

Begin with the preflight checklist:

Ask for God's blessing:

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.

Assert spiritual authority:

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 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.

Combinations

focus on low self esteem (part two)

Meditation:

Make two passes through Jesus' encounter with the widow to whom Jesus said, "Don't cry." before returning her son to life. (Week 7, Day 1)

Remind yourself that the Jesus of this encounter is with you right now.

Read through the following:

Colossians 1: 13, 14 He delivered us from the power of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. *(NET)*

Romans 5: 1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ... *(NET)*

Galatians 4: 4 - 6 But when the appropriate time had come, God sent out his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we may be adopted as sons with full rights. And because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, who calls “*Abba!* Father!” *(NET)*

Titus 3: 4 - 7 But when the kindness of God our Savior and his love for mankind appeared, he saved us not by works of righteousness that we have done but on the basis of his mercy, through the washing of the new birth and the renewing of the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us in full measure through Jesus Christ our Savior. And so, since we have been justified by his grace, we become heirs with the confident expectation of eternal life.” *(NET)*

John 17: 3 (Jesus, praying to the Father:) “Now this is eternal life—that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you sent.” *(NET)*

Worship:

You stand before God as a forgiven, justified, adopted, reborn, Spirit-filled child. The Father himself is your father; Jesus is your big brother; the Holy Spirit lives in you and with you. All this is a consequence of his lavish love—he has done it! Praise God for all he has brought into being in you and for what he will accomplish through you.

Concluding Prayer:

Jesus, make it so that my every thought of myself is nested within the awareness of all I am and have in you. Amen.

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

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Pray for the people you know who need emotional healing.

Meditation with a Friend

Here's another way to enjoy and benefit from the encounter meditations:

Imagine you're with a friend who asks, "What's your God like?"

Respond by saying, "Come and see."

By memory, quickly move through each of the meditations, experiencing Jesus words and actions as if present to observe them with your friend.

At the end of each encounter, point at Jesus and say to your friend, “That’s what my God is like.”

Here are the first three encounters to get you started:

- Jesus’ encounter with the leper who knelt down before Jesus and said, “If you are willing, you can make me clean.”
- Jesus’ encounter with the blind man who cried out, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!”
- Jesus’ encounter with the man whose little daughter was dying, so Jesus went with him.

(See Week 8, Day 5 for the full list of encounter meditations.)

Worship:

The apostle Paul writes in the first chapter of Colossians that Jesus is the “image of the invisible God” and also that “God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in the Son”.

Praise God for the full revelation of his loving, kind and merciful nature in Jesus.

Concluding Prayer:

Jesus, you faithfully and perfectly reveal your Father. Thank you for who you are and for all that you do for me. 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.

Abiding

A few days ago, we attended to the following texts:

Hebrews 13: 6(b) ...he has said, "I will never leave you and I will never abandon you." (*NET*)

Matthew 28: 20(b) (Jesus:) "...remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (*NET*)

John 14: 18 - 20 (Jesus:) "I will not abandon you as orphans, I will come to you. In a little while the world will not see me any longer, but you will see me; because I live, you will live too. You will know at that time that I am in my Father and you are in me and I am in you. (*NET*)

If Jesus is always with us, why do we sometimes speak as if he is not? If we pray on behalf of another believer, "Lord, please be with them during this difficult time," are we not asking Jesus for something which he has already promised? When we speak of "going before the Lord in worship", are we implying that Jesus is not immediately present? Does it matter? The answer is both "yes" and "no".

The answer is "yes" if our words reveal a false understanding. That is, if we actually think of God's presence as something away from us, as something that needs to be entered into or as something to which we need to go.

The answer is "no" if our words are just a manner of speaking and we recognize what we really mean by them. So let's make sure we know what we really mean by them:

When we pray: "Please be with her during this difficult time." In light of the promises of God to always be with us, we really mean: "Please make her aware of your presence during this difficult time." And when we say: "Let's enter into God's presence to worship," we really mean: "Let's bring God and his goodness into our consciousness and worship him."

The point of the above is not to nitpick our use of language (the biblical writers, after all, speak similarly at times), but to remember that abiding with Jesus is not about going to Jesus or bringing Jesus near, it's about being conscious of the presence of the one who has promised to always be with us. The question is not, "Will Jesus abide with me?"; it's, "Will I attend to him?" or "Will I hold him in my consciousness?" or "Will I remind myself of his presence and goodness?"

This, then, is the point of the encounter meditations: To remind ourselves of the character and goodness of the one who has promised to abide with us—continually.

Meditation:

Make two quick passes through the two or three meditations that touch you the most. (For a list of the encounters, see Week 8, Day 5.)

Worship:

Worship Jesus for what these encounters reveal about his character and for his promise to always abide with you.

Prayer:

Jesus, grant that I might, more and more, be aware of your constant and abiding presence that my life might become one of perpetual worship.
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.

Mindful of Jesus' Presence

If you lived during the days of Jesus earthly ministry and you heard that Jesus was nearby, if you needed healing, would you go to him? Would you shout out to him as he passed by? Would you plead with him to deliver you from sin? Would you take your child to him for his blessing? If you were invited to a dinner party where he was to be the guest of honor, would you attend? Would you sit next to him if he invited you to do so?

We have with us the abiding presence of the eternal Son of God, and nothing should shape our lives more than this great gift. As we have seen in the encounter meditations, even the momentary presence of Jesus heals and restores and changes lives. How much more then should the constant presence of the kind, gentle, healing, powerful Jesus change us?

If we want Jesus' presence to shape and transform us, we need not chase after more presence; we need to train ourselves to be more mindful of the one who is already fully present with us.

Meditation:

Remind yourself of the character of the one who has promised to always be with you by taking a quick pass or two through your favorite encounter meditation. (See Week 8, Day 5 for a list of the encounters.)

Worship:

Thank Jesus for what he reveals about himself in this meditation.

Revisit this same meditation throughout your day. Take a quick pass through the meditation and when spend a moment in worship thanking Jesus for his loving presence. Do this during a coffee break or while walking across a parking lot or while waiting on hold during a phone call. Cultivate the habit of taking frequent worship breaks throughout each and every day.

Concluding Prayer:

Jesus, I want to be more aware of your constant, abiding presence. Help me to remind myself of all that I am and all that I have in you as I move through the day. Amen.

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

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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.

Maturing In Christ

If you want an animal to catch mice for you, go with a cat and not a dog. If you want an animal to provide protection and/or bark when strangers come to the door, the dog is the better choice. A cat, by nature, is just better at catching mice, and a dog, likewise, is better suited to security related tasks.

But while a cat is good at catching mice, not so much the kitten. And a dog may be good at providing security, but not while it is still a puppy. The kitten and the puppy have the necessary nature, but they cannot yet do the things that they will be able to do when they are mature.

All who have placed faith in Jesus for salvation are born again; we have been given a new spiritual nature. Scripture tells us that the new nature is “created to be like Christ in true righteousness and holiness” (Ephesians 4: 24). This new nature—once mature—is capable of doing and being everything God desires.

What does God desire? That we become like Christ. How do we mature? By nurturing ourselves with prayer, Bible reading, meditation and worship—the very things we’ve been doing for the past thirteen weeks. When we partake of these things, our new nature matures and strengthens, and we become more and more like Jesus.

Meditation:

Remind yourself of the one whom we are to become like by taking a pass or two through a favorite encounter meditation. (See Week 8, Day 5 for a list of the encounters.)

Bible Reading:

Colossians 4: 12 - 14 Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. *(NIV)*

Worship:

Notice how, in the above passage, God does not ask us to do for others anything that he hasn’t already done for us. Praise God for the example of his Son. Thank him for the gift of spiritual rebirth and for the means he has provided for our growth.

Concluding Prayer:

Jesus, there is no higher calling than to become like you. Please guide us to embrace both our calling and the means by which we grow into it. 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.

A Lifelong Encounter

Jesus invites us into a lifelong and deepening encounter with himself. As we conclude our season together, it's important to think about what you will do to continue the journey. If you've found the last thirteen weeks helpful, consider continuing within the framework with which you're now familiar:

The Preflight Checklist (always start here):

Ask for God's blessing.

Assert spiritual authority.

Ask for forgiveness.

Extend forgiveness.

Pray.

Continue with the weekly structure as presented here or create something that is a better fit for you.

Meditate on the person of Jesus daily.

Use the now familiar encounter meditations and/or search the scripture for additional meditations to add to the list.

Remind yourself of the constant presence of Jesus constantly. Bring Jesus into your consciousness as you move through your day. Share your life with him. Invite him to commune with you.

Read scripture.

Pick a gospel and begin to read through it and/or join a Bible study. Write out your questions and present them to your pastor.

Apply specific scripture to your specific needs. (If you wrestle with anxiety, for example, meditate on the scripture which addresses anxiety.)

Worship.

Worship daily. Worship hourly. Take frequent worship breaks.

Maintain accountability.

Continue to check in with a friend or friends.

Closing Reflection:

1 Thessalonians 5: 23, 24 Now may the God of peace himself make you completely holy and may your spirit and soul and body be kept entirely blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is trustworthy, and he will in fact do this. (*NET*)

Give thanks to God for his abiding presence. Praise him for his loving, caring, generous nature. Worship him for his perfect steadfastness. Thank him for his many gifts.

Concluding Prayer:

Jesus, bless me with a deepening encounter with you. Help me to continue growing in faith and in the awareness of all that you are and have for me. Amen.

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

Note: This marks the end of the original thirteen week series of devotionals. It is the author's intent to make this into a year round series.

Please stay tuned for more...

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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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