[**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

[**COLOSSIANS 2:1-5**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=col+2&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. *“I want you to know how hard I am contending for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally.”* Why does Paul want the Colossians (and others as well) to know this? What does he hope knowing this will achieve?
3. *“I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments.”* Think back to the Garden of Eden and all that God had done, forgotten in the seduction of the serpent’s arguments. How do we keep ourselves from being deceived?
4. *“My goal is ... so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”* To first understand and then to know (movement from mind to heart) all that is hidden in Christ. The implication is that there is a lot more to Christ than meets the eye but people will come and draw you away from Christ before you could discover them. Here is an important indicator of truth or deception. If we believe that Christ is the Word, the Cause of All Creation, With God and Is God, who now offers himself to us as our Lord and King, does it make sense to turn elsewhere for our own spiritual growth and health? What might we substitute Christ for in our journey as Christians?
5. *“... that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love … ”* Paul tells us that we need this encouragement and unity in love to go deeper in Christ. How can you find this encouragement and unity? Where can you find it?
6. Satan’s deceptions tear apart the unity of Christians and tear down their passion and courage. Paul fights hard to encourage and unite. So here is another good indicator of truth or deception. What about you? Do you encourage and unite, or tear down and tear apart? Write down a prayer in response.

# Tuesday

[**COLOSSIANS 2:1-5**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=col+2&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

[**COLOSSIANS 2:6-15**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=col+2&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. From these verses, who is Jesus Christ? List all that Paul says he is. What do they imply?
3. Make a list of all that Christ has achieved for us because of who he is. Is there anything missing that we need to add on so that we can continue to grow in righteousness?
4. Even in those early days, the “Christ plus” deception diminishes Christ. In those days, the plus is circumcision and the Law and also other special rules and observances (see also vv16-23). What would be some teachings you have heard today that imply Christ is insufficient and you need something more? The pattern is something like, *“Yes, you are saved through Christ. But now you must … so that you can …”* Do you think these teachings can come under what Paul is characterising here as deception?
5. *“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.”* For Paul, you start with Christ and you end with Christ. It is not “Christ plus” but “Christ alone” or “Christ deeply”. What does it mean to live in Christ, to be rooted in him, to be built up in him? How does this work out in the life of a Christian?
6. Write a prayer to God in response.

# Thursday

[**COLOSSIANS 2:6-15**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=col+2&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

[**COLOSSIANS 2:16-23**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=col+2&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. *“Therefore do not let anyone judge you … Do not let anyone ... disqualify you.”* In what context are you not to let others judge you and disqualify you? And do you judge or disqualify others? The only one who can judge (in the sense of condemn and disqualify) is God. On what basis will he judge and qualify or disqualify you?
3. *“They have lost connection with the head”* … who is Christ. People who would judge and disqualify you have lost touch with Christ. Is this true? What makes them think they are in a position to judge? How can we ensure that we do not lose our way?
4. Putting all that we have explored in these verses, these deceptive teachings: diminish the role of Christ and promote a special activity or experience; judge and disqualify Christians unless they adhere to their priorities (this is why they can be seen as Law); discourage and split Christian communities creating a “special” elite group who are more spiritual; promote strict rules to prohibit certain behaviour and activities (do not handle, taste, touch); promote “extreme” spirituality of denial, harsh treatment of human needs and desires (to combat sin); and promote “spiritual” activities such as worship and prayer above all else (and perpetuate a spiritual-secular divide). Paul says that such ideas are merely human in origin, appear wise but actually lack real effect. Is this a fair representation of Paul’s concerns? Do you agree with Paul?
5. Why are such teachings so convincing and attractive? Do they convince or attract you? Do you have any specific examples that would fall under these qualities? Do you perpetuate such teachings?
6. Write down a prayer in response.

# Saturday

[**COLOSSIANS 2:16-23**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=col+2&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

**TRUE SPIRITUALITY**

*These rules, which have to do with things that are all destined to perish with use, are based on merely human commands and teachings. Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.*

These two verses in Colossians 2 have been among the most thought-provoking verses for me for a long time. For me, they are a clarion call that the Christian faith is not about rules and regulations and harsh discipline to combat sin.

The problem is that while the bible is clear that God uses the power of love to save us, we are sceptical and continue to believe that fear is a more powerful motivation and a more effective tool to transform. Of late though there is another movement that believes that even more powerful is the appeal to man’s innate selfishness and greed and thus the prosperity gospel. The Gospel instead offers freely an escape from God’s judgement and wrath through the sacrifice of Christ right at the beginning, in order to deal with the intractable problem of sin with grace, love, knowledge and the power of the Holy Spirit; the motivation is righteousness itself!

Paul’s response is to reiterate simply: you began with Christ, you continue with Christ, so that you end with Christ. *“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught, and overflowing with thankfulness.”* Christ offers his love and our freedom; we should therefore continue in his love and freedom, growing in faith and overflowing with gratitude.

False paths to spirituality *diminishes the role of Christ and promote a special activity or experience; judges and disqualifies Christians unless they adhere to their priorities (this is why they can be seen as Law); discourages and splits Christian communities creating a “special” elite group who are more spiritual; promotes strict rules to prohibit certain behaviour and activities (do not handle, taste, touch); promotes “extreme” spirituality of denial, harsh treatment of human needs and desires (to combat sin); and promotes “spiritual” activities such as worship and prayer above all else (and perpetuate a spiritual-secular divide).*

The spirituality of Christ is warm *(let the children come)*, generous *(I will, touching the leper)*, compassionate *(neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more)*, dignifying *(I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little)*, without discrimination *(it is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick)*, caring *(come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest)*, gentle *(come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.)* yet uncompromising *(I have not come to abolish them (the Law and Prophets) but to fulfill them.)* Only he (and the Spirit) can hold the balance and thus our spirituality needs to be rooted in Christ.

Take time to think through what should characterise your spirituality. Paul had worked hard contending for the soul of the Christian faith in his day. We now carry the torch.

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.