**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

[**REVELATION 2:1-3**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%202&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 [REVELATION 2:1-3](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%202&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. *“To the angel of the church in Ephesus write:”* People have suggested that the “angel” refers to an actual angel, a prominent leader, or was just a way of addressing the church as an individual (in other words, the angel of the church is the church). Whichever it may be, who do you think are the intended recipients of the letter?
2. *“These are the words of him who holds the seven stars in his right hand and walks among the seven golden lampstands.”* A recurring structure of these letters is that a part of the description of “the son of man” in chapter 1 is used in every of these letters. Also, we were told in Revelation 1:20 that the seven stars refer to the angels of the churches and the golden lampstands the churches themselves. What does this description of Jesus make him to be, in relation to the church? What is his authority over the church? How should the church view his message?
3. The fact that the lampstands represent churches begs the question: why lampstands and not lamps? Aren’t we supposed to shine for Jesus?
4. *“I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance.”* Jesus acknowledges what the church has done, and the effort that has gone into them. What else characterises the church favourably in the eyes of Jesus? From what was said, how would you describe the church in Ephesus in your own words?
5. Would this be a description and that would be appropriate for you and your church? How would your church fare in these areas?

# Wednesday and Thursday

[**REVELATION 2:4-6**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%202&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 [REVELATION 2:4-6](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%202&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. *“Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first.”* What do you think “the love you had at first” means? In what way were they to repent?
2. *“If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.”* How would you understand “remove your lampstand from its place” to mean? Why does Jesus seem to place so much importance on this one matter and discount all the good things he had commended them for? Is it a matter of “all or nothing” or that the one supersedes all the rest or something else?
3. The church had changed from what it was and what it did at the beginning, to now a church that is hardworking, diligently focused on purifying its members (cannot tolerate wicked people) and purifying its theology (test for truth and falsehood), enduring and persevering in times of hardships. Isn’t this good? Why does Jesus say that the state of the church is unacceptable?

# Friday and Saturday

[**REVELATION 2:7**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%202&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 [REVELATION 2:7](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Revelation%202&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. *“Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches.”* The message is from Jesus to the church in Ephesus, yet it calls on everyone to hear what the Spirit says to the churches (note plural). What does it mean? Who do you think is the intended audience of this letter?
2. *“To the one who is victorious …”* The literal translation is “to him who overcomes”, painting a picture of one who overcomes the challenges he faces, both internally and externally, to remain faithful to the end. Do you think this is about overcoming the problem raised earlier or overcoming sin and death as a Christian or something else?
3. *“… I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.”* Does this imply that our salvation depends on our works? How really are we to overcome?

# Sunday

**YOU HAVE FORSAKEN THE LOVE YOU HAD AT FIRST**

*“I know your deeds, your hard work and your perseverance.”*

Hard work, hardships, perseverance, careful attention to right behaviour, right values, right teaching. These are what characterise the church in Ephesus. They are not wrong, nor are these things bad. In fact, Jesus commends them.

Yet when you read the description of the first church, in Acts 2, you will see that they are a far cry from that church:

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

The church in Acts 2 was filled with awe, love, gladness, sincerity, praise and worship. You can feel the life throbbing. At the heart of it is the love they had for one another, so much so they spent much time with each other and with God with “glad and sincere hearts”. People on the outside were drawn to them.

Every church is made up of different individuals and they are not alike. But the foundation of every church must surely be the same: the love and forgiveness that we receive from Jesus, and the love and forgiveness we impart to each other, as Jesus commands us.

The church in Ephesus had focused on right behaviour, right values, right teaching, and along the way lost sight of love and forgiveness, the key qualities of the life that Jesus gives. As you read Jesus’ description, you feel the absence of joy and love, of fellowship and unity, of gladness and sincerity. This life, founded on love and forgiveness, is not optional; it is central.

As a lampstand, the church is to carry the light of Jesus to all around. But if that light is not the true light, then it is not worthy to be a lampstand.

*“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (John 13:35)*

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.