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Pray: Father God, as I seek a deeper encounter with your Son, speak directly to my heart and mind through your Holy Spirit. Guide my prayers that they might be sincere. May the truth of your word accomplish its purpose in me. Please thwart any attempt by the evil one to interfere in any way with what follows. Amen.

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Say aloud: As a child of God and with the authority of Jesus, I forbid any spirit that is not of God from interfering in any way with what follows. I command this in Jesus' Name.

Ask for forgiveness:

Pray: "God, please bring to mind anything I've done that is offensive to you." (If nothing comes to mind, skip the next prayer. If something comes to mind, continue:)

"Father God, I want to confess my sin to you and ask for your forgiveness. Specifically, I confess the sin (or sins) of _____. (Be as specific as possible. Make a list if necessary.) Please forgive me and change me and cleanse me. Please grant me strength that I might truly turn from my sin. I receive your forgiveness. Thank you. Amen."

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(If no one comes to mind, skip the next prayer. If someone comes to mind, continue:)

Pray: God, I forgive _____ (name of person) for _____. (Name the sin as specifically as possible.) Please help me to forgive them from the heart. Amen.

(If you find yourself unable to forgive someone, pray this prayer: "Jesus, you know why it's so difficult for me to forgive _____. Please help me to desire to forgive them and please heal me so completely that I am able to forgive them from my heart. Amen.")

Pray for the people you know who need physical healing.

Peter's Mother-In-Law

a meditation

Bible Reading:

Mark 8: 14 - 16 Now when Jesus entered Peter's house, he saw his mother-in-law lying down, sick with a fever. He touched her hand, and the fever left her. Then she got up and began to serve them. When it was evening, many demon-possessed people were brought to him. He drove out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick. (NET)

Meditation:

Imagine that you are present to observe the scene. Watch as the events unfold:

Enter Peter's house with Jesus.

Notice Peter's mother-in-law lying down, sick with a fever.

Watch as Jesus touches her hand.

See her get up and begin to serve them.

Notice the onset of evening.

Watch the many demon-possessed and sick people being brought to Jesus.

Hear him drive out the spirits with a word.

See him heal all the sick.

Worship:

Reflect on how Jesus always uses his power to heal and not to destroy. Offer thanks to God for his demonstration of power over both sickness and the demonic.

Questions:

- 1) What is significant about Jesus using touch to heal Peter's mother-in-law?
- 2) How does Jesus drive out demonic spirits?
- 3) What percentage of the sick does Jesus heal?

Concluding Prayer:

Jesus, touch me that I might be made perfectly whole. Speak to any spirit that would seek to enslave me. Thank you for your healing touch and word. Amen.

[Text your Accountability Partner(s): Finished Monday's Exercises.]

Resistance

(continued...)

Sin

Ongoing, habitual sin can make it difficult to remain consciously in God's presence (we'll address this more closely in week twelve). For now, if you struggle with ongoing, habitual sin, make this a regular prayer:

"Lord, you know what I continue to struggle with. I am ashamed to have to keep coming back to you again and again for forgiveness. Please forgive me, but also change me and heal me, so that I will no longer need your forgiveness in this area. Amen."

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Pray for the people you know who need emotional healing.

A Thief on a Cross

a meditation

Bible Reading:

Luke 23: 32, 33... ..39 - 43 Two other criminals were also led away to be executed with him. So when they came to the place that is called "The Skull," they crucified him there, along with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left... ..One of the

criminals who was hanging there railed at him, saying, “Aren’t you the Christ? Save yourself and us!” But the other rebuked him, saying, “Don’t you fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we rightly so, for we are getting what we deserve for what we did, but this man has done nothing wrong.” Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingdom.” And Jesus said to him, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.”(NET)

Meditation:

Imagine that you are present to observe the scene. Watch as the events unfold:

Picture Jesus upon his cross, crucified between two criminals.

Listen as one of the criminals mocks Jesus.

Listen as the other criminal says to the first, “Don’t you fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? And we rightly so, for we are getting what we deserve for what we did, but this man has done nothing wrong.”

Then hear this same criminal say to Jesus, “Jesus, remember me when you come in your kingdom.”

Listen as Jesus says, “I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise.”

Questions:

- 1) If you were with Jesus at the time of his crucifixion, what would you say to him?
- 2) What does Jesus’ response to the criminal reveal about his generosity?

Worship:

Express to Jesus your awe at his graciousness and kindness.

Concluding Prayer:

Jesus, in the midst of your pain, you continued to extend mercy to someone in need. You are truly an amazing God. Amen.

[Text your Accountability Partner(s): Finished Tuesday’s Exercises.]

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Pray for salvation and/or spiritual breakthrough for friends and family members who need it.

An Encore Appearance

a meditation

Bible Reading:

John 20: 24 - 29 Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he replied, "Unless I see the wounds

from the nails in his hands, and put my finger into the wounds from the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will never believe it!" Eight days later the disciples were again together in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and examine my hands. Extend your hand and put it into my side. Do not continue in your unbelief, but believe." Thomas replied to him, "My Lord and my God!" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are the people who have not seen and yet have believed." (NET)

Meditation:

Imagine that you are present with the disciples in the house:

Listen as the other disciples excitedly tell Thomas, "We have seen the Lord!"

Hear Thomas' reply: "Unless I see the wounds from the nails in his hands, and put my finger into the wounds from the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will never believe it!"

Fast forward eight days: You are again present in the house with the disciples.

Picture Jesus suddenly standing among you.

Hear Jesus say, "Peace be with you!"

Watch as Jesus looks directly at Thomas and says, "Put your finger here, and examine my hands. Extend your hand and put it into my side. Do not continue in your unbelief, but believe."

Hear Thomas reply, "My Lord and my God!"

Listen as Jesus says to Thomas, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are the people who have not seen and yet have believed."

Questions:

- 1) If you had been Thomas, would you have believed the other disciples when they told you that they had seen the Lord?
- 2) Jesus says that those who believe despite not having seen are blessed. Why then, do you suppose, he makes a special appearance for Thomas?
- 3) What emotions would you have experienced if you had been present when Jesus appeared to Thomas?

Worship:

Express worship to Jesus both for being willing to meet Thomas' demands and for blessing those (like us) who believe without having seen. (Example: "Jesus, you show such grace to Thomas when you provide him what he needed in order to believe. You are gracious to us as well for bringing us to faith without seeing you in person. Thank you for your graciousness and for your blessing.")

Concluding Prayer:

Jesus, I have not seen you, at least not in the way that you appeared for Thomas and the other disciples, yet I believe in you. Please bless me with your peace. Amen.

[Text your Accountability Partner(s): Finished Wednesday's Exercises.]

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Pray for the specific needs of immediate family members and loved ones.

Withered Hands and Stubborn Hearts

a meditation

Bible Reading:

Mark 3: 1 - 6 Then Jesus entered the synagogue again, and a man was there who had a withered hand. They watched Jesus closely to see if he would heal him on the Sabbath, so that they could accuse him. So he said to the man who had the withered hand, "Stand up

among all these people.” Then he said to them, “Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath, or evil, to save a life or destroy it?” But they were silent. After looking around at them in anger, grieved by the hardness of their hearts, he said to the man, “Stretch out your hand.” He stretched it out, and his hand was restored. So the Pharisees went out immediately and began plotting with the Herodians, as to how they could assassinate him. (NET)

Meditation:

Imagine that you are present to observe the scene. Watch as the events unfold:

Watch as Jesus enters the synagogue.

Notice that a man with the withered hand is present.

Observe the presence of the Pharisees.

Hear Jesus call out to the man with the withered hand, “Stand up among all these people.”

Hear Jesus say to the Pharisees, “Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath, or evil, to save a life or destroy it?”

Observe the silence of the Pharisees.

Sense Jesus’ anger and grief.

Listen as Jesus says, “Stretch out your hand.”

Watch as the man stretches out his now restored hand.

See the Pharisees leave.

Questions:

- 1) At whom is Jesus angry?
- 2) Why is Jesus angry?
- 3) What is the source of Jesus’ grief?

Worship:

Reflect on how Jesus’ anger and grief were a sign of his love. Offer praise to God because even his anger and grief are motivated by his compassion and care.

Concluding Prayer:

Jesus, you are grieved when we fail to love others. Open our hearts to your love and compassion that we might love others as deeply as you do. Amen.

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Pray for government and world leaders—that God would grant them wisdom, courage, knowledge of the truth and genuine faith in him.

Meditating On the Meditations

Up to this point, we've meditated on sixteen different scenarios. Take a moment and recall...

- the leper who knelt down before Jesus and said, "If you are willing, you can make me clean."

- the blind man who cried out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”
- the man whose little daughter was dying, so Jesus went with him.
- the woman who said to herself, “If only I touch his clothes, I will be healed.” and to whom Jesus said, “Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your disease.”
- the receiving and blessing of the children.
- the healing of the woman who had been disabled by a spirit for eighteen years.
- the widow to whom Jesus said, “Don’t cry.” before returning her son to life.
- the calming of the wind and the waves.
- the lame, blind, crippled, mute, and others who were brought to Jesus to be healed.
- the ten lepers who were healed, one of whom returned to thank Jesus.
- the man who cried out, “I believe; help my unbelief!” before Jesus delivered his son from a demon.
- the man who Jesus asked, “Do you want to become well?” before he healed him.
- the healing of Peter’s mother-in-law.
- the thief on the cross.
- Jesus appearing to Thomas.
- the man with the withered hand.

Questions:

- 1) Which three or four of the above are your favorites?
- 2) What is it about your favorites that makes them your favorites?

Worship:

Take a moment to revisit and recall several of your favorites. If possible, do this by memory. (Or, if necessary, refresh your memory with scripture.) If your favorites include, for example, 1) the story of the leper who said, “If you are willing, you can make me clean.” and 2) the receiving and blessing of the children by Jesus and 3) the widow to whom Jesus said, “Don’t cry.”, begin by recalling each scene as if you had been present to experience it. Allow each

moment to remind you of the character and compassion of Jesus before moving on to the next vignette.

Reflect on this truth: the Jesus of these stories is the Jesus who is available to you today. Let this sink in and then go into God's presence to worship.

Concluding Prayer:

Jesus, please move in us that we might desire to be made physically, emotionally and spiritual whole. As we reflect on these stories, please remind us of your compassion, care, gentleness and power that we may trust you more and rest more fully in your care. Amen.

[Text your Accountability Partner(s): Finished Friday's Exercises.]

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Pray for those in any of the daily categories who have the greatest need.

An Amazing Lack of Faith

Bible Reading:

Mark 6: 1 - 6 Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. "Where did this man get these things?" they asked. "What's this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable

miracles he is performing? Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him. Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own town, among his relatives and in his own home." He could not do any miracles there, except lay his hands on a few sick people and heal them. He was amazed at their lack of faith. (*NIV*)

The people of Jesus' hometown thought they knew everything there was to know about Jesus because he had grown up among them. Their impression of him couldn't make room for his wisdom, his teachings or his miracles. And so, somehow, they were offended by him. Jesus was amazed at their lack of faith and could not do any miracles among them (except for healing a few sick people).

Questions:

- 1) Why does Jesus' hometown fail to honor him?
- 2) What is the consequence of Jesus' hometown failing to put faith in him?
- 3) What is the link between the people's faith and Jesus' ability to heal?

Worship:

Express to Jesus the honor that his hometown failed to give him. (Example: "Jesus, you created all things, yet you condescended to visit even those who would fail to honor you. You are both a truly great and humble God.")

Concluding Prayer:

Jesus, teach us about faith that we might understand it, and bring us to deep faith in you that we might enjoy every blessing you want to give us. Amen.

[Text your Accountability Partner(s): Finished Saturday's Exercises.]

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The majority of the biblical quotes are from the New English Translation (*NET*)

NET

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Scripture quotations marked "NET" are taken from New English Translation: NET Bible, electronic edition. Dallas, TX : Biblical Studies Press, 1998. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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