[**TIME ALONE WITH GOD**](http://timealonewithgod.org/)

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

[**JAMES 1:19-21**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=james+1&version=NIV)

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. James tells us to take note that we should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to anger because *“human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.”* What usually results from anger? What do you think causes a person to be quick to anger?
3. Considering the sequence—quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger—it is possible to think that when a person is quick to listen and slow to speak, the likelihood is that they will be less likely to become angry. Do you think so? So in the 3 ways of responding to another person, where is your strength and weakness?
4. James goes on to say *“therefore get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.*” It would seem that “moral filth and evil” promotes anger which in turn promotes moral filth and evil. Do you think so?
5. What we need to do is “humbly accept the word planted in you”. Do you think this is linked to the earlier advice that we should be quick to listen?
6. Why does James refer to the word as “planted in you”? What do you think it refers to?
7. “Quick to listen” and “humbly accept the word planted in you” simply implies that we are asked to be “teachable”. Who is our teacher?
8. James calls us to be responsive to our teacher and not to the sinful self; to be humble and not to be arrogant and self-centered. In Matthew 17:5, at the scene of the Transfiguration, a voice from heaven spoke to the disciples emphatically, *“This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!”* Write down a prayer in response.

# Tuesday

[**JAMES 1:19-21**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=james+1&version=NIV)

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

[**JAMES 1:22-25**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=james+1&version=NIV)

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. *“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”* What does the writer emphasise here? Why do you think he needed to make it crystal clear that mere listening is not enough? Think back the past month: how many times has the Word of God succeeded in getting you to do what it says? How often are you focused on obeying the Word or is it enough just to “listen” to it?
3. *Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like someone who looks at his face in a mirror and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like.* In using the analogy of someone looking in the mirror, is the writer saying that the Word is like a mirror showing who you are, or is he emphasising the forgetting part, that there is no point looking into the mirror and immediately forgetting what you saw (without doing something about what you saw), because only when you do what the Word says would its truth be written in your mind and heart (is this the word planted in you, re:v21)? Or is it something else?
4. *“The perfect law that gives freedom.”* Why does the writer add this little description to the Word, that it is perfect, that it is law and that it gives freedom? What is he telling you is the purpose of the Word/Law? How will you come to experience the blessing of the Law?
5. The writer makes it crystal clear: only when you do what the Word says will you be blessed by it and enjoy its promise of freedom. Do you think you’re good with this, or this is a problem? Write down a prayer in response.

# Thursday

[**JAMES 1:22-25**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=james+1&version=NIV)

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

[**JAMES 1:26-27**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=james+1&version=NIV)

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. *“Those who consider themselves religious and yet do not keep a tight rein on their tongues deceive themselves, and their religion is worthless.”* Having dealt with “slow to become angry” and “quick to listen”, James now turns his attention to “slow to speak”. *(In 3:8, James calls the tongue “a restless evil, full of deadly poison” and this reminds us of what he said in 1:21, “get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent”. Where is the source of all moral filth and evil? Jesus tells us it is the heart (Matthew 15:19)).* The tongue is the most natural way for what is in the heart to find expression. What do you think James means about keeping a tight rein on our tongues? Do you think we should “watch our tongue”? Or does he mean something else?
3. *“Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world”* is a way of summarising what God wants from us. Jesus summed up the law in this way: *‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.* Do you see any similarity between James’ summary and Jesus’ summary? Why do you think James puts it in that way?
4. In a succinct and practical way, James helps us to get a handle on how to live our Christian life: Be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry. Which are you doing well in and which are you having problems over? Write down a prayer in response.

# Saturday

[**JAMES 1:26-27**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=james+1&version=NIV)

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

##### RELIGION

Once in a while it is good to step back and ask “what is it all about?”

Church life can suck you in: worship on Sundays, care group meetings, sunday school, youth meetings, band practice, committee meetings. These activities beget even more activities: outings, visitations, workshops, bible classes, outreach programs, fellowship programs, meals, birthdays, etc. James however boils religion down to two: look after orphans and widows and maintain a righteous lifestyle.

Of course we must not take James literally. Taking the cue from Jesus’ summary of what is most important in the Law, we can see that loving God would mean wanting to emulate his qualities and what he stands for—righteousness; and loving our neighbour means that we care for their needs, especially when they are not in a position to care for themselves or benefit us in any way—look after orphans and widows.

Nothing that remotely resembles church life, it would seem. None of the list of activities above are bad; indeed they have worthy goals. But we must be careful that our religion (among other things) is one that *“God our Father accepts as pure and faultless.”*

How can we ensure that we do what pleases God (rather than what we think pleases God)? By being quick to listen (and obey), slow to speak (so our life expresses the goodness of God) and slow to anger (and not express the sinful state of our heart). When you have this teachable attitude in your heart, you will *“humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.”*

Growing in righteousness and growing in love, as taught by God’s Word. Does this conform with your idea of what being a Christian is all about?

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.