**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

[**PHILIPPIANS 2:12-13**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians%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 [PHILIPPIANS 2:12-13](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians%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. *“Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed … continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling.”* The second “therefore” in this chapter builds on the first and leads us to a more general view of what Paul is asking us to do, not just because persecution is coming, but because this is what Christians should always doing — working out what it means to be saved — and that means becoming the person who inhabits the mindset of Christ. The mindset that fosters unity, of humbling oneself, putting the interests of others before our own, and setting aside our selfish ambition and conceit, is the Christian mindset that we should work to make our own. Do you agree? Why “with fear and trembling”? Do you see much of this reverent desire to be like Christ (rather than be “ourselves”) in the church and why?
2. *“not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence”* Here is an allusion to the fact that Paul is unlikely to be around to help the Philippians to accomplish and maintain this mindset and unity in the church. This unity must stem from within the Christian and not held together by leaders. Do you agree? How can you be responsible for your own mindset and your own contribution to the unity in the church, or are you dependent on your leaders for this?
3. *“… for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.”* The basic principle is that ultimately we must find God within us and let him have his way in our lives. We must not make our leaders our surrogate gods or put on them the responsibilities of the church — the church and the calling of the church is placed upon all our shoulders. When each member of the church fails to contribute his or her uniqueness, the impact of the church is diminished. How can we work this truth in our own Christian living? What must we do? How can we maintain this for the rest of our lives?

# Wednesday and Thursday

[**PHILIPPIANS 2:14-18**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians%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 [PHILIPPIANS 2:14-18](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians%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 everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.”* Paul makes the link between “grumbling or arguing” and “blameless and pure”, giving us an idea of what his concerns are. In what way can doing everything with a “grumbling and argumentative” spirit blemish our souls? After all, aren’t we already doing the work? What would be the spirit with which Paul would recommend that we involve ourselves in the life and ministry of the church? Is Paul implying that there must be no disagreements within the church community, especially with the leadership? Is it possible to be wholehearted in our involvement with the church when the agenda of the church is not our agenda or we are unhappy about some people in the community?
2. *“Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain.”* Paul tells us that our unity, not merely an outward display but an inner reality, will be a tremendous testimony of the truth of the Gospel (which is the word of life) and would also be the confirmation that the church are truly the disciples of Jesus (see John 17:20-23). Would you consider your church community to be “shining like stars” against the darkness of the fallen world around you? Would you consider yourself to be one such star that shines for the truth of the Gospel? What more needs to be done?
3. *“But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.”* Paul now points to himself and shares with the church the mindset that he calls on them to adopt: humbling oneself, putting the interests of others before his own, and setting aside his selfish ambition and conceit. The only way to get others to walk the road to calvary is to walk the road yourself. Are you on this road?

# Friday and Saturday

[**PHILIPPIANS 2:19-30**](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians%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 [PHILIPPIANS 2:19-30](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Philippians%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 hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare”* Apart from sharing his own heart as an example of a Christian who embodies the mindset of Jesus, Paul points to Timothy. How does Timothy embody the mindset of Christ? What impresses you in Paul’s description of Timothy? Who in your midst are “Timothys”?
2. *“ But I think it is necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care of my needs. For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. Indeed he was ill, and almost died. But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow.”* The third example Paul shared is Epaphroditus, someone from the Philippian church. How did Paul describe Epaphroditus? What about him are you impressed by?
3. *“So then, welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor people like him, because he almost died for the work of Christ. He risked his life to make up for the help you yourselves could not give me.”* Paul encouraged the Philippians to honour people like Epaphroditus. These people usually do not let themselves stand out or tell everybody what they have done. To honour them, you will have to learn to recognise them. Who are these people in your church?
4. Jesus, Paul, Timothy and Epaphroditus — examples of how Christians ought to be inside and out. Would they represent the “super-Christians” that we hear of these days? Do you think this is only for special Christians chosen by God for ministry, or for all Christians? Does Paul allow us the idea that we can be slack in this matter? How can you be such a person in your own church?

# Sunday

**CHRISTIAN STARS**

*Do everything without grumbling or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.” Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life.*

The world around us is obsessed with being noticed. We are in the era where you can make a lot of money by being popular, thus earning the title of an influencer. To stand out, we have to tell people what we have done, what we think, how we are unique, effective, attractive or relevant. We are of a generation obsessed with self and promoting self.

For Paul to tell us to “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others” is blasphemy in the religion of today. For Paul to assert that this is fundamentally the mindset of our Lord, a mindset that he beseeched us to have for ourselves, sets the Christian diametrically opposite the world.

Now Paul tells us that this is how we will shine as we live our lives against the backdrop of the prevailing philosophy of life and success in this world — when we are genuinely and wholeheartedly united as a community, not focused on ourselves but on each other and on Christ, not quarrelling over programmes and agenda, but resting on the grace of God.

To further help us understand this mindset, that perhaps is a little too far for us to approach when we see the example of Christ, who not only left heaven’s glory but humbled himself to obey God, even to the cross, Paul shared 3 other examples: himself, Timothy and Epaphroditus.

Paul shared his joy in seeing the Philippians blessed as they grow in their faith. Even if he were to be diminished in any way, his heart is still with the Philippians and he will still rejoice in their progress.

Timothy was a person who showed “genuine concern for your welfare” and was willing to serve Paul in whatever ways he could.

Epaphroditus was someone from the Philippian Church; someone from their own ranks. Paul shared that he risked his life to serve Paul and although he was ill and almost died, yet his heart was with the church.

This is not to say that these people were perfect — only Christ is perfect. But they demonstrated in their lives the attitude of caring for the interests of others so that when others are served and blessed, that forms the basis for their joy and on those occasions they were able to embody the mindset of Christ.

We too are not perfect and we should not read in these words of Paul the implication that we should be completely unselfish and humble throughout our entire Christian journey and expect the same of others. But they do hold up as examples of the kind of Christian we should aspire to be in the challenges we face in church and in the communities we have been placed.

At the same time, we learn to recognise those among us who have the same humility and eagerness for the good of the other, finding joy in their joy, progress and blessing, who are genuine in their service and actions, and who seek to nurture the fruit of the Gospel in the members of his church.

*“So then, welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor people like him.”*

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.