**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 2:12-14**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20John%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 [1 JOHN 2:12-14](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20John%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. *“I am writing to you because …”* John refers to 3 groups: children, fathers, and young men. We should not pay too much attention to gender and assume that the groups comprise male and female. Do you think the groups represent physical ages, stages of a christian, or emphasise the relationships and responsibilities between them, fathers having responsibility and authority over the children and young men to teach and guide them, young men providing the manpower for work, and children needing to focus on their foundations?
2. *“Children: because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name; because you know the Father.”* What do those who are new in the faith need to have a clear knowledge and experience of? Do you think that this foundation is well-laid in those who are young Christians in your church? Do you think this foundation is a solid foundation in your own Christian life?
3. *“Young men: because you have overcome the evil one; because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.”* John emphasised 3 areas for young adults: overcoming the evil one in their lives, living out God’s word and using their strength. Are those who have moved on from the fundamental truth of forgiveness and knowledge of God, taught and trained in recognising the evil one and resisting him, in knowing, understanding and responding to God’s word, and involvement in the work of the church?
4. *“Fathers: because you know him who is from the beginning.”* Interestingly there is only one characteristic of fathers: that they know God. When you think about it, this truth releases everything that they are and can be. Fathers take responsibility to teach, to lead, to train, to exercise authority. Would you say that those who have the responsibility to teach, lead, train and exercise authority in your church “know God”?
5. Are you a child, a young man or a father in your church? Do you think we leave the child when we enter adulthood and leave that when we enter fatherhood, or, as we journey towards fatherhood (knowing God in life), the child and the adult follow along? How would that work out?

# Wednesday and Thursday

[**1 JOHN 2:15-17**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20John%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 [1 JOHN 2:15-17](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20John%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. *“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.”* John explains that “loving the world” is actually lust, a powerful, consuming desire that will push God away. John is clearly not talking only about sexual lust. Beyond sexual lust, what else can provoke powerful, consuming desires in us? Who do you think John is directing this to, children, fathers or young men? Who are vulnerable?
2. Lust is brought about by the world, and not by God. Whether from sex, or money, or power, or popularity, or status, or many other aspects of life, lust makes us lose control. Why is it important that we not allow lust to shape our lives? How can we recognise lust and differentiate it from normal desires such as ambition or passion, or would you equate them with lust? Is John suggesting that Christians must avoid the things of the world and only occupy ourselves with the things of God?
3. How does John suggest we keep lust at bay?

# Friday and Saturday

[**1 JOHN 2:18-29**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20John%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 [1 JOHN 2:18-29](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20John%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. *“I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray.”* Having warned Christians about the pitfall of being sucked in by the world and away from God, John now writes about the danger of being deceived by imposters. There is no need to be distracted by who “antichrists” are; John sets out clearly the kind of people he is talking about: what makes them able to deceive Christians? What characterises them (see the whole passage)?
2. *“I do not write to you because you do not know the truth, but because you do know it and because no lie comes from the truth. Who is the liar? It is whoever denies that Jesus is the Christ. Such a person is the antichrist—denying the Father and the Son. No one who denies the Son has the Father; whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father also.”* It is easy to just apply this literally—we look out for people who deny that Jesus is the Christ. More difficult is to recognise teachers and teachings that emphasise our need to work out our righteousness (Law and legalism) instead of repentance and belief (faith and Spirit), denying the importance of Christ’s sacrifice or those who deny that we obey him as Lord of our lives. Why is this so important, and why do people (who claim to be Christians) want to deny that Jesus is the Christ, literally or in practice?
3. What does John tell us that we have, that we need to allow to shape our view of our faith, in order that we be protected from such deception?

# Sunday

**THE PITFALLS**

*“Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world.”*

Having laid down the foundations of the Christian life, John turns his attention to the pitfalls. While he recognises that in a Christian’s journey with Christ a person may be at different levels—a child who needs to be taught and who should focus on fundamentals; a young man who should now flex his muscles in learning more directly from the word of God, in participating in the work of the church, and in learning to deal with the evil one in his life’s journey; and a father who has come to knowledge of God over time, over obedience, over experience both good and bad, over an extended study and knowledge of the word of God, and who now must focus on raising the younger ones and guiding the older ones—everyone must be wary of these pitfalls—every Christian is in danger of them.

Having come from the world, it is difficult to differentiate what is of the evil one and what is a natural part of our life while living in the world, what stirs up our sinful nature and what is just part of our nature. John helps us by associating the world with lust—world is lust—just as he would soon tell us that God is love.

Lust consumes while love affirms and frees. Love encourages self-control while lust makes one lose control. Love causes life to blossom while lust sucks life out of us. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.

The second pitfall is more difficult because it comes from people that we accept as a part of our community. However, they either do not accept the authority of Christ and have no intention of obeying him, wanting only their ticket to heaven, or they do not accept that our passage to life can be had by mere repentance and belief in Christ and so they add more rules and regulations, believing that adherence to these rules and regulations will qualify us better. Essentially they deny that Jesus is Saviour and Lord.

We are not left defenceless however. We have the Gospel through which we found our way into the kingdom. We have the Holy Spirit, given to us through our Lord Jesus Christ. These two, the Gospel and the Spirit are twin beacons that are unchanging, and are our constant guide in our journey with Christ. What we need to do is to stay close to them and examine everything we are unsure about in their clear light.

*“As for you, see that what you have heard from the beginning remains in you. If it does, you also will remain in the Son and in the Father. And this is what he promised us—eternal life.”*

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.