**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

[**1 JOHN 4:13-16**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20John%204&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 during the past day. Share with God what you thought or felt. Pray also for those he has laid on your heart.
2. Read [1 JOHN 4:13-16](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20John%204&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. *“This is how we know that we live in him and he in us: He has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God.”* The issue at stake here is not our salvation. It is that when we are saved we will be sanctified and we will be glorified. It is the certainty that when we stand with Jesus and trust that he and he alone will be able to accomplish what we cannot do for ourselves. What is the guarantee that all these promises will see the light of day in our lives (see also Ephesians 1:13-14)?
2. *“If anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, God lives in them and they in God.”* What does it mean for us who are Christians that God lives in us and we in God? What certainties can we derive from such a development (meaning, if God lives in us, then …, if we live in God, then …)?
3. *“And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.”* What does “knowing the love God has for you” do for you? In what ways would a Christian be able to “rely on the love God has for you”? Spell it out in practical areas that are real issues in your life.
4. *“God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.”* John tells us that the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives means that now God lives in us and we live in God. His presence enables us to know God’s love (because God is love) and in knowing, we can rely on that love (see also Romans 5:5). Do you think that the Holy Spirit is now a part of you and your life? How does John help us to be certain about the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives? Does the truth of the Spirit’s presence in you make any difference to you?

# Wednesday and Thursday

[**1 JOHN 4:16-18**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20John%204&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 [1 JOHN 4:16-18](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20John%204&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. *“God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.”* In v13 John tells us that we know we live in him and he in us because he has given us his Spirit. In v15 he tells us that if anyone acknowledges that Jesus is the Son of God, “God lives in them and they in God.” Now he tells us that whoever lives in love “lives in God, and God in them”, reversing the order, so that in this case the starting point is us. Do you think he is giving us different ways to be sure that we live in God and God lives in us, or he is implying that if it were true that we live in God and God lives in us then all 3 conditions must be true or he is saying that Christians (who acknowledges Jesus is the Son of God) have the Holy Spirit, leading us to live in love as a result? It would seem that there is something we can take the initiative in to really experience God: what is it? What do you think to “live in love” means in a practical sense?
2. *“God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.”* John is also saying that since God is love then when we live lives that are full of love, we live lives that are full of God. What do you think is the result for us of living lives that are full of God?
3. *“This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.”* The key point is to be like the Jesus we know from Scripture. The context of our confidence is the day of judgement when perfect love drives out fear. How is the love we have now imperfect? How can the love we have become perfect?
4. Do you think this makes sense, that there is so much focus on helping us to love, and to love more perfectly? What has this to do with being righteous, being sanctified, being holy? Do you think it is possible to grow in righteousness and holiness by growing in love, or are they two different roads altogether?

# Friday and Saturday

[**1 JOHN 4:19-21**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20John%204&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 [1 JOHN 4:19-21](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20John%204&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. *“We love because he first loved us.”* Do you think the meaning is that we are capable of loving because we have experienced God’s love in the first place, or that we are motivated to love because we have experienced God’s love, or that we should let God’s love for us be the basis, reason and inspiration for our loving actions towards one another and our neighbour (even when we don’t feel loving towards them)?
2. *“Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar. For whoever does not love their brother and sister, whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen. And he has given us this command: Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.”* A brother or sister would be a fellow Christian in your community. Hates would basically imply not loving rather than extreme animosity. Do you think the issue is that an unseen God is more difficult to love than a visible, known, person, or that love towards an unseen God is an unseen love whereas hatred towards an existing person is an existing hatred, or that if hatred exists in the heart then love cannot exist (unlikely because the argument emphasises the seen and unseen nature of the objects, but I thought interesting still)? What do you think is the main point that John makes here (however you understand the argument)?
3. *“Anyone who loves God must also love their brother and sister.”* The principle is clear: for the one to be true, the other must also be true. You can hate God and love your brother but you cannot love God and hate your brother. Is it the case because in hating your brother you disobey God’s command, or because in God’s eyes love is not an emotion but an action and the action he accepts is the act of love towards your brother and so if you hate your brother, God rejects your love for him? Whatever the case may be, what must be an important aspect of a Christian’s demonstration of devotion to God, his worship of him? How would this truth affect you and your own walk with God and your ongoing relationship with your brothers and sisters in Christ?

# Sunday

**THE CHRISTIAN IS LOVE**

*“Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.”*

This is an amazing statement and I think we do well to not quickly explain it away.

The problem in our theological minds is that it seems to bypass the sacrifice of Christ or we will have to claim that only Christians are capable of “living in love”, which seems rather arrogant, or restrict “whoever” to mean only Christians. To me, however, the issue is an issue only when we insist on the logic of western argument and thinking that wants to filter everything down to its essence.

The statement does not focus on faith in Christ and so we should not bring it into the picture to complicate what it tells us. Instead we should let it inform us just how much God – is – love; how much love is the very essence of God; all love that is unselfish and sacrificial and imparts life (see vv9-10).

In Mark 12, the lawyer, who asked Jesus which he thinks is the most important of all the commandments of God—and Jesus replied in that famous statement about love—affirmed Jesus’ answer and added “To love … is more important than all burnt offerings and sacrifices,” and Jesus responded, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.”

Even to understand what love means to God brings a person closer to the kingdom of God; what more to live in love—that is, to make love (as defined in vv9-10) as the foundation of your life and lifestyle.

The logical conclusion that John brings us to is that as children of God, hatred must never be in our DNA; love has no place for hatred; children of God love, not hate; Christians must be marked by their love.

*“A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (John 13:34-35)*

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.