[**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

[**EPHESIANS 4:1-6**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%204&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. Paul spent the first three chapters expounding in detail all that God did for us in Christ. What follows from chapter 4 onwards is his appeal to *“live a life worthy of the calling you have received.”* In other words, he calls on us to now live lives befitting all that God has done. “*Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.”* Does it surprise you that Paul considers humility, gentleness, patience, forbearance and love as a fitting response to God’s work of salvation? What would you have expected? In what way would these qualities befit us who are called into his kingdom?
3. Paul sums up our calling in terms of *“There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all”,* emphasising oneness under God. In what way would “humility, gentleness, patience, forbearance and love” be fitting attitudes in us when we realise that we all come under *“one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all”*?
4. At the beginning of the letter in chapter 1, Paul introduces himself as *“an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God”* but in making his appeal here in chapter 4, he refers to himself as *“a prisoner for the Lord”*. Do you think this example of humility by Paul will strengthen his call to all to strive to keep the unity of the Spirit, or would it have been more effective for him to assert his special position as apostle?
5. Would you say that you are a unifying person in your church rather than a polarising one? In what ways?
6. “*Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”* It sounds like a lot of work is needed to maintain unity in the Church. Why is this so? How can we keep the unity of the Spirit without compromising what we believe to be the truth of God? Write down a prayer in response.

# Tuesday

[**EPHESIANS 4:1-6**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%204&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

[**EPHESIANS 4:7-13**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%204&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. *“But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it.”* When you examine how Paul constructed the sentence: “grace”—what does it imply?; “given”—not earned; “each of us”—all receive; “as Christ apportioned it”—here is where differentiation occurs but who decides the apportionment?—what can you learn from this statement that Paul makes?
3. *“So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers…”* … and many others—the list is not intended to be exhaustive. Who is the source of these resources? *“... to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.”* To what end? So who do we serve? And who do we service? Do you see your place in the church (prominent or not) in this way?
4. *“... until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”* Note the “all”: our gifts, experience, knowledge is intended to help all get to the point where they experience fully what it means to be a Christian. Do you see your role in the church in this light?
5. Who we are is by grace. What we have is given to us. What we can do is Christ’s gift to the church. Write down a prayer in response.

# Thursday

[**EPHESIANS 4:7-13**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%204&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

[**EPHESIANS 4:14-16**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%204&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. *Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.* Infants, as compared to “until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” What characterises the church that is like an infant? From the previous passage, Paul says Christ gives the church “the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers” so that the church may be mature. Does this mean that the church remains an infant if it does not have these gifts, or if those who have these gifts do not build the church in unity, or if the church do not let themselves be taught and guided by those who are Christ’s gifts to the church? What do you think are the key ingredients for a church to grow towards unity and maturity?
3. *Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.* Why “speaking the truth in love”? Is this the means by which we will grow, or is this what we will be doing when we grow and mature? Is it about having honest relationships in the church or that we are well-versed with the truth of the bible? How do truth and love (as an inseparable pair, meaning truth that is loving and love that is founded on truth) function in our growth and maturity?
4. *… as each part does its work.* Everyone is to contribute to the unity, growth and maturity of the church. Is it possible for this to happen? Write down a prayer in response.

# Saturday

[**EPHESIANS 4:14-16**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%204&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

**MATURITY**

*Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.*

The contrast between v14, “Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming.” and v15, “Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.” is very revealing. On the one hand the immature church is one that is unstable, chasing after the latest trendy idea and therefore easily manipulated. Such a church has no sense of truth and certainly no Christ as Shepherd. On the other hand, the church that is well equipped by the gifts of Christ, is well-grounded in the truth and therefore has the confidence to express it with love towards others. Here is a church that clearly has Christ as the head and unitedly serves him.

Paul makes it clear that Christ bestows gifts to the church. These gifts, such as the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, minister to the people and equip them for works of service. We should understand the following text to mean that as the people then involve themselves in works of service, the body is built up. The building up of the body is not the task of the gifts of Christ. They are to equip the people for works of service *so that the body may be built up.*

But Paul’s description of the resulting church is instructive: unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God (truth), and become mature (love, or more broadly, the gifts of the Holy Spirit), attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ (completeness).

It is not just that as we are well taught we will come to the unity of truth; we must be practitioners (as people involved in works of service) as well. What this simply means is that if we are to know truth, we must be involved in acts of love. In other words, truth cannot be grasped in a theoretical environment. It is only when we are involved in service, when we have a stake in the truth, that we will be built up. This is the call of Paul at the top of the chapter: Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.

And so Paul, describing the path to maturity in Christ, or fullness of Christ, puts together the twin building blocks of Christian maturity—truth and love—and tells us that as we “truth in love” *we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.*

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.