immoral? If so, in what way and if not, why does Paul? Do you think Paul is just too “old-fashioned” and that these objections of his are actually harmless? Are Christians supposed to be very serious people who cannot even joke? Why is thanksgiving an appropriate quality of our speech?
3. *“For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.”* Can any of us claim to be free of immorality, impurity or greed? What kind of person is Paul thinking about? Is he saying that such Christians are not saved?
4. *“Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God’s wrath comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be partners with them.”* It would seem that all these things that Paul was talking about come from a particular worldview that dismisses these things—pornography, improper speech, hedonism, greed—as harmless and acceptable. Do you share this view or do you agree with Paul?

# Wednesday and Thursday

[**EPHESIANS 5:8-14**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%205&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 5:8-14](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. *“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.”* Paul now gives the reason for his instructions, that all these things are incompatible with light. The assumption is that you have chosen to escape the darkness and enter the light when you chose to follow Jesus. Do you agree?
2. *“Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord.”* Would you agree with Paul’s notion of what light is all about and that these things are what pleases the Lord?
3. *“Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. It is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light.”* What comes to your mind when you think of “fruitless deeds of darkness”? In asking us to “expose them”, do you think that Paul is asking us to campaign to snuff out immorality in our society or that the way to deal with deeds of darkness is to live in the light? Does this mean that Christian communities should discourage individual privacy so that as lights we can expose the darkness within our community?

# Friday and Saturday

[**EPHESIANS 5:15-21**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%205&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 [EPHESIANS 5:15-21](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. *“Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.”* This is phrased as a warning. What is the danger?
2. *“Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* What are the different outcomes of getting drunk and being filled with the Spirit? Note that “be filled” is passive. What can we do to “be filled with the Spirit”? What is the picture that Paul paints of a Christian community that is filled with the Spirit? What dominates that picture?
3. *“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”* What do you think Paul has in mind in calling us to submit to one another? Does it make any sense or is it practical (see 5:22-6:9 for clues)? Why do you think that this is the appropriate outcome when we grow to be like Christ?

# Sunday

**CHILDREN OF LIGHT**

*“Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.”*

Paul tells us that as Christians, our identity is now associated with light. “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord”, he declares. He associates darkness with immorality, impurity and greed and tells us that people who surround themselves with darkness are idolaters, in the sense that they worship a false god. Finally he tells us that the deeds of darkness are fruitless and cause shame; when we are in the grip of darkness it is as if we are drunk on wine—losing our inhibitions and letting our human emotions and human drives dominate. This is debauchery.

The Christian solution is to let the light shine. Paul tells us that “the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth”. What is the light that he speaks of? We can think of light as exposure, as in living a life completely naked, with nothing to hide. As Paul tells us, “Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them.” However the next line “But everything exposed by the light becomes visible—and everything that is illuminated becomes a light.” suggests to us that Paul has something else in mind.

Perhaps he means the Word but I think the best fit is to consider the Spirit as the light because of the call by Paul for us to “be filled with the Spirit”. All of us who follow Jesus receive the Holy Spirit as God’s gift and guarantee of our salvation. However along the way our lifestyle and choices may restrict his impact on our lives and spirit. We need to live lives that will allow the Spirit free rein and free flow and that is a life that is consonant with the will of God.

Ultimate it is the power of the Spirit in our lives that will enable us to make the transfer from darkness to light. Only with his power can a leopard change its spots. As Paul goes on to tell us, when we consistently enjoy the full flow of the Spirit because we choose to live in accordance with the will of God, our lives will be a psalm, a hymn, a spiritual song that will resonate with joy, worship and thanksgiving.

*“Instead, be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

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.