**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

**PHILIPPIANS 4:1-3**

1. Take time to be quiet, until you can focus on being in the presence of God. Read the text until you can understand what it says. If you have any initial thoughts, write them down.
2. Paul calls the Philippians *“brothers and sisters”, “you whom I love and long for”, “joy and crown”, and “dear friends.”* Why would Paul value these people so much? Paul at this point is in prison, not in Philippi. How does he maintain such affection, even though he is not in close contact with them?

1. At the same time, *Euodia and Syntyche* do not feel the same way about each other even though they are not only in the same church, but have also worked together with Paul. How can this happen? Why is there such a difference between Paul’s response and these two?
2. Think over your own church members, and especially those who are your *partners in ministry*. Is your relationship more about the ministry or more about each other? Do you pray for them beyond the ministry? How do you handle disagreements?
3. Write down a prayer in response.

# Tuesday

**PHILIPPIANS 4:1-3**

1. Take time to be quiet, until you can focus on being in the presence of God. If you have any initial thoughts, write them down.
2. Read the passage. Review the answers/thoughts you wrote down yesterday. Is there anything that you need to respond to?
3. Review the past day. What concerns/joys/events occupy your heart?
4. Write down a prayer in response.

# Wednesday

**PHILIPPIANS 4:4-9**

1. Take time to be quiet, until you can focus on being in the presence of God. Read the text until you can understand what it says. If you have any initial thoughts, write them down.
2. *“Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!”* Notice that it is a call to rejoice “in the Lord”, meaning that the source of joy is Jesus. What reasons for joy do we have in Jesus?
3. Vv5-7: What actions does Paul recommend to us so we can maintain our capacity for joy even though our circumstances are constantly changing? Do you think these will help you to be a joyful Christian?

1. In v8 Paul recommends that we keep our minds on “such things”. Who is the source of these things? Is he telling us to turn a blind eye to bad situations or ignore matters that deserve our concern or just positive thinking? How will keeping your mind focused on God and all that He stands for, help you?
2. *“Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice.”* Love and befriend your partners in ministry! Let the Lord be our agreement! Rejoice! Pray! Be nourished by the good things in life that come from God! Which of these in Paul’s approach to life and ministry will you put into practice?
3. Write down a prayer in response.

# Thursday

**PHILIPPIANS 4:4-9**

1. Take time to be quiet, until you can focus on being in the presence of God. If you have any initial thoughts, write them down.
2. Read the passage. Review the answers/thoughts you wrote down yesterday. Is there anything that you need to respond to?
3. Review the past day. What concerns/joys/events occupy your heart?
4. Write down a prayer in response.

# Friday

**PHILIPPIANS 4:10-23**

1. Take time to be quiet, until you can focus on being in the presence of God. Read the text until you can understand what it says. If you have any initial thoughts, write them down.
2. *“I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.”* Revisit what Paul has been teaching in vv 4:1-9. How can his approach to life and ministry be a source of contentment? How is such contentment possible (v13)?
3. What does the phrase “at last” in v10 reveal to you about the situation? How did Paul respond (v10, vv14-17)?
4. In the context of what Paul has written (vv14-20): who is giving and who is receiving? How does our faith in God make such generosity possible?
5. In this whole chapter, who most represents you: Paul, Euodia and Syntyche, that “true companion whom Paul called upon to be a peacemaker”, or the Philippian Christians? And who do you wish to be like?
6. Write down a prayer in response.

# Saturday

**PHILIPPIANS 4:10-23**

1. Take time to be quiet, until you can focus on being in the presence of God. If you have any initial thoughts, write them down.
2. Read the passage. Review the answers/thoughts you wrote down yesterday. Is there anything that you need to respond to?
3. Review the past day. What concerns/joys/events occupy your heart?
4. Write down a prayer in response.

# Sunday

**JOY AND CONTENTMENT**

Paul opens his heart and lets the Philippians in. *“Brothers and sisters”, “you whom I love and long for”, “joy and crown”,* and *“dear friends”* Paul did not hold back. In chapter 1 he calls them his partners in the Gospel. And they are also his mission field. Now they are his dear friends and family. A delay in the Philippians’ response to Paul could have resulted in much anxiety and negativity but Paul chose to think well of the Philippians and kept them close to his heart.

Unlike Euodia and Syntyche, Paul chose to love. It is a quality in Paul that you will see in all his letters. His secret, which is no secret at all, is that fundamentally his joy springs from the Lord. “Rejoice in the Lord always!” That joy enables him to love because that joy brings him peace and contentment.

*Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

*Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.*

This is how Paul maintains his joy in the Lord. In plenty and in need; in uncertainty and in good news; in disagreement and in unity; *I can do all this through him who gives me strength.*

1. Take time to be quiet, until you can focus on being in the presence of God. If you have any initial thoughts, write them down.
2. Review the answers/thoughts you wrote down in the past week. What conclusion can you draw from the passages of Scripture you have been considering? Is there anything that you need to respond to?
3. Read the short sharing above. Do they add anything to your own conclusions?
4. Review the past week. What concerns/joys/events occupy your heart?
5. Write down a prayer in response.