

INTERMEDIATE AND ADVANCED EXERCISES

As you approach the intermediate and advanced exercises for the spiritual temperaments, remember to pay attention to what brings life to your relationship with God. Notice the ways the presence of Jesus is mediated that enable you to hear His voice and sense His live-giving Spirit with clarity and surety.

As my friend Sam Metcalf put it:

The older I get, the more I realize that God is remarkably accommodating, far beyond my imagination or comprehension. He longs to relate with me so much that He will go to great extremes to overcome the frailties of my humanity. Consider what He has done throughout redemptive history and the huge variety of means He has employed to reveal Himself: angels, a pillar of fire, a Temple, an ass, an audible voice from heaven. . . .

Like all liturgical practice, regularity [of time with God] can bring confidence and surety. It is like the regular exercise of a muscle. However, structure can be deadening and can suck the life right out of the most passionate pursuit of God. While discipline is certainly admirable regardless of the pace, structure without grace can be the death of real spiritual vitality.¹

So enter into these exercises with attentiveness to how your own soul is responding to the Lord as you taste and see for yourself that He is indeed good.

¹Sam Metcalf is the president of Church Resource Ministries. This entry appeared on his personal blog (January 2007).

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THE ACTIVIST

Loving God through Confrontation with Evil

Record your temperament score for the Activist from page 158. _____

Is it high, medium, or low? _____

Record your practice score for the Activist. _____

Is it high, medium, or low? _____

In spiritual development, repetition is one way the Lord brings growth and transformation. Through repetition, God's Spirit can deal with us at ever-deepening levels and in more detail, which is why we will be focusing on one exercise for an entire week. It will be helpful for you to read and review the weekly activity each day, asking God to increase your capacity to know and love Him each time you revisit the exercise.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES FOR THE INTERMEDIATE ACTIVIST

Week 1

READ: In the Bible, we are told to uphold the cause of those who do not have the political, social, or economic power to care for themselves. We are told to lend them our voices, our advocacy, our strength. Read these two passages that discuss this directive:

Cursed is the man who withholds justice from the alien, the fatherless or the widow. *Deuteronomy 27:19*

Prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a

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doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was. But one who looks intently at the perfect law, the law of liberty, and abides by it, not having become a forgetful hearer but an effectual doer, this man will be blessed in what he does. If anyone thinks himself to be religious, and yet does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this man's religion is worthless. Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.

James 1:22-27 (NASB)

REFLECT: Ask God now to show you those in your sphere of influence—family, neighborhood, church, or community—who do not have the political, social, or economic power to care for themselves: the alien (those who live near you but are not citizens), the fatherless (those who have lost a parent to death, divorce, or desertion), the widow (those who have lost their husbands). Consider how the Lord might be inviting you to get involved or to lend your voice, your advocacy, or your strength. Wait on Him today for insight and discernment. Jot down the ideas that come to mind.

RESPOND: What specifically did the Lord show you?

Ask Him for grace and wisdom to take action this week and care for one person He brought to mind. Depend upon Him and let Him lead you in how you respond.

RECORD: How did you take action this week?

What follow-up do you need to do in the future?

Share your experience with a friend you can trust, asking him or her to check in with you next month about this situation and the action you took.

Now write a prayer, committing your steps to the Lord (see Psalm 37:5).

Week 2

READ: In her book *Suffering*, Dorothee Soelle says that middle-class society insulates itself from the pain of those who are in distress and even from the pain inside themselves. In our materialist desire for heaven on earth, we anesthetize ourselves against feeling pain of any kind and will only move toward that which is orderly and therefore unfelt.¹

REFLECT: Look around your neighborhood, church, or community this week. Do you see anything that may be causing pain to the heart of God?

What grief might He be inviting you to share with Him?

RESPOND: Step out this week toward that pain. If it is a person in need, do not try to meet his or her need financially. Instead, ask God for the grace to begin a genuine friendship with that person so that Jesus may incarnationally (in the flesh) love and serve through you.

RECORD: How did you take action this week?

What follow-up do you need to do in the future?

Share your experience with a friend you can trust, asking him or her to check in with you next month about this situation and the action you took.

Write a prayer, committing your steps to the Lord (see Psalm 37:5).

Week 3

INTEGRATION: Review the last few weeks. What has God taught you?

How will you integrate what you have learned into your life?

If there are ways you need to take action in the future, write them in your journal.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES FOR THE ADVANCED ACTIVIST

Week 1

READ: In Micah 6:8, the prophet said, “He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.”

REFLECT: In the Lord’s economy, mercy, humility, and walking with God must accompany acts of justice. Take a few minutes to stop now and examine your own heart and character. Take a personal inventory, ranking how you are doing in the following areas:

(1 is low; 5 is high)

- _____ Compassion (sympathy and concern for the suffering of others, with a desire to help)
- _____ Courage (the ability to face difficulty, uncertainty, or the threat of pain without being sidetracked)
- _____ Wisdom (the insight and experience needed to see life from God’s perspective)
- _____ Knowledge (attentiveness to facts and an ability to assess data based on God’s principles)
- _____ Humility (a high regard and respect for others with no assumption of self-importance)
- _____ Empathy (the capacity to feel the pain of others)
- _____ A servant heart (the desire to be the heart of God in a lost world)
- _____ Grief (the habit of weeping over your own sin and the sins of others)
- _____ Holiness (the ability to love the sinner while hating the sin)
- _____ Being motivated only by God’s glory (the willingness to listen to people who are different from you, not evaluating them based upon how active they are in your cause)
- _____ Forgiveness (the ability to bless those who vigorously oppose your cause)
- _____ Eternal perspective (the habit of blessing those who curse you, and moving your eyes back toward God)

The Activist

RESPOND: How did you do overall on this inventory? If you scored an average of 4 or 5, you are most likely responding in sync with God's heart as you move to accomplish justice in your area of influence. If you scored an average of 3, you may want to ask the Lord to help you regain His heart and perspective in these specific areas. If you scored an average of 1 or 2, you may need to take an extended break, a time to be alone with God, away from action. Spend some time resting and being with God, asking Him to help you regain His motivation and compassion.

In what areas do you need to invite the Father to refresh you and make your heart and character more like Christ's?

Ask Him now to change you, by His grace.

RECORD: How did you take action this week?

What follow-up do you need to do in the future?

Share this with a friend you can trust, asking him or her to check in with you next month about how you are doing.

Write a prayer, committing your steps to the Lord (see Psalm 37:5).

Week 2

READ: In Exodus 18 we see how God helped one Activist survive in ministry:

It came about the next day that Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood about Moses from the morning until the evening. Now when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, "What is this thing that you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge and all the people stand about you from morning until evening?" Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God. When they have a dispute, it comes to me, and I judge between a man and his neighbor and make known the statutes of God and His laws." Moses' father-in-law said to him, "The thing that you are doing is not good. You will surely wear out, both yourself and these people who are with you, for the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone.

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Now listen to me: I will give you counsel, and God be with you. You be the people's representative before God, and you bring the disputes to God, then teach them the statutes and the laws, and make known to them the way in which they are to walk and the work they are to do. Furthermore, you shall select out of all the people able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain; and you shall place these over them as leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens. Let them judge the people at all times; and let it be that every major dispute they will bring to you, but every minor dispute they themselves will judge. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. If you do this thing and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all these people also will go to their place in peace." So Moses listened to his father-in-law and did all that he had said. *Exodus 18:13-24 (NASB)*

REFLECT: Not only does the Lord want us to survive in service for Him, He also wants us to thrive. Ask Him and others close to you how they think you are doing personally, emotionally, spiritually, and in relationship to your family and others. Listen carefully to what they say. To help with your self-assessment, respond honestly to the following statements with *T* (true), *F* (false), or *S* (sometimes).

- _____ I have good co-laborers who support me in my work as an Activist.
- _____ I have a lot of energy and enthusiasm for what I do.
- _____ My relationship with God is strong and vibrant.
- _____ Depression is not an issue for me.
- _____ I have a good counselor I could turn to anytime.
- _____ My financial resources are strong.
- _____ I keep the Sabbath weekly.
- _____ I have friends I can be "off" with, folks I spend time with at least twice a month.
- _____ I get away by myself to rest and pray at least one day each month.
- _____ I take time for my hobbies and have enjoyed several of them this month.

The Activist

- _____ I take at least three days off from work each month, in addition to my weekly Sabbath.
- _____ I have at least ten people I could name right now who regularly pray for my family and me.
- _____ My feelings of love for the marginalized and oppressed are strong.
- _____ I have at least three people who regularly encourage me.
- _____ I have good mentors—like Moses’ father-in-law—who speak into my life on a consistent basis.

RESPOND: What did God (or those close to you) say about your current health and well-being?

Ask the Lord to show you what your next steps need to be in building a “thrival” strategy. List them in your journal.

If needed, what mentor or group of Activists can you approach this week who might help you add balance to your life?

RECORD: How did you take action this week?

What follow-up do you need to do in the future?

Share your plans with a friend you can trust, asking him or her to check in with you next month about the action you are taking.

Now write a prayer, committing your steps to the Lord (see Psalm 37:5).

Week 3

INTEGRATION: Review the last few weeks. What has God taught you?

How will you integrate what you have learned into your life?

If there are ways you need to take action in the future, write them in your journal.

Now receive God’s total grace and reflect upon His unalterable love for you—no matter how you feel you did on these spiritual exercises the last few weeks.

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THE ASCETIC

Loving God through Solitude and Simplicity

Record your temperament score for the Ascetic from page 158. _____

Is it high, medium, or low? _____

Record your practice score for the Ascetic. _____

Is it high, medium, or low? _____

In spiritual development, repetition is one way the Lord brings growth and transformation. Through repetition, God's Spirit can deal with us at ever-deepening levels and in more detail, which is why we will be focusing on one exercise for an entire week. It will be helpful for you to read and review the weekly activity each day, asking God to increase your capacity to know and love Him each time you revisit the exercise.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES FOR THE INTERMEDIATE ASCETIC

Week 1

READ: The Bible is indeed God's love letter to His people, the infallible record of His acts throughout history; it is literally God-breathed (see 2 Timothy 3:16). Yet God calls us to go beyond merely knowing and studying the Bible; He calls us to know and study Him (see John 17:3). As we do, His Spirit, through His Word, transforms us (see 2 Corinthians 3:16-18).

One of my friends told me that after graduating from Bible school and seminary at the top of his class, it took a spiritual crisis for him to feel free to "have a relationship with a Person instead of a book." Yet our

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fathers and mothers in the faith have understood the merger of Spirit and Word for centuries through the practice of *lectio divina*, or “spiritual reading.” Guigo II, a second-century monk, was the first to articulate the four steps of *lectio divina*¹ when he wrote this letter to a friend:

One day when I was busy working with my hands I began to think about our spiritual work, and all at once four stages in spiritual exercise came into my mind: reading, meditation, prayer and contemplation. These make a ladder for monks by which they are lifted up from earth to heaven. It has a few rungs, yet its length is immense and wonderful, for its lower end rests upon the earth, but its top pierces the clouds and touches heavenly secrets.²

In *lectio*:

- *Reading* is the careful study of the Scriptures.
- *Meditation* is the application of the mind to seek knowledge and hidden truth.
- *Prayer* is the heart turning to God to drive away evil and obtain what is good.
- *Contemplation* is when the mind is lifted up to God and held above itself, so that it “tastes the joys of everlasting sweetness.”³ Thus we read (*lectio*) under the eye of God (*meditatio*) until the heart leaps (*oratio*) and bursts into flame (*contemplatio*).

In spiritual reading we are using the Bible as a conduit of God’s Spirit, not as an intellectual tool to try to analyze God. The Word becomes a means for God to speak to us and impress His truth upon our hearts and minds in the moment.

REFLECT: How do you usually read the Bible? Describe your method and motivation in your journal.

How effective is your current method of reading Scripture?

Describe how you experience life transformation through your Bible reading.

The Ascetic

How free do you feel to have a relationship with God—a Person—instead of His Book?

RESPOND: Now try utilizing *lectio divina* as you read the story of the Prodigal Son.

Lectio: Read the story in Luke 15:11-32. *Lectio* is imaginative reading, so as you begin, invite the Spirit to use your God-given, God-surrendered imagination to take you to the time and place of the setting. Your creative imagination may recreate the story in a contemporary context, or you may see the setting as you imagine it was in Jesus' day. Read the passage aloud slowly and thoughtfully, allowing the pictures in your mind to be formed as you hear the words. (Allow up to fifteen minutes.)

Meditatio: Reflect upon what you have read (allow up to twenty minutes). Ponder the ideas and insights communicated in the passage. *Feel* your way into the text, personalizing your reading and considering what it means to you. Where do you see yourself in the story? As you read the parable in the present moment, do you identify with the wayward younger brother or the self-satisfied older brother? Perhaps you felt more kinship with the father, or maybe you saw yourself as an onlooker, someone invited (or not invited) to the party. Reflect upon what that reveals about you and your interaction with God. If Jesus were with you right now, telling you the story as He did to the disciples, what more might He say to you?

Oratio: Speak to God (allow ten to thirty minutes). *Oratio* is the part of the exercise that we generally think of as prayer or talking with God. Having read the text aloud and having brought it to life by pondering its meaning for you, now you enter a highly personal dialogue with God about what you've experienced. A profound bonding and a deeper, transformative healing occur when you talk with God about your life through the Scripture.

Tell God what you heard, saw, experienced, and received from the passage. Share your feelings and thoughts with Him, your insights and concerns, and your questions about things that are unclear. Thank Him for any instruction you received, and share with Him what you intend to

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do now. Ask for what you would like because of the message you heard. Your response may sound something like this:

God, I wish I had a father like the one in the story. Such mercy. I do feel like the Prodigal, running away from responsibility and often living life for myself. Even though I am Your child and I know You love me, I have trouble believing You want me close to You, that You are waiting and watching for me to come, that You run to meet me and want to celebrate my life as I approach You. But Lord, interestingly, I also see myself as the older brother. I, too, feel resentful that in life I carry so much of the burden while others just seem to get by doing so little. Dear God, please take away the bitterness that is poisoning me and replace it with Your love and grace. Help me when I'm feeling jealous of others or when I'm miffed that my efforts go unnoticed. Make me like You, Father: generous of heart and willing to give sacrificially.

Contemplatio: Be quiet with the Lord (allow ten to thirty minutes).

This is the last step in the exercise, the time when you simply receive from the Lord what you need—His grace, forgiveness, love, or quiet presence. This is not a time to talk, but to just be with God, ready to listen and receive. Be attentive to God's Spirit in and with you. Focus on Him and just sit quietly in His abiding presence.

As you repeat this exercise this week, go through this same passage using *lectio*. Then choose another passage if you'd like, perhaps Luke 15:4-7 or Luke 15:8-10.

RECORD: How would you describe your times of *lectio divina* this week?

How has your relationship with the Lord grown or changed through reading Scripture this way with the Lord?

If you struggled with *lectio*, is there someone you might be able to talk with who could help you get "unstuck"?

Share your experience with a friend you can trust, asking him or her to

check in with you next month about how *lectio divina* is enriching your time with God in His Word.

Write a prayer, committing your steps to the Lord (see Psalm 37:5).

Week 2

READ: Just as Socrates said, “Know thyself,” Saint Augustine said, “Let me know myself, let me know Thee!” Many of our early church fathers and mothers were proponents of the “double knowing”—believing that knowledge of God was dependent on knowledge of oneself and one’s need for grace, and that knowledge of oneself was only possible with greater knowledge of God and His vast ocean of love and mercy. John Calvin taught that the deeper one’s walk with God, the deeper one’s reflective life and study of self must be, including one’s faults, limitations, moral weaknesses, and inadequacies. This degree of self-revelation creates a channel for God’s grace to flood the humble, repentant heart.

It was also believed that this extent of self-knowing could not be done in isolation. Benedictine Joan Chittister writes, “Alone, I am what I am, but in community I have the chance to become everything that I can be.”⁴ Thus serious believers have long sought spiritual companions and guides to travel with them on the inner journey.

Today, one way to find spiritual companionship is through a spiritual director, someone on the path ahead of you who is able to listen and be with you as God develops new habits of the heart. Margaret Guenther likens a spiritual director to a “midwife of the soul,” a tenacious guardian who is present with us in times of spiritual vulnerability, offering support and feedback at every stage, attending to the new life God is forming within us.⁵

I have had a spiritual director for years, someone who is trained in the art of discernment and listening, who helps me identify and sort through—with wisdom and grace—what God is doing in my life. I sometimes come to my spiritual director with what seem like complicated spiritual and theological questions—things that hang me up—and together we bring these pieces to the Lord for clarity. I have

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been greatly helped by my spiritual director's capacity to walk with me, as she is often several steps ahead.

REFLECT: Do you have a spiritual director, someone who is able and willing to put himself or herself aside so that the total attention will be focused on what God is doing in you?

How would you feel about having a person like this in your life?

RESPOND: If you are ready for a spiritual director and don't already have one, ask the Lord to lead you to someone in the near future. Then read Margaret Guenther's book *Holy Listening* and ask someone you think could help you find a spiritual director.

RECORD: How did you take action this week regarding a spiritual director?

What follow-up do you need to do in the future?

Share your interest with a friend you can trust, asking him or her to check in with you next month about how your search for a spiritual director is taking shape.

Write a prayer, committing your steps to the Lord (see Psalm 37:5).

Week 3

INTEGRATION: Review the last two weeks. What has God taught you?

How will you integrate what you have learned into your life?

If there are ways you need to take action in the future, write them in your journal.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES FOR THE ADVANCED ASCETIC

Week 1

READ: Larry Crabb said, "As surely as birds were made to fly and fish to swim, we were made for community, for the kind of community the

Trinity enjoys, for spiritual community. And to the degree we experience it, we change, we grow, we heal.”⁶

We are inescapably communal creatures, made in the image of a Trinitarian God, and we depend on others to be born, to survive, to be buried, and to be remembered. We live and have our being in community, however sparse that community may become.⁷

Even though we see community reflected in the Trinity and we hear God’s pronouncement that it is not good for humankind to be alone (see Genesis 2:18), there are many factors in our culture working against commitment to community. We tend to believe and act as if:

Faith and salvation were essentially private, acultural and ahistorical . . . an individual concern, something that gives color to our private lives but is not publicly accountable. What I think or feel about God is between me and my conscience. “Spirituality” is an amorphous, ever mutable engagement between two isolated selves—the human individual and “God,” both apart from the world, change, time, place and community.⁸

But spiritual formation is not a private affair, nor is the Christian life ever simply an individual struggle; it is a community project, with each of us becoming an instrument of God’s Spirit to one another.⁹ Thus, personal freedom reaches its greatest meaning when viewed within a web of accountable spiritual relationships. Here we learn something essential from the relationship of Father, Son, and Spirit; we discover how the presence (and pressure) of others actually helps us become who we truly are meant to be, together in Christ.¹⁰

REFLECT: If growing in Christ is a community project, are you seeking someone in your life to be in your web of accountable spiritual relationships?

If so, who is it?

Together, how are you attending to your hearts?

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RESPOND: In Trinitarian fashion, find two people this week with whom you would like to form a six-month accountability group to pursue an ongoing renovation of the heart. Don't just select people quickly, but pray and see whom God brings to mind. When you come together, you might want to be prepared to share your responses to a few questions. Some triads don't need prewritten questions, but if it would help you, here are a few questions that may assist you in getting started:

- What truth affected you most from either a spoken message or your study of God's Word since we last met?
- How have you sensed God leading you this week, and what action will you take in partnership with Him?
- How is your intimate life—your intimacy with your spouse, your children, or your close friends? Your intimate times with the Lord? How are you pursuing greater spiritual and soul intimacy?
- How are you contributing to God's world? What are you reinvesting in others that the Lord has invested in you? How are you showing excellence on the job?
- How can we support you in areas where God's Spirit is inviting you to grow and change?
- What challenges are you facing that you would like us to pray with you about?

RECORD: How did you take action this week in finding two soul friends to journey with you spiritually?

What follow-up do you need to do next?

Write a prayer, committing your steps to the Lord (see Psalm 37:5).

Week 2

READ: Ascetics know that one important way to grow in Christ is through the discipline of submission—not only yielding to God, but also regarding as essential the voices of those in our communities. This relinquishing of self-will to the common voice of wisdom and truth, even when it is difficult, is the way to freedom through obedience. The

The Ascetic

Benedictines held a strong conviction that to submit to others, especially those in authority, was to submit to God.¹¹ Esther deWaal reflects:

Subjecting myself to another “in all obedience for the love of God” means giving up my power, my arrogance, and instead submitting myself to seek the will of God through others. If I want to grow, openness and interaction with others is imperative since then I can grow with the help of someone else’s gifts. I admit my limitations and my weakness, and I let someone else hold me up so that I can go on. This of course prevents any false self-image and cuts down my pride in my own sufficiency.¹²

This is the gift submission brings. Richard Foster describes submission as “the ability to lay down the terrible burden of always needing to get our own way. . . . Only submission can free us sufficiently to enable us to distinguish between genuine issues and stubborn self-will. In submission we are at last free to value other people.”¹³

To be free *from* ourselves is to be truly free *for* God; that is the greatest kind of freedom! For as the Bible says,

So Christ has made us free. . . . Not freedom to do wrong, but freedom to love and serve each other. *Galatians 5:1, 13 (TLB)*

REFLECT: As you look at your own patterns of decision making, how willing are you to submit to others?

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autonomous and self-governing	harmonious and accommodating
Place an “N” on the continuum where you are now. Then place an “L” on the continuum to represent where you would like to be.	

RESPOND: Show your continuum to your accountability partners or people you trust. Invite them to place the initial of their first name on your continuum based upon how they honestly experience you in the area of submission.

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Thank them for wherever they placed their initials—even if you disagree—and ask God to help you move to greater Christlikeness in this area. Feel free to ask others you trust to also place their initials on the continuum and give you their feedback. Discuss with them the “L” you gave yourself, and invite them to speak into your life whenever they think it would be helpful. Listen to their comments in silence; try to take seriously what they say, even when you are prone to argue or disregard them. Talk with God about their feedback, and listen carefully to what He says.

RECORD: How would you describe your submission this week and your ability to receive input from God through others?

Feedback is very important. Proverbs 15:5 says that a wise person learns from correction. When the prophet Nathan told David that God would establish His throne and Kingdom through him, God also said, “I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men” (2 Samuel 7:14, NASB).

How are you at listening to correction when it comes through the “rod of men”?

Talk with God now about helping you grow in this area.

Share your intentions with a friend you can trust, asking him or her to check in with you next month about your progress in appropriate submission to others.

Write a prayer, committing your steps to the Lord (see Psalm 37:5).

Week 3

INTEGRATION: Review the last two weeks. What has God taught you?

How will you integrate what you have learned into your life?

If there are ways you need to take action in the future, write them in your journal.

Now receive God’s total grace and reflect upon His unalterable love for you—no matter how you feel you did on these spiritual exercises the last few weeks.

10

THE CAREGIVER

Loving God through Serving Others

Record your temperament score for Caregiver from page 158. _____

Is it high, medium, or low? _____

Record your practice score for Caregiver. _____

Is it high, medium, or low? _____

In spiritual development, repetition is one way the Lord brings growth and transformation. Through repetition, God's Spirit can deal with us at ever-deepening levels and in more detail, which is why we will be focusing on one exercise for an entire week. It will be helpful for you to read and review the weekly activity each day, asking God to increase your capacity to know and love Him each time you revisit the exercise.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES FOR THE INTERMEDIATE CAREGIVER

Week 1

READ: For the Caregiver, shouldering the burdens of others is a form of worship. Mother Teresa taught us to look behind the eyes of the poor, the sick, and the needy to see the eyes of God. She loved God by caring for others; thus, she knew what Jesus meant when He said, "Whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40).

REFLECT: Who are the "least of these" in your life right now—those who require care but give nothing in return?

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What attitude might God be inviting you to have in the way you serve these people (seeing His face, His eyes, His needs in them)? How can you free yourself to show love in a new way, as if you were caring for Jesus' physical presence through them?

RESPOND: In your journal, list those you care for whom you need to see differently this week.

Ask God now for the grace to care for these people as you would care for Him, to see His bodily presence in them.

RECORD: How did you change this week in attitude and action?

What do you still need God to do in your life to love the "least of these" as Jesus loves them—and you?

Share your progress with a friend you can trust, asking him or her to check in with you next month about your attitude and actions toward "the least of these."

Write a prayer, committing your steps to the Lord (see Psalm 37:5).

Week 2

READ: In his book *Conspiracy of Kindness*, Steve Sjogren suggests that Christians mix service with evangelism by doing random acts of kindness for unbelievers, such as raking leaves for an elderly neighbor, shoveling the snow on someone's sidewalk, or giving out cookies on a university campus.¹ If possible, read the book this week.

REFLECT: In Sjogren's book, random acts of kindness are done to indirectly stimulate recipients to consider the kindness of God. Consider God's caregiving heart toward you. Think about the ways He has shown kindness to you, especially through the care of others. List those in your journal.

RESPOND: This week, ask the Lord to help you notice and respond to random (unplanned) opportunities where you can show kindness to others—preferably things others will not know you did.

The Caregiver

Note the attitude of your heart as you show care. Try to remember the ways God has cared for you, and make your actions an act of worship to God.

RECORD: How would you describe your attempts at doing random acts of kindness this week?

What did you learn about yourself in the process?

How is God encouraging you to be a better Caregiver?

Where do you still need to grow?

Share your progress with a friend you can trust, asking him or her to check in with you next month about this situation and the action you took.

Write a prayer, committing your steps to the Lord (see Psalm 37:5).

Week 3

INTEGRATION: Review the last two weeks. What has God taught you?

How will you integrate what you have learned into your life?

If there are ways you need to take action in the future, write them in your journal.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES FOR THE ADVANCED CAREGIVER

Week 1

READ: The Bible instructs us on how to be good Caregivers:

Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. *Romans 12:10-16 (NASB)*

WHAT'S YOUR GOD LANGUAGE?

REFLECT: On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being low and 5 being high), evaluate yourself as a Caregiver in the following areas:

- _____ Being devoted to others in brotherly love
- _____ Giving preference to others in honor
- _____ Diligently and fervently serving the Lord as you serve others
- _____ Praying for others
- _____ Contributing to the financial and practical needs of the saints
- _____ Practicing hospitality
- _____ Blessing those who persecute you
- _____ Rejoicing with those who rejoice and weeping with those who weep
- _____ Being teachable, humble, and open-minded
- _____ Associating with the lowly

RESPOND: Show your numbers to someone you trust and ask that person if you are seeing yourself accurately. If this person cannot confirm your numbers, you will have a chance to practice being teachable, humble, and open-minded regarding their feedback.

Select one area from the list in which you especially need to grow. Write Romans 12:10-16 on a three-by-five card and carry it with you this week. As you meditate on the passage, ask God to give you an opportunity to practice caring with a new attitude.

Plan to take action this week in one of the areas above in which you did not score a 4 or 5. For example, if the area is hospitality, invite someone you would not normally spend time with to your house for lunch or dinner. Start small if you need to—in other words, you may want to invite someone from church or your neighborhood whom you don't know well, as opposed to a homeless person. On the other hand, God may prompt you to care for someone you do not know who lives on the streets, so be sensitive to His leading.

RECORD: How did you take action this week in the area of caregiving? What did you see God do in your life as you were being stretched?

The Caregiver

What did you see God do through you?

What did you learn?

What follow-up do you need to do in the future?

Share your progress with a friend you can trust, asking him or her to check in with you next month about this situation and the action you took.

Write a prayer, committing your steps to the Lord (see Psalm 37:5).

Week 2

READ: On the day before His death, Jesus—the greatest Caregiver of all—gave us an amazing picture of what it looks like to care for others, even in the midst of His own impending crucifixion. In this humble act of service, Jesus invites us to join Him:

Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come forth from God and was going back to God, got up from supper, and laid aside His garments; and taking a towel, He girded Himself. Then He poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. . . . He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. Truly, truly, I say to you, a slave is not greater than his master, nor is one who is sent greater than the one who sent him. If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them." *John 13:3-5, 12-17 (NASB)*

REFLECT: Why do you think Jesus washed the disciples' feet that night?

Since most of the people we have contact with probably wear shoes and drive cars, how is Jesus' example of removing the travelers' dirt applicable in your life today?

Jesus not only washed John the Beloved's feet, He also washed Judas's feet. Ask God how you might apply this principle of humble service:

WHAT'S YOUR GOD LANGUAGE?

- in your home
- in your neighborhood
- in your church

RESPOND: In solidarity with Jesus, find time to wash the feet of those who look to you for leadership. If you are a pastor or business leader, how will you wash the feet of your staff? If you are a father or mother, how will you wash the feet of those in your family? If no one looks to you for leadership, select another group of people.

If possible, make this exercise a literal foot washing and explain why you are doing it. What will you say to introduce this activity in a way that will bless those whose feet you wash?

If you work in an environment with people who do not yet know the Lord and who would not understand this gesture, ask God to give you an alternate way to serve them, still utilizing the caregiving spirit. Try to select an act of kindness that will cost you more time than money and will increase your humility and love for others.

RECORD: How did you emulate Jesus' example this week by washing the feet of those who look to you?

How did that feel?

What did you learn about yourself in this process?

What did you learn about the people whose feet you washed?

What did you learn about the Lord?

What follow-up do you need to do in the future?

Share this experience with a friend you can trust, asking him or her to check in with you next month about how you are humbly continuing to "wash the feet of others."

Write a prayer, committing your steps to the Lord (see Psalm 37:5).

Week 3

INTEGRATION: Review the last two weeks. What has God taught you?

How will you integrate what you have learned into your life?

Are there ways you need to take action in the future? If so, write them in your journal.

Now receive God's total grace and reflect upon His unalterable love for you—no matter how you feel you did on these spiritual exercises the last few weeks.

11

THE CONTEMPLATIVE

Loving God through Adoration

Record your temperament score for the Contemplative from page 158. _____
Is it high, medium, or low? _____

Record your practice score for the Contemplative. _____
Is it high, medium, or low? _____

In spiritual development, repetition is one way the Lord brings growth and transformation. Through repetition, God's Spirit can deal with us at ever-deepening levels and in more detail, which is why we will be focusing on one exercise for an entire week. It will be helpful for you to read and review the weekly activity each day, asking God to increase your capacity to know and love Him each time you revisit the exercise.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES FOR THE INTERMEDIATE CONTEMPLATIVE

Week 1

READ: In Scripture, the idea of living a full, productive life while intermittently beholding God's face was exactly the way lovers of God were portrayed. The Bible says this about the face of God:

- Seek the Lord and His strength; seek *His face* continually (see Psalm 105:4).
- The Lord spoke to Moses *face-to-face*, as a man speaks with his friend (see Exodus 33:11).
- "The LORD bless you and keep you; the LORD make *his face* shine upon you and be gracious to you; the LORD turn *his face*

WHAT'S YOUR GOD LANGUAGE?

toward you and give you peace.” (Numbers 6:24–26, emphasis added)

- “When Gideon realized that it was the angel of the LORD, he exclaimed, ‘Ah, Sovereign LORD! I have seen the angel of the LORD *face to face!*’” (Judges 6:22, emphasis added)
- “Do not hide *your face* from your servant; answer me quickly, for I am in trouble.” (Psalm 69:17, emphasis added)
- “Because I am righteous, I will see you. When I awake, I will see you *face to face* and be satisfied.” (Psalm 17:15, NLT, emphasis added)

REFLECT: As you consider these Scriptures, what do you think it means to see the face of God?

Why do you think it seems important for God’s people to see His face?

How might that look in your life?

The Lord enjoys face-to-face encounters with us. He loves to look into our faces and study us (see Psalm 139), just as He likes us to look into *His* face and study Him—His tender eyes; His gentle, affectionate, and affirming smile; His strength, grace, and longing for us. Gazing at Him, you can become lost in His love. In that moment, we forget ourselves—our blunders and the blunders of others—and the only thing we see is God. We are transformed, changed, rearranged by beholding His glory with an unveiled face (see 2 Corinthians 3:18). As the psalmist said,

It was not by their sword that they won the land, nor did their arm bring them victory; it was your right hand, your arm, and the light of your face, for you loved them. *Psalm 44:3*

RESPOND: What is so special about a face?

Think of a person whose face you enjoy looking at, a person whose face you are always happy to see. Who comes to mind?

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In your journal, draw this person's face or write the words that come to mind when you look at him or her: physical characteristics or inner attributes detected from her or his countenance.



Now spend a few moments quietly seeking the Lord's face. What might you learn about God from seeing His face that you would not know otherwise? What words describe His attributes as you gaze at Him? Write everything you see in your journal.



Talk with the Lord about your desire to see and know Him face-to-face.

RECORD: In what ways did God show you His face this week?

What would you like the Lord to do in your heart and mind to increase your hunger, longing, and ability to see His face?

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Share this experience with a friend you can trust, asking him or her to check in with you next month about how you are doing in your face-to-face encounters with the Lord.

Write a prayer, committing your steps to the Lord (see Psalm 37:5).

Week 2

READ: Thomas Merton said that contemplation is the desire for unity with God—“a return to the inmost self united with the Absolute, a quest for Him Who is above all, and in all, and Who Alone is Alone.”¹ This union with God is the goal of our faith, just as Jesus prayed:

I pray that they will all be one, just as you and I are one—as you are in me, Father, and I am in you. *John 17:21 (NLT)*

Teresa of Avila described our union with God as living in an interior castle, with God at the center. As we approach God and come to live in greater union with Him, our lives begin to be given over to our loving Lord, including regular times of deep, adoring silence. Motives are purified as we become aware of God’s holiness and our sinfulness; worship and work become intertwined because both become expressions of God’s life flowing through us. This is the life Jesus prayed we would experience with Him.

REFLECT: Ponder Merton’s words that the One “who is above all, and in all, and Who Alone is Alone” is indeed the transcendent One who is profoundly other in holiness and unlimited power and knowledge, with absolute authority, command, influence, and sovereign dominion. Then consider that this God, the Creator and Sustainer of life, has come to earth as Immanuel—God with us—and is praying for us (see Hebrews 7:25), is living in us (see John 14:17), and has reconciled us to Himself (see Romans 5:11).

Take a moment to consider the decision of a transcendent God to become immanent, to be present with us and in us, to be constantly attentive, near, accessible, active, and daily, moment-by-moment, fully engaged with us, alive *to us* and *in us*—forever.

How does it feel to belong to this One who is nearer than breath?

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RESPOND: Write John 17:20-23 on a three-by-five card. Carry it with you this week so that at every opportunity—when you are stopping at an intersection in your car, waiting in line, sitting between appointments—you can meditate on the truth that God invites you to know Him and be one with Him, just as Jesus was one with the Father. Talk with God now about the fact that Jesus prayed for and made a way for your union with Him to happen.

Do you think Jesus would have prayed for something that He did not expect to occur?

If He expects it to happen, how do you think oneness with God will look in your life?

How might you cooperate more with Him in His desire for oneness?

RECORD: Describe the state of your heart this week as you were meditating on God's truth—that He is transcendent yet immanent.

What did you learn about God?

What did you learn about yourself?

Did anything change inside as you meditated upon God's invitation to be one with Him?

What do you think that means for you?

Share your experience with a friend you can trust, asking him or her to check in with you next month about how oneness with God is slowly transforming you.

Write a prayer, committing your steps to the Lord (see Psalm 37:5).

Week 3

INTEGRATION: Review the last two weeks. What has God been teaching you?

How will you integrate what you have learned into your life?

If there are ways you need to take action in the future, write them in your journal.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES FOR THE ADVANCED CONTEMPLATIVE

Week 1

READ: For hundreds of years, people have followed the Rule of Saint Ignatius of Loyola and have experienced what Ignatius called *consolation* and *desolation*. These terms describe two fundamental spiritual conditions or experiences—ways that God operates within us. Consolation is the presence of enlivening feelings, while desolation brings feelings of death. Ignatius described these conditions of the soul this way:

Consolation is when we are caused to love God more. When we shed tears of love for our Lord, whether out of sorrow for our sins, or for the Passion of Christ, or because of other things directly connected with His service and praise, we are in consolation. Consolation is every increase of hope, faith and charity, and all interior joy that calls us to heavenly things, giving us peace in our Creator and Lord.²

In contrast, this is Ignatius's description of desolation:

Desolation is all the contrary of the first rule, such as prevailing love for things low and earthly, the unquiet of different temptations, lack of confidence in God, when we love not God, when we find ourselves all lazy, tepid, sad, and as if separated from our Creator and Lord.³

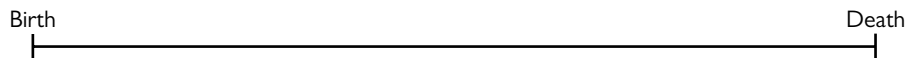
Ignatius taught that consolation was never ours to achieve or possess, but only God's to give. Sometimes Christians believe that if they are doing everything correctly, all will be well in their spiritual lives and they will automatically sense God's presence and grow in ever-increasing intimacy. Conversely, they believe that if desolation comes, they must be doing something wrong. While it may well be that desolation follows the willful blocking of God's Spirit through carnal behavior or attitudes, that is not always the case. Certainly when we are not trusting God but are running our own lives, we will eventually experience desolation. "Only the rebellious dwell in a parched land" (Psalm 68:6, NASB). But desolation also comes because we live in a fallen

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world and continue to experience the results of our own fallenness, plus that of others. Thus, even in His darkest hour, the sinless Christ experienced desolation when He said, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34). Desolation comes to all humanity this side of heaven.

Though desolation is certainly not desirable, God allows it to expose conditions of the heart that need to be transformed by the Lord. It is also good for us to learn to live without the blessing of God’s “felt presence.” When consolation is withheld (or even when dark nights of the senses or soul are present, as described by Saint John of the Cross), we can still live in obedience, resting wholly in God’s goodness, or as Psalm 37:3 says, “Feed . . . on His faithfulness” (AMP). Thus, when there is no light to comfort us and we are forced to live wholly by faith, we learn persistence and patience, and our love for God can be purified. It is then that we realize that it is only peaceful trust in God’s character that is required for our happiness; nothing else is needed to sustain us.

REFLECT: Developing an ever-deepening relationship with God calls for an understanding about our lives with the Lord over time. Think back and use the line below as a time line of your relationship with God—from birth on the left to the present on the right. Have there been seasons of consolation and desolation? Seasons of consolation include times of hope, faith, and love for God, as well as all interior joy. Seasons of desolation include times of temptation, lack of confidence in God, laziness, and sadness.



RESPOND: Now draw some symbols on the time line to reflect your spiritual story. Use symbols to depict your significant times with God,

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both positive and negative, placing positive experiences above the line and negative ones below it.

Using the line as a baseline, graph your times of consolation—times you experienced the nearness of God—above the line. (The higher above the line you place the symbol, the greater the intimacy and consolation you experienced.) Also graph your times of desolation below the line—seasons when you were unaware of God's presence and love, even though you may have been walking with Him. Make this graph the story of your spiritual life.⁴

Now look back over your time line and circle seasons or events when the Lord might have been inviting you to continue on with Him in loving obedience—even when feelings of consolation were not present. What might He have been teaching you?

How were your roots going deeper into Him during these times?

Talk with the Lord about these seasons and ways that He may even now be inviting you to a new place of grace—either because you have not been cooperating with Him or because you have misunderstood desolation and your heart has grown cold. Perhaps you need His encouragement in the midst of your current season. Tell Him that now.

Ignatius of Loyola taught that desolation is useful because it helps us grow indifferent—even detached—from all that hinders our relationship with God:

We were created to praise, reverence and serve God, our Lord, and by this means to experience salvation. All things on earth are created for us and to help us praise, reverence and serve God. We are to use them as much as they help us in this praise, reverence and service, and ought to rid ourselves of anything that hinders our praise, reverence and service. For this it is necessary that we become indifferent to all created things so that, on our part, we want not health rather than sickness, riches rather than poverty, honor rather than dishonor, long rather than short life, and so in all the rest, desiring and choosing only what helps us praise, reverence and serve God. This detachment comes only if we

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have a stronger attachment; therefore our one dominating desire and fundamental choice must be to constantly live in the living presence and wisdom of Christ, our Savior.

God loves us and wants us to share life with Him forever. Our love response takes shape in our praise and honor and service of the God of our lives. All the things in this world are created because of God's love and they become a context of His gifts, presented to us so that we can know God more easily and return His love more readily. As a result, we show reverence for all the gifts of creation. . . . But if we abuse any . . . or take them as the center of our lives, we break our relationship with God and hinder our growth as loving persons. . . . We must hold ourselves in balance. . . . Our only desire and our one choice should be this: I want and I choose what better leads to God's deepening life in me.⁵

RECORD: What did God show you this week as you made your consolation and desolation time line?

What grace are you asking Him for in your life?

What did you learn about the Lord?

What did you learn about yourself?

Share your experience with a friend you can trust, asking him or her to check in with you next month about how consolation and desolation are affecting your life with God.

Write a prayer, committing your steps to the Lord (see Psalm 37:5).

Week 2

READ: Although suffering is not unique to the Contemplative spiritual temperament, it does tend to be a theme that drives the Contemplative's roots deeper into the Lord. The Bible says:

Blessed are those who trust in the LORD and have made the LORD their hope and confidence. They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are

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not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought.
Their leaves stay green, and they never stop producing fruit.

Jeremiah 17:7-8 (NLT)

Many Contemplatives perceive suffering as a fundamental ingredient to open the human soul to deeper levels of spiritual insight. From suffering comes what Isaiah referred to as the “treasures of darkness” (Isaiah 45:3): grace that yields greater faith, intimacy with God, patience, perspective, and wisdom. Consider these ideas about suffering from some Contemplatives who have walked before us:

- The Contemplative life, in which the hidden life of oneness with the Divine becomes more and more central, may well begin in an experience of pain. Evelyn Underhill calls the first stage in the mystic journey “conversion” or “un-selfing.”⁶
- The willingness to suffer is essential to the Contemplative because suffering can bring new seeing, new feeling, and new awareness; it is a path to God. Fully receptive and open, the Contemplative is increasingly aware of her own pain and the pain around her.⁷
- Only through embracing our own brokenness and inadequacy will we experience growth and new life. Thus, as we recognize our own alienation, false gods, and deluded hopes, suffering is inevitable. It need not be sought out; it is within, awaiting acknowledgment.⁸
- Beauty and cruelty, intimacy and horror, extravagance and waste are recurring themes in Annie Dillard’s prose. In solitary retreats she experiences intense mystic moments . . . moments of new seeing, of profound oneness with the Source of life . . . always accompanied by suffering, loss, despair, doubt, and anxiety. God’s absence and God’s presence are felt simultaneously. Dillard’s work proposes that suffering is a chief characteristic of the contemporary mystic way.⁹

REFLECT: How has suffering been a part of your life?

Has suffering brought you into greater union with God? If so, how?

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Think back over your life. Focus on three or four times when you were experiencing some form of anguish or prolonged distress. How did you respond to God while suffering?

How have you allowed the treasures or lessons of darkness—new insights, character, and depth with God—to adorn your soul?

Do you think God causes suffering, or is it primarily an outcome of living in a fallen world? Consider sharing your answer with a friend.

RESPOND: Write a letter to the Lord thanking Him for the treasures or lessons of darkness you have received during times of suffering, and thank Him for always being with you—even when you didn't see or feel Him. Thank Jesus for transforming the most difficult times into good in your life, as He said He would:

We know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. *Romans 8:28 (NASB)*

Note: This verse does not say that God *causes* all things; it says that God takes all things that happen—even the worst of things—and causes them to have a transformative effect that brings ultimate good into the lives of those who love Him. In other words, God redeems all things. He is the great Redeemer, and thus there is nothing He cannot and will not restore and ultimately use for our benefit.

RECORD: What has God redeemed in your heart and relationship with Him this week?

What would you still like Him to redeem in the future?

Share with a friend you can trust what God is redeeming in you—what He is restoring and using for your ultimate benefit—and ask him or her to check in with you next month to see how your life of redemption is progressing.

Write a prayer, committing your steps to the Lord (see Psalm 37:5).

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Week 3

INTEGRATION: Review the last two weeks. What has God taught you?

How will you integrate what you have learned into your life?

If there are ways you need to take action in the future, write them in your journal.

Now receive God's total grace and reflect upon His unalterable love for you—no matter how you feel you did on these spiritual exercises the last few weeks.

12

THE ENTHUSIAST

Loving God through Mystery and Celebration

Record your temperament score for the Enthusiast from page 158. _____

Is it high, medium, or low? _____

Record your practice score for the Enthusiast. _____

Is it high, medium, or low? _____

In spiritual development, repetition is one way the Lord brings growth and transformation. Through repetition, God's Spirit can deal with us at ever-deepening levels and in more detail, which is why we will be focusing on one exercise for an entire week. It will be helpful for you to read and review the weekly activity each day, asking God to increase your capacity to know and love Him and His truth each time you revisit the exercise.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES FOR THE INTERMEDIATE ENTHUSIAST

Week 1

READ: The word *worship* appears in the Bible more than one hundred times, and the word *praise* is used in more than two hundred passages. Obviously, praising and worshipping God has long been an essential aspect of spiritual life, and it continues to be vitally important in expressing love and thanksgiving to Jesus. The word *worship* in the New Testament is *proskuneo*, which means "to move toward" (*pros*) and "kiss" (*kuneo*).¹ Inherent in the idea of worship is the notion of bringing a heart of affection, devotion, and love to the Lord Jesus Christ.

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REFLECT: As you reflect upon your own attitude during times of worship, do you bring your affection, devotion, and love to God?

How comfortable are you expressing your feelings to God when an emotion is present?

Practice expressing affection, devotion, and love to God by reading the words of this song to Him. As you do, “turn toward Him” to offer Him a “kiss”:

No other Lover could ever discover the hope and the longing I keep in my heart.

Only You, Jesus, could fill every longing, Only You, Jesus, could meet every need.

*You are kindness and compassion, full of mercy, full of grace,
And I love when You so tenderly hold me in Your embrace.*

*Always faithful, ever able, bringing healing to my soul, You're my laughter,
You're my treasure, You're my song of songs, strong and true, I belong to only You.*

*You are Daystar; You are Dawning, Light of lights, Joy of joys,
You are Kingdom, You are Power, You are Glory, You are Lord.²*

RESPOND: Talk with God now about your ability to express affection, devotion, and love to Him through worship. If you struggle with this, ask Jesus for the grace to be free in the Spirit to offer Him a “heart kiss.”

This week borrow or purchase a CD with a collection of songs containing intimate dialogue with the Lord. If you aren't sure which CDs fit this description, ask a staff member at your local Christian bookstore or a friend. Then find a comfortable, quiet place where you can listen to the songs, inviting the Lord to open your heart to Him so you can both give and receive holy affection. Practice this exercise as many times as possible this week.

RECORD: How would you describe your times of worship with God this week?

What will you ask the Lord to help you do in the future so that your love for Him will flow more freely?

Share your experience with a friend you can trust, asking him or her to check in with you next month about your heart of worship with God.

Write a prayer, committing your steps to the Lord (see Psalm 37: 5).

Week 2

READ: The Enthusiast is comfortable with the mystical aspects of God and Christian spirituality, and doesn't avoid those expressions of the faith that, although reasonable, are sometimes unexplainable. Author and teacher Eugene Peterson writes:

There is a huge world that we have not yet seen, an incredible creation that we cannot account for, a complex reality that is not defined or controlled by our experience of it. There is more—far more. Our experience, while authentic enough, is not encompassing. There is far more that we don't know than what we do know.³

Prayer, too, seems to be a mystery. How can someone in California petition God to protect a friend in Kenya and have that protection come within moments of the request? Like electricity, we may not be able to totally understand how it works, but we can still use it to light our homes! So it is with prayer: It is “a gift, a mystery made up of moments of experience.”⁴

REFLECT: How do you handle the mysteries of God and those aspects of Him or the spiritual realm you don't totally understand?

Do you ever doubt what you can't see or understand, especially when it comes to the unknown, obscure workings of God? If so, how do you process that doubt?

Psalm 103:7 says that while God made His *acts* known to the children of Israel, He showed Moses His *ways*—how He did things and why. God took Moses backstage, so to speak, and he got to see more revelation from the heart and mind of God. Is there someone in your life you can

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talk with about your questions—a spiritual friend who knows the Lord deeply and might help you understand more of God and His ways? If so, who comes to mind?

What are some questions you might ask this person?

RESPOND: Call that person this week and ask her or him if you can get together soon. If the person lives out of town, set up a time for a phone conversation about your questions and your relationship with God.

If possible, share some of your questions in advance with this person so he or she can think and pray before you get together.

RECORD: How would you describe your appointment with your spiritual friend this week?

What did you learn?

Would you like to meet with this person again, perhaps on a regular basis? If so, ask God to prepare the way for that to happen.

Share your progress into the mysteries of God with a friend you can trust, asking him or her to check in with you next month about how you are processing and progressing.

Write a prayer, committing your steps to the Lord (see Psalm 37:5).

Week 3

INTEGRATION: Review the last two weeks. What has God taught you?

How will you integrate what you have learned into your life?

If there are ways you need to take action in the future, write them in your journal.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES FOR THE ADVANCED ENTHUSIAST

Week 1

READ: As we've already seen, worship is something that is done with the whole person—body, soul, and spirit. When we look at examples

of worshippers in Scripture, we see that some are moved to silence (see Zechariah 2:13), some stand (see Deuteronomy 29:10), some lift their hands (see 1 Timothy 2:8), some clap (see Psalm 47:1), some bow down (see Genesis 24:48), some shout (see Ezra 3:11), while others lie prostrate (see Revelation 19:10). Many people even dance when worshipping the Lord:

The young women will dance for joy, and the men—old and young—will join in the celebration. I will turn their mourning into joy. I will comfort them and exchange their sorrow for rejoicing.

Jeremiah 31:13 (NLT)

Interestingly, Scripture infers that God dances too. In the seventh century, Syrian theologian John of Damascus described the relationship of the Trinity as a *perichoresis*, a “circle dance.” *Choros* is an ancient Greek round dance performed at banquets and festive occasions. John envisioned the Godhead as a holy community, a circle in which existed a sense of joy, freedom, song, intimacy, celebration, and harmony—and we have been invited in! Here’s what the Bible says about God delighting—maybe even dancing—over us.

The LORD your God is living among you. He is a mighty savior. He will take delight in you with gladness. With his love, he will calm all your fears. He will rejoice over you with joyful songs.

Zephaniah 3:17 (NLT)

REFLECT: How comfortable are you using your whole body to worship God?

Have you ever been moved to stand, clap, bow, shout, or lie prostrate as you worshipped God? If so, how did it feel to use your body this way to worship the Lord?

The psalms say, “Praise his name with dancing and make music to him with tambourine and harp. . . . Praise him with tambourine and dancing” (Psalm 149:3; 150:4). Have you ever danced before the Lord, using your body as a vehicle to express your love for God?

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RESPOND: Practice worshipping God this week with your whole body. Play one of your favorite praise albums and listen closely to the words. More important, allow the words to saturate your heart. If they indicate standing or bowing, allow your body to assume that posture before God.

As different thoughts and emotions come to mind, raise your hands high or stretch them out wide to signify your abandonment and utter devotion to God. Let your body move however it desires to express worship and praise. Only Jesus is watching, and He is pleased by your full surrender.

Feel the music as much as you can, allowing your body to become an instrument of worship to the Lord. Sing along only as it helps you express your love for God.

If you feel awkward or silly, try to “press in” past that feeling. *Pressing in*, as I call it, is what happens when we commit to the process of getting closer to God in spite of our feelings of discomfort or uneasiness. Just as blind Bartimaeus pressed in to know Jesus (see Mark 10:46-47) and the woman with the hemorrhage of blood pressed in to touch Christ’s robe (see Mark 5:25-34), so we must press in with this same dogged determination, moving past all obstacles. Pressing in happens when we imagine ourselves on the tenth floor of a burning building. The elevator is going down for the last time, and when the door opens on your floor, you realize the elevator is already full. But because there is no other way out of the building, your need for life motivates you to *press in*. Compelled by a desire to save your own life, you don’t allow social customs, the opinions of others, or even your own comfort to stop you from getting into that elevator. In the same way, when we want spiritual life that badly, we must *press in* to get it!

Practice this exercise as many times as possible this week.

RECORD: How did you experience worshipping God this week—body, soul, and spirit?

Did you press in past your feelings and just go for it—as if it were a matter of life or death?

What follow-up do you need to do in the future?

Share your worship experience with a friend you can trust, asking him or her to check in with you next month about how you are pressing in to God and how your relationship with Him is changing.

Write a prayer, committing your steps to the Lord (see Psalm 37:5).

Week 2

READ: Even Enthusiasts—no matter how much they are able to worship and celebrate—do not constantly live on the mountaintop. In fact, the Bible tells us about times when God Himself led His people into the desert or other difficult places to have their faith examined, tested, and developed (see Matthew 4:1). Saint John of the Cross talks about God-directed times of darkness as “dark nights of the senses and soul.”⁵ These times teach us detachment and attachment, helping us to become so attached to Christ that we long to constantly live in His presence more than we want any other created thing—we don’t care if we’re healthy or sick, rich or poor, honored or dishonored. When we learn to detach from all the “good things” in this world and attach ourselves primarily to Christ, He becomes ultimately all that matters. Thus, we desire and choose only that which helps us praise, reverence, and serve our God.

It is often these “dark night” experiences that bring us into greater love and communion with Jesus as we detach from the things we can see and feel, and more deeply attach our hearts to Jesus. God promises this:

I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden wealth of secret places, so that you may know that it is I, the LORD, the God of Israel, who calls you by your name. *Isaiah 45:3 (NASB)*

REFLECT: Have you ever been in a place of spiritual darkness, a place you didn’t understand, where you hung on to God even though you did not sense His presence?

If so, how did you feel and react during that time?

Did you blame yourself for being in a low place spiritually?

If so, why?

WHAT'S YOUR GOD LANGUAGE?

What did you learn about the Lord and about yourself during that dark season?

What treasures of the soul did God give you during your time in the darkness?

RESPOND: Our lives with God go through seasons. Sometimes we feel closer, more in tune to Him. At other times we may not sense God's presence at all, even though He is still there. The mothers and fathers of the faith believed that God withdrew His presence at certain times so that His children could learn to walk with Him without the support of "good feelings."

To understand more about the dark seasons of life, consider reading one of the following books:

Dark Night of the Soul, by Saint John of the Cross

Abba's Child or Ruthless Trust, by Brennan Manning

Let Your Life Speak, by Parker Palmer

The North Face of God: Hope for the Times When God Seems

Indifferent, by Ken Gire

After you've read one of these books, discuss what you learned with a close friend who understands the soul seasons of life.

RECORD: What did you learn about this season of your life this week? If this season is not dark or difficult, what has God shown you about times past when darkness was your companion?

Does anyone come to mind who may need to hear about what you learned?

Share with a friend you can trust, asking him or her to check in with you next month about this new learning and your life with God.

Write a prayer, committing your steps to the Lord (see Psalm 37:5).

Week 3

INTEGRATION: Review the last two weeks. What has God taught you?

How will you integrate what you have learned into your life?

If there are ways you need to take action in the future, write them in your journal.

Now receive God's total grace and reflect upon His unalterable love for you—no matter how you feel you did on these spiritual exercises the last few weeks.

13

THE INTELLECTUAL

Loving God through the Mind

Record your temperament score for the Intellectual from page 158. _____

Is it high, medium, or low? _____

Record your practice score for the Intellectual. _____

Is it high, medium, or low? _____

In spiritual development, repetition is one way the Lord brings growth and transformation. Through repetition, God's Spirit can deal with us at ever-deepening levels and in more detail, which is why we will be focusing on one exercise for an entire week. It will be helpful for you to read and review the weekly activity each day, asking God to increase your capacity to know and love Him each time you revisit the exercise.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES FOR THE INTERMEDIATE INTELLECTUAL

Week 1

READ: In Old Testament times, Ezra was a man who vigorously studied the Word of God.

Ezra had devoted himself to the study and observance of the Law of the LORD, and to teaching its decrees and laws in Israel.

Ezra 7:10

For a Hebrew, studying the Torah meant being devoted to understanding and knowing Jehovah and His message—to caringly, faithfully, and constantly examine and probe the ancient manuscripts for

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their meaning. We, too, are encouraged to be like Ezra and vigorously study the Word of God—caringly, faithfully, and constantly.

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. *2 Timothy 2:15 (NASB)*

REFLECT: What biblical words or topics have you wanted to understand more completely (for example, God's glory, the fear of the Lord, forgiveness, caring for the poor, God's love and mercy)?

What is it that you want to know about this topic?

Why is this aspect of God interesting to you?

When you are curious about a Bible topic, how do you usually begin to learn more about it?

Thomas Brooks, a seventeenth-century preacher, said, "It is not the mere touching of the flower by the bee that gathers honey, but her abiding for a time on the flower that draws out the sweet. It is not he that reads most, but he that meditates most, that will prove to be the choicest, sweetest, wisest, and strongest Christian."

RESPOND: Start a Bible study this week on a specific word or topic of interest to you. You will need several tools: an exhaustive concordance, a Bible dictionary, a Bible commentary, and several different translations of the Bible. Pray that the Lord will teach you and give you understanding of Himself and His truth as you open His Word and other books.

- First, select your word or topic and look up all the relevant and corresponding words in your Bible and Bible dictionary.
- Next, look up the word or topic in your exhaustive concordance; find each time the word is used in Scripture.
- Comparing different versions of the Bible, what do you believe the word or verses mean? For example, compare the following four versions of the John 1:14 and see how each gives a slightly different flavor to the Incarnation—God becoming man:

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And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. (*NASB*)

So the Word became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son. (*NLT*)

The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighborhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, generous inside and out, true from start to finish. (*THE MESSAGE*)

- Now look up your word or topic in a Bible commentary and study what scholars have said about it.
- Continue this study until you find what you think the Lord has for you to learn.

RECORD: What did God teach you as you studied His Word this week?

How will your life be different from the understanding you gained about the Lord through the topic you studied?

What did God show you about Himself?

What did God show you about yourself?

Share your study with a friend you can trust, asking him or her to check in with you next month about this topic and the effect it is having on your life.

Write a prayer, committing your steps to the Lord (see Psalm 37:5).

Week 2

READ: The Bible makes an interesting statement:

Using a dull ax requires great strength, so sharpen the blade.
That's the value of wisdom; it helps you succeed.

Ecclesiastes 10:10 (NLT)

WHAT'S YOUR GOD LANGUAGE?

Here is how this verse appears in *THE MESSAGE*:

Remember: The duller the ax the harder the work; use your head:
The more brains, the less muscle.

REFLECT: What do you think this verse means?

What is your “ax,” and how might it need sharpening?

My pastor friend George Haraksin defines wisdom as an experiential understanding of how to live happily, deeply, and in harmony with God, oneself, others, and the cosmos. How is wisdom especially important in your life?

Thinking back over the years, how has wisdom given you success? How has ignoring it caused you trouble?

RESPOND: Ask one of your pastor friends to lunch this week—preferably one who challenges you intellectually. At lunch, ask the pastor how he or she stays sharp mentally—how he or she “sharpens the ax.” Inquire about books this pastor has been reading or would recommend to you, and about the seminars he or she is planning to attend. If these books or seminars interest you, purchase the book or plan to attend the seminar. Then, after you have read the book or attended the seminar, buy lunch for your pastor friend again. This time, discuss what you’ve learned and how you were challenged in your thinking.

RECORD: How was your time with your pastor friend this week?

What have you decided to do to keep your ax sharpened?

How will you intentionally pursue wisdom and the success it brings?

Share your pursuit with a friend you can trust, asking him or her to check in with you next month about your longing for wisdom and the action you are taking.

Write a prayer, committing your steps to the Lord (see Psalm 37:5).

Week 3

INTEGRATION: Review the last two weeks. What has God taught you?

How will you integrate what you have learned into your life?

If there are ways you need to take action in the future, write them in your journal.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES FOR THE ADVANCED INTELLECTUAL

Week 1

READ: The book of Proverbs tells us that just as iron sharpens iron—one substance honing and polishing material of equal sturdiness—so friends can sharpen, challenge, and polish one another (see Proverbs 27:17). When I read this verse, I picture two equally matched gladiators sparring with their swords, building up one another's strength, skills, and capacity during practice because of the challenge they provide.

A person with an Intellectual spiritual temperament is especially in need of friends who can challenge and provoke him or her—equals in some capacity who can both stimulate and speak the truth in love. This sparring may occur during hearty spiritual discussions or through personal words of challenge. Ephesians says,

Speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. *Ephesians 4:15*

REFLECT: Who in your life challenges you by speaking the truth in love?

Is there someone who may have real truth to speak into your life, someone to whom you both enjoy talking and listening?

Is there a person to whom you resist listening because his or her style of delivery is not the same as yours?

RESPOND: This week, ask the Lord to bring someone into your life with whom you are equally matched in some capacity, a person who is not afraid to speak the truth in love to you. When this person comes, ask God to open your heart to the truth he or she brings and to give you grace during the conversation, remembering Proverbs 12:1:

WHAT'S YOUR GOD LANGUAGE?

Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but he who hates correction is stupid.

RECORD: Did anyone speak the truth in love to you this week?

If so, how did you “spar”?

Did the encounter become an intellectual debate, or did you experience it as a personal challenge from the Lord?

What was most difficult for you to receive?

How will you grow and change from the encounter?

Ask God now to give you the grace to receive the truth from others so that you can grow from the feedback you need—both from those who can be iron sharpening iron as well as from those whose presentations are not as sharp as your own.

Share your growing edges with a friend you can trust, asking him or her to check in with you next month about how you are receiving the truth from others around you.

Write a prayer, committing your steps to the Lord (see Psalm 37:5).

Week 2

READ: There is an old song that tells us that when we're trying to express love for someone, the words sometimes get in the way. So it is in our lives with God; at times the words get in the way, especially when we try to understand, analyze, and think about all that is happening as we spend time with the Divine. Our minds can become so busy, so full of words, that we never come to the point of being able to simply rest, relax, and receive from the Lord. Of course, for some, the thought of receiving implies an increase in vulnerability and a decrease in control, and that in and of itself can feel uncomfortable. But prayer must eventually move from being active to receptive, especially when it comes to allowing our minds to rest and slow down.

Psalm 46:10 says this:

Cease striving and know that I am God. *(NASB, emphasis added)*

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In the Hebrew, the words “cease striving” literally mean to be still, relax, fall limp, let go. God is not only asking us to give Him our lives; He is also asking us to give Him our minds, to come to the point where we can relax our intellects because *He is God!* Thus, we can stop having to figure everything out as we let ourselves rest in the arms of a very big God who is exquisitely brilliant.

REFLECT: How are you at turning off the flow of words in your head—even during prayer—truly letting go, being still, relaxing your mind in order to just be with God, ready to receive whatever He has for you?

What would it look like for you to cease striving so that your mind could “be still, relax, fall limp, and let go” during your times with God?

If this idea makes you uneasy, consider Psalm 46:10 again and what it might progressively mean for you to “cease striving and know that [He is] God.”

RESPOND: Spend some time with the Lord now. If you have a hammock or a place to recline, go to that place, and as you lie there, picture yourself being held by the Lord as He supports all your weight. You are not too heavy for Him. As you begin, open your heart in this quiet place to receive whatever God has for you. Ask for His agenda and not your own. Now read the words of Psalm 46:1-11 (nasb):

*God is our refuge and strength,
A very present help in trouble.
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change
And though the mountains slip into the heart of the sea;
Though its waters roar and foam,
Though the mountains quake at its swelling pride.
There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
The holy dwelling places of the Most High.
God is in the midst of her, she will not be moved;
God will help her when morning dawns.
The nations made an uproar, the kingdoms tottered;
He raised His voice, the earth melted.*

WHAT'S YOUR GOD LANGUAGE?

*The LORD of hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our stronghold.
Come, behold the works of the LORD,
Who has wrought desolations in the earth.
He makes wars to cease to the end of the earth;
He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two;
He burns the chariots with fire.
“Cease striving and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”
The LORD of hosts is with us;
The God of Jacob is our stronghold.*

Now simply rest. Take time to be still and do nothing. If a word or phrase caught your attention as you read the passage, slowly and gently repeat the word or phrase to the Lord. Allow Jesus to bring an image into your mind's eye if He should choose. Let His Spirit lead your time together. Listen for what He may want to say to you, especially if something comforting comes to mind that you would not normally say to yourself. Then rest in the stillness as much as possible. If your mind begins to race or tries to control your experience, ask God for the grace to rest and allow the words in your mind to stop so that you can make space for Him to speak into a place of peace. Be aware of what you are feeling.¹

When your time has ended, thank the Lord for always holding you—for being God—even when you are not in a hammock or reclining. Now go on your way in peace.

RECORD: How was this time of letting your mind relax for you?

Did the words in your head actually stop?

What, if anything, did Jesus say to you?

What pictures came to mind?

This week, ask God to help you allow your mind to be more receptive to His leading when you need to be still, relax, and let go.

Share about your experience with a friend you can trust, asking him or

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her to check in with you next month about how you are learning to let go and relax with God.

Write a prayer, committing your steps to the Lord (see Psalm 37:5).

Week 3

INTEGRATION: Review the last two weeks. What has God taught you?

How will you integrate what you have learned into your life?

If there are ways you need to take action in the future, write them in your journal.

Now receive God's total grace and reflect upon His unalterable love for you—no matter how you feel you did on these spiritual exercises the last few weeks.

14

THE NATURALIST

Loving God through Experiencing Him Outdoors

Record your temperament score for the Naturalist from page 158. _____

Is it high, medium, or low? _____

Record your practice score for the Naturalist. _____

Is it high, medium, or low? _____

In spiritual development, repetition is one way the Lord brings growth and transformation. Through repetition, God's Spirit can deal with us at ever-deepening levels and in more detail, which is why we will be focusing on one exercise for an entire week. It will be helpful for you to read and review the weekly activity each day, asking God to increase your capacity to know and love Him each time you revisit the exercise.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES FOR THE INTERMEDIATE NATURALIST

Week 1

READ: From the beginning of recorded time, the Lord has met with His people in a garden, and it was to a garden that Jesus retreated to be with His Father during His darkest hour:

Jesus went with his disciples to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." *Matthew 26:36*

In the garden, Jesus found His "sacred space" with Abba—a place where He could be completely vulnerable and open about what was in His heart. For Him, the garden was a place of surrender, yieldedness,

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submission, and relinquishment. Here eternal decisions were at stake. And in the solitude of that garden setting, Jesus was able to receive from the Father the strength and comfort He needed to face what was coming next: the Cross.

REFLECT: Just as the Son of God met His Father in a garden, where do you most often find your “sacred space” to receive strength and comfort from the Father during difficult times?

Why do you choose this place?

How different would it be for you to meet God outdoors for prayer—at least a few times each week—if you are not already doing that?

RESPOND: This week, as you face each day, find a gardenlike spot, a quiet place outdoors where you can be with the Father to gain perspective, strength, comfort, and deep connection. As you do this, consider Jesus and His Gethsemane. Ask the Lord to give you grace to surrender your will as He did, trusting the ultimate outcome into the hands of a good and all-knowing Father. Practice this exercise as many times as possible this week.

RECORD: How did you meet God in the garden this week, and what was the outcome?

How did Jesus' Gethsemane encourage you to surrender more fully?

Share about your time with a friend you can trust, asking him or her to check in with you next month about this and how you are doing meeting God outdoors.

Write a prayer, committing your steps to the Lord (see Psalm 37:5).

Week 2

READ: Creation inspires us to be creative. We see that God is not simply a functional God, He is also a God of limitless variety, detail, and extravagant beauty. Simone Weil said, “The soul’s natural inclination to love beauty is the trap God most frequently uses in order to win it.” The beauty of God’s creation will always have the power to move us, because creation is still speaking—as it always has—of the wonder and magnifi-

cence of God Himself. Beauty is not just about what God makes; it's also about who God is. Perhaps nothing shouts more loudly of the God who is essentially and lavishly beautiful than the creation itself. Consider these words, which were inspired by the Creator and His creation:

THE WILD CHRIST

*I surrender to an infinite Christ,
not a local, owned version but a spontaneous sanity of silence
who makes the Pleiades burn in utterly pure flame
who smears the orange chalk of the sun all over the leaves and bodies of
the trees
who rides careening clouds, like gray ponies prancing down wild rivers
of wind
who changes breezes into His angel to whisper a spacious laugh of liberty
who puts a silver moistness in dark valleys
a seep between mountains where the wild ones drink;
who cherishes birds passionately
from the inside they have to sing!
who swells succulent grasses for the white teeth of cattle;
who breathes life into a sullen bear and sucks it out again when those dark,
simmering eyes cease to burn;
who makes pear trees drip slow, golden bodies for the juice of the sun;
who seduces water into wine in every grape of the world
to celebrate a perpetual wedding feast;
who makes the human heart like a candle in meditation
to spout through it words as sputters of flame in a wind—
to sing his own wonder at the infinite plentitude of Wisdom's everywhere
wise, spontaneous lush of being.
This is the wild Christ no one can tame!
This is the new, unknowable name.¹*

REFLECT: What type of “wild Christ” do you see when you look at creation?

Do you allow yourself time to be inspired by what He has made? If so, do you allow yourself to create after being inspired?

WHAT'S YOUR GOD LANGUAGE?

RESPOND: This week, as you are in God's creation, ask Him to motivate you to be creative in a way that best suits you. Perhaps it will be through writing a poem, a hymn, a letter, or a story. Perhaps you will gather leaves or see colors that inspire you to redecorate your home, add color to your dinner table or office, or recognize the loveliness in others. You may be inspired to visit a friend and bring flowers or a book. Allow God to move you through His creative genius. Allow God's beauty to inspire you as many times as possible this week.

RECORD: What did you do that was creative this week?

What was encouraging about allowing God's handiwork to inspire you?

What did you find challenging?

How does your soul feel when you interact with an original, artistic, inventive God?

Share your experience with a friend you can trust, asking him or her to check in with you next month about how the Creator is inspiring *your* creativity.

Write a prayer, committing your steps to the Lord (see Psalm 37:5).

Week 3

INTEGRATION: Review the last two weeks. What has God taught you?

How will you integrate what you have learned into your life?

If there are ways you need to take action in the future, write them in your journal.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES FOR THE ADVANCED NATURALIST

Week 1

READ: God's creation teaches us about rhythms, timing, and the seasons of life and death. In our world, we often try to push and manipulate to make things happen. But in God's creation, time is required for a seed to flower or an egg to hatch, and when the flower has lost its

The Naturalist

petals or the chick has lost its breath, no amount of effort on our part can keep either of them alive. We humans are put in our place, humbled by what we cannot make or control. Here we remember that God is in charge and we are not. Nature doesn't ask our permission to carry on; it doesn't check our schedules. The weather doesn't care what we have planned. Here we can find comfort in being smaller than the One who is in charge.

REFLECT: How easy or difficult is it for you to experience your powerlessness in the face of God's unlimited supremacy?

How are you at yielding control when the rhythms of life force you to admit that you cannot make things happen your way, at your time?

What in nature helps reinforce this lesson for you?

RESPOND: In your journal, list the things in your life that currently escape your control.

How is God's timing different from yours?

What in the universe encourages you to trust God with those people and situations that you cannot move, change, or rearrange, especially at your speed?

Write the things in creation that remind you of God's unlimited, infinite capacity (for example, the hundreds of millions of galaxies of stars that God ordained, and the fact that He knows each of them by name, according to Psalm 8:3; 147:4).

Pray a prayer of relinquishment, acknowledging your finite limitations and God's unlimited capacity to run His universe. Speak the truth that God is sovereign, and allow Him to comfort you by giving you examples from nature of the new life to come.

RECORD: How did you feel about practicing relinquishment this week?

How are you different after consciously putting yourself in a posture that acknowledges your trust in an infinite God?

Share about your experience with a friend you can trust, asking him or

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her to check in with you next month about your growing awareness of God's unlimited capacity.

Write a prayer, committing your steps to the Lord (see Psalm 37:5).

Week 2

READ: It is good to recall that God is Master of the forces of nature, even the wind and the waves:

One day Jesus said to his disciples, "Let's go over to the other side of the lake." So they got into a boat and set out. As they sailed, he fell asleep. A squall came down on the lake, so that the boat was being swamped, and they were in great danger. The disciples went and woke him, saying, "Master, Master, we're going to drown!" He got up and rebuked the wind and the raging waters; the storm subsided, and all was calm. "Where is your faith?" he asked his disciples. In fear and amazement they asked one another, "Who is this? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey him."

Luke 8:22-25

REFLECT: Imagine what it must have been like to be with Jesus and feel constantly unprepared—even somewhat jarred and unsettled—by His tendency to say and do the unexpected, even the supernatural.

How do you think you would have responded in this same situation, had you been with Jesus in the boat as it was filling with water?

As you reread the passage, what strikes you about Jesus' character and behavior in this story?

The Scripture tells us that after Jesus fell asleep, a fierce gale of wind descended and the boat was actually in real danger. Perhaps this was a typical storm, or maybe it was one brought on by the enemy, whose intention it was to wipe out the Son of God. Why do you think Jesus was able to sleep during such a bad storm?

If you had Jesus' perspective, how might that alter your peace in the storms you are facing?

Jesus' storm was real; the water in the boat was real; the danger was real! Why, then, do you think Jesus asked them, "Where is your faith?"

What do you think He expected of His disciples?

RESPOND: In the account of this storm, we suppose the Son of God was sleeping because He knew His Father wasn't. The Scriptures say,

*My help comes from the LORD,
the Maker of heaven and earth.
He will not let your foot slip—
he who watches over you will not slumber;
indeed, he who watches over Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.
The LORD watches over you—
the LORD is your shade at your right hand;
the sun will not harm you by day,
nor the moon by night.
The LORD will keep you from all harm—
he will watch over your life;
the LORD will watch over your coming and going
both now and forevermore.*

Psalms 121:2-8

Isn't it nice to know that the Sovereign God is never sleeping on the job? Do you think Jesus might have expected the disciples to step up to the plate and exercise their faith and delegated authority to stop the storm themselves (see Matthew 10:1; Mark 6:7; Luke 9:1)? Do you think they could have used their own faith and the delegated authority Jesus had already given them, to rebuke the wind and waves, saying, "Peace, be still"? Why or why not?

How have these words of Jesus, "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father" (John 14:12), allowed you to use His delegated authority to stop storms in your life—literally or otherwise?

Think about the areas of your life in which God's authority needs

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to be exercised over the enemy and the elements. Partner with Him now in prayer and speak to the storms in your life, using your delegated authority to say, "Peace, be still."

RECORD: How did you partner with God this week over the enemy and the elements?

What new initiatives did you sense God giving you as you prayed?

Share your insights with a friend you can trust, asking him or her to check in with you next month about how you are learning to partner with Jesus to see His peace come into your life and the lives of others.

Write a prayer, committing your steps to the Lord (see Psalm 37:5).

Week 3

INTEGRATION: Review the last two weeks. What has God taught you?

How will you integrate what you have learned into your life?

If there are ways you need to take action in the future, write them in your journal.

Now receive God's total grace and reflect upon His unalterable love for you—no matter how you feel you did on these spiritual exercises the last few weeks.

15

THE SENSATE

Loving God through the Senses

Record your temperament score for the Sensate from page 158. _____

Is it high, medium, or low? _____

Record your practice score for the Sensate. _____

Is it high, medium, or low? _____

In spiritual development, repetition is one way the Lord brings growth and transformation. Through repetition, God's Spirit can deal with us at ever-deepening levels and in more detail, which is why we will be focusing on one exercise for an entire week. It will be helpful for you to read and review the weekly activity each day, asking God to increase your capacity to know and love Him each time you revisit the exercise.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES FOR THE INTERMEDIATE SENSATE

Week 1

READ: Music must be extremely important to God, because it is talked about from Genesis to Revelation. Even at Creation, the morning stars were singing together and the angels were lifting their voices in joy (see Job 38:6-7).

The angel said, "Don't be afraid. I'm here to announce a great and joyful event that is meant for everybody, worldwide: A Savior has just been born in David's town, a Savior who is Messiah and Master." . . . At once the angel was joined by a huge angelic choir *singing God's praises.* *Luke 2:10-13 (THE MESSAGE, emphasis added)*

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I heard a voice from heaven, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of loud thunder, and the voice which I heard was like the sound of harpists playing on their harps. And they *sang a new song* before the throne. *Revelation 14:2-3 (NASB, emphasis added)*

The LORD your God is living among you. He is a mighty savior. He will take delight in you with gladness. With his love, he will calm all your fears. He will rejoice over you with *joyful songs*.

Zephaniah 3:17 (NLT, emphasis added)

REFLECT: How important is music to you—the kind of music that soothes your soul?

Have you ever wondered what the following events were (or will be) like?

- the morning stars singing together and the sons of God shouting for joy
- the angelic choir lighting up the sky and singing at Christ's birth
- the throne of God with the elders and thousands of saints singing to the Lamb
- the Lord Himself singing over you a happy song

If you could experience one of these events now, which would you most like to hear?

RESPOND: Select some classical or contemporary music to listen to that has no words. If you don't know where to start, Handel's "Pastorale" from *Messiah* or Pachelbel's Canon in D might be helpful, though any soothing instrumental music will do. Then use your spiritual imagination to listen for God's voice through the sounds and moods of the music. Allow the music to suggest words and a story as you listen.

Let the songs become a prayer, a melody of love between you and the Lord, and let your soul be "held" by the melody as it unfolds.

RECORD: How did the music inspire your interaction with God this week?

What did you learn about yourself and the Lord?

What surprised you? What challenged you? What blessed you most?

Share about your experience with a friend you can trust, asking him or her to check in with you next month about your life with the God of music and song.

Write a prayer, committing your steps to the Lord (see Psalm 37:5).

Week 2

READ: When Jesus walked the earth He taught His disciples to pray for and believe in the unseen:

Whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you *have received* it,
and it will be yours. *Mark 11:24 (emphasis added)*

In Hebrews, it is recorded,

Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what *we do not see*. *Hebrews 11:1 (emphasis added)*

As we partner with God in intercessory prayer, He allows us to use our God-given, God-surrendered imaginations to visualize the unseen by faith. In His grace, He invites us to trust Him to call that which is not yet visible into being.

REFLECT: How is your prayer life? Do you ever use visualization—picturing people and things in your mind—as you pray?

When you pray, do you mostly visualize circumstances as they are now—the current condition of things—or do you see what you are hoping for and asking God to do?

As you intercede for others, do you sense that you are a partner with the Almighty and that He has given you authority to work with Him by asking boldly—believing that you have received that for which you've asked?

RESPOND: On a note card, write the names of five or more people you feel led to intercede for this week. Feel free to fill up the card with names if you prefer. These may be friends or family members,

WHAT'S YOUR GOD LANGUAGE?

people coping with chronic illness, loved ones far away from the Lord, or just people for whom you want to intercede.

Now as you pray, look at the card; as you see each name, visualize the face of the person for whom you are praying. Take a few moments to focus on his or her face, seeing all the features you can remember. Picture the face of that person as it might be right at this moment. Then, as you think of that person's need, with his or her face still in focus, invite the Lord to lead you in His Kingdom purpose for that person's life; see the Lord touch that person and provide exactly what you are asking. If you are praying for people who are ill, picture the Lord touching them and healing them. Say aloud words like these:

- Lord, I bring to You [name]; surround [him/her] with Your loving arms this day and give [him/her] great strength.
- Lord, I lift up [name]; may Your healing hand touch [him/her] and raise [him/her] out of that place of depression.

Continue to pray for whatever is needed as you move through your list using visualizing faith.¹

RECORD: How was your prayer time this week as you visualized and interceded for others?

Write down the date and what you pictured for each person. Be ready to see God's answers when they come.

What follow-up do you need to do in the future?

Share about your experience with a friend you can trust, asking him or her to check in with you next month about how God is answering your prayers of faith visualized.

Write a prayer, committing your steps to the Lord (see Psalm 37:5).

Week 3

INTEGRATION: Review the last two weeks. What has God taught you?

How will you integrate what you have learned into your life?

If there are ways you need to take action in the future, write them in your journal.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES FOR THE ADVANCED SENSATE

Week 1

READ: The art and architecture humankind creates can speak powerfully of the Creator's magnificence and beauty. Sometimes a masterpiece on canvas or stained glass can lead us deeply into an awareness of God and enhance our communion with Him. Some people find that they can best meditate on God's character and attributes by studying a photograph, a drawing, or a work of art. Many Sensates discover that great paintings viewed in a book or museum give concrete expression to their prayers. Paintings or drawings can be explicitly religious, such as Michelangelo's well-known depiction of the creation of Adam, or simple landscapes or pictures of children may move to an awareness of God.

This week, find a place of beauty that speaks to you—such as a painting, a cathedral, a museum, or a High Church with icons. As you drive through your town, be aware of the architecture as it catches your eye. Then find one painting, statue, or stained-glass window on which to focus. Allow ten to twenty minutes to sit and be spoken to through the message of the art and artist. Study what humankind can do, and let it inspire you to praise the great, eternal Designer, Architect, and Artist.

RECORD: How did the beauty of art, architecture, marble, or stained glass inspire you spiritually this week?

What did you learn about the Lord?

What did you learn about yourself?

What were you prompted to do as a result of focusing upon this piece of created beauty?

Share about your time with a friend you can trust, asking him or her to check in with you next month about how the created beauty around you is stirring you spiritually.

WHAT'S YOUR GOD LANGUAGE?

Write a prayer, committing your steps to the Lord (see Psalm 37:5).

Week 2

READ: Worshipping God is, of course, more than just singing songs; it is allowing ourselves—body, soul, and spirit—to come into God's presence while releasing ourselves into His hands. One way of moving into God's presence is through the use of prayer chants, a spiritual exercise going back centuries to our Judeo-Christian roots. Long before a system of musical notation was developed, monks were learning to chant orally, gathering a repertoire of more than five thousand chanted melodies that still exist today.

Just as gloves adapt themselves to hands, so chants adapt themselves to prayer, and prayer is a window through which we gaze at God. Chanting is a rhythmic, verbal, auditory, and kinesthetic practice. Likened to praying through song, a chant is different from a hymn because, while a hymn is linear—moving from a beginning to an end, usually through several verses—a chant is circular, relying upon repetition to facilitate the experience.² Psalm 136 is an example of a biblical chant:

*Give thanks to the LORD, for He is good,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.
Give thanks to the God of gods,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.
Give thanks to the Lord of lords,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.
To Him who alone does great wonders,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting;
To Him who made the heavens with skill,
For His lovingkindness is everlasting.* *Psalm 136:1-5 (NASB)*

REFLECT: How familiar are you with Christian chanting?

If it is foreign to you, consider how God has met you in the past through new and unfamiliar experiences.

Invite the Lord to meet you as you enjoy an experience of “cutting

loose” and worshipping Him in a way that might be new and different for you.

RESPOND: Begin now worshipping with a prayer chant. Use the repetitive phrase in Psalm 136 as your model: “His lovingkindness is everlasting.”

As you begin, think of ways you have experienced the Lord’s lovingkindness in the last few months. Then spontaneously create and sing out words of praise or thanksgiving; keep all the words on one note, with the exception of the next to the last syllable, which is raised or lowered by a third. In the word “ev-er-last-ing,” the syllable “last” will be lowered a third. This gives the chant a harmonic, dissonant flavor. (If you have heard Gregorian chants or the psalms sung in a monastery, this process may be familiar to you.) The important thing is not that you get this exactly right but that you pray aloud to the Lord in a way that makes His goodness more vivid in your heart and mind. Don’t worry about the tune; just make one up if that suits you better, or use my suggested breaks here:

Thank You, Lord, for help-ing me get this pro-ject com-plet-ed
(hold the last note),

Your lov-ing-kind-ness is e-ver-la-a-sting.

I love You, Lord, for the grace and en-er-gy You give me,

Your lov-ing-kind-ness is e-ver-la-a-sting.

May You re-ceive glor-y and plea-sure from my work, Lord,

Your lov-ing-kind-ness is e-ver-la-a-sting.

Now put in your own words, and let them be spontaneous, with “Your lovingkindness is everlasting” after each impromptu phrase. Practice this exercise as many times as possible this week, using a different psalm each time or making up the words on your own.

RECORD: How did you feel as you practiced your prayer chants this week?

WHAT'S YOUR GOD LANGUAGE?

Were you able to allow the Holy Spirit to lead you through unfamiliar times of worship as you formed impromptu words of unplanned praise?

What did you learn about the Lord?

What did you learn about yourself?

Share about your experience with a friend you can trust, asking him or her to check in with you next month about your ongoing life of prayer with God.

Write a prayer, committing your steps to the Lord (see Psalm 37:5).

Week 3

INTEGRATION: Review the last two weeks. What has God taught you?

How will you integrate what you have learned into your life?

If there are ways you need to take action in the future, write them in your journal.

Now receive God's total grace and reflect upon His unalterable love for you—no matter how you feel you did on these spiritual exercises the last few weeks.

16

THE TRADITIONALIST

Loving God through Ritual and Symbol

Record your temperament score for the Traditionalist from page 158. _____

Is it high, medium, or low? _____

Record your practice score for the Traditionalist. _____

Is it high, medium, or low? _____

In spiritual development, repetition is one way the Lord brings growth and transformation. Through repetition, God's Spirit can deal with us at ever-deepening levels and in more detail, which is why we will be focusing on one exercise for an entire week. It will be helpful for you to read and review the weekly activity each day, asking God to increase your capacity to know and love Him each time you revisit the exercise.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES FOR THE INTERMEDIATE TRADITIONALIST

Week 1

READ: Rituals keep our lives ordered and in rhythm. Just like brushing our teeth daily is a habit that helps us take care of our teeth, so spiritual habits help us take care of our relationship with God. Because rituals “provide a way for us to enter into God's glory and still be protected from a force that is too great for human experience,”¹ the Bible suggests many practices that can help us know and love God more deeply.

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One such practice is the way in which we come to the Lord, the attitude and posture of our hearts. As Scripture tells us:

Give to the LORD the glory he deserves! Bring your offering and come into his presence. Worship the LORD in all his holy splendor.

1 Chronicles 16:29 (NLT)

In this passage, we are taught to come to God:

- *reverently respectful*, recognizing who God is and all He has done, attentive to the glory He deserves
- *sacrificially surrendered*, bringing an offering of value to Him

This means we come with a soul that is clothed in peace and trust.

REFLECT: When you come to worship the Lord, what is the attitude of your heart? Are you reverently respectful—mindful of who He is and all He has done, attentive to the glory He deserves?

Do you come sacrificially surrendered, bringing an offering of value to Him?

In what condition is your soul? Is it prepared? ready? expecting to experience His splendor?

Do you anticipate that God will meet you?

RESPOND: This week as you come to God, give Him your full attention.

When you come, begin in silence and allow at least the first five minutes to be a time to recall who God is and all He has done—from the beginning of time until today.

Then bring Him an offering. As you go to your regular place of worship, your offering may be your regular church tithe, or it may be something sacrificial you do for someone that you keep secret between you and the Lord. Ask God to show you what sacrifice or offering He would like you to give.

In Old Testament times, people covered their heads during worship to show respect and surrender. This head covering was like a modern-day shawl.

In the privacy of your own home, find a shawl or something appropriate to use to cover your head during your time of prayer. As you do this, realize that the shawl is a symbol of the submission and respect God deserves. Remember that you are doing this to honor God, showing that you have set aside this time especially for Him. You may want to say something to the Lord as you put on the shawl, such as, “I am a servant of the living God, adorning myself for You, Jesus.” Then, as you cover your head, use a moment of your time to examine your heart. Look within and ask the Holy Spirit to show you any areas where repentance and deeper surrender are needed.

RECORD: How was your time with the Lord this week?

How did it feel to come to God?

- *reverently respectful*, mindful of who He is and all He has done, attentive to the glory He deserves?
- *sacrificially surrendered*, bringing to Him an offering of value?

What follow-up do you need to do in the future?

Share about your experience with a friend you can trust, asking him or her to check in with you next month about how you are sacrificially coming to the Lord with respect.

Write a prayer, committing your steps to the Lord (see Psalm 37:5).

Week 2

READ: In the Bible, many of God’s people built altars to represent victories or special meeting times when the Lord came to them or changed their lives significantly (such as Noah in Genesis 8:20; Abraham in Genesis 12:7; Isaac in Genesis 26:25; Jacob in Genesis 35:1; Moses in Exodus 17:15; Balaam and Balak in Numbers 23:2; and Joshua in Joshua 8:30). One generation taught the next generation to build altars of stones as a memorial to God, symbolizing their encounters with Him.

The LORD said to Moses, “Write this on a scroll as something to be remembered and make sure that Joshua hears it. . . .” Moses built an altar and called it The LORD is my Banner. *Exodus 17:14-15*

WHAT'S YOUR GOD LANGUAGE?

REFLECT: Consider all the times God has led you and met you in significant ways.

If you were to build an altar of stones representing the things God has done for you, what would some of your stones signify?

RESPOND: With your family or close friends, construct an altar to the Lord. Find enough rocks so that all who gather can signify with stones what the Lord has done for them, special times He has led and blessed their lives both individually and as a family. Use actual stones and write on them with a permanent marker, constructing this altar in a significant place in your yard (or in a park somewhere you can visit), a place you can use to help you remember God's work on your behalf. If you live in a place where constructing an altar is not feasible, draw an altar in your journal and write words signifying the meaning of every stone.

Begin by giving every person five to ten small stones, with more available as needed. Allow everyone to remember God's work in his or her life, writing on the stones the title or theme of the event. Do not minimize this experience for children, even though you may need to help them think of times God answered prayer or blessed them. When everyone is finished writing, begin to build the altar. It may be good to go around the circle, allowing each person to share one stone at a time.

Once your altar has been built, close your time in prayer. Revisit your altar as often as you want or need to—when it is important for you to remember what God has done for you individually or as a family.

RECORD: How did your family or friends respond this week to building an altar?

What did you learn about the Lord?

What did you learn about your family or friends?

What did you learn about yourself?

What follow-up do you need to do in the future?

Share about your experience with a friend you can trust, asking him or her to check in with you next month about how your altar-building experience is encouraging your family and increasing their trust in God.

Write a prayer, committing your steps to the Lord (see Psalm 37:5).

Week 3

INTEGRATION: Review the last two weeks. What has God taught you?

How will you integrate what you have learned into your life?

If there are ways you need to take action in the future, write them in your journal.

SPIRITUAL PRACTICES FOR THE ADVANCED TRADITIONALIST

Week 1

READ: Change is unavoidable. Things wear out and new items need to be purchased to replace the old; jobs come and go; friends and family move or pass away. In fact, in this life, nothing remains unchanged—except God Himself:

Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

Hebrews 13:8

God alone is permanently unchangeable!

REFLECT: Consider all the changes in your life—both those that were helpful and those that were particularly hard. Think through the life of Jesus and all the changes He ushered in, even though many of the religious people of His day resisted those changes.

Are there changes in your life (or in your church) that you are watching or resisting, even though Jesus may actually be ushering them in?

What might some of those changes be?

If you are watching, how can you get involved? If you are resisting, consider why you are inflexible. What are you afraid of?

WHAT'S YOUR GOD LANGUAGE?

RESPOND: Read through the book of Acts in the New Testament this week. Record all the changes God brought to His people—first-time experiences for the church.

How did the people respond to the changes?

How would you have handled the Spirit's movement if He had brought so many changes to your church that quickly?

RECORD: How do you typically respond to change in your life?

Ask your spouse or a close friend to pray with you, inviting God to give you the grace to accept His changes with peace and to trust in your unchanging God.

What did God show you about yourself and Him?

Share your insights with a friend you can trust, asking him or her to check in with you next month about how you are handling change.

Write a prayer, committing your steps to the Lord (see Psalm 37:5).

Week 2

READ: Jesus asks us specifically to “remember Him” when we gather.

He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me.” *Luke 22:19*

Though Jesus instituted a time and space for us to remember Him, just before His crucifixion, He is also remembering *us* now, refusing to drink the cup again until we are with Him in His Kingdom:

Mark my words—I will not drink wine again until the day I drink it new with you in my Father's Kingdom. *Matthew 26:29 (NLT)*

REFLECT: Consider how often you take time and make space to really remember Jesus and what He has done for you.

Is it daily, weekly, or monthly Communion? Any other times?

RESPOND: This week, allow Communion to be a daily reminder of the Lord. If others in your home would like to participate, welcome them to join you, but do not allow their lack of interest to deter you.

Begin your time of Communion by preparing some bread and wine (or grape juice). Then read this Scripture:

I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "This is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 (NASB)

Take some bread and break it, saying, "This is the body of Christ, which was broken for me." Now eat the bread slowly, remembering Christ's body broken for you. (If you are taking Communion with another person, give the bread to one another, saying, "This is the body of Christ, which was broken for you.")

Then drink the wine or grape juice and say, "This is the blood of Christ, poured out for my sins and the sin of the whole world." Drink the wine or grape juice slowly, remembering Christ's blood shed for you. (If you are taking Communion with another person, give the wine or grape juice to one another saying, "This is the blood of Christ, which was spilled for you.")

After you are done, do as Jesus did and sing a hymn or one of your favorite worship songs (see Matthew 26:30).

RECORD: How were your times of Communion this week?

What did remembering Jesus do for your relationship with Him?

What did you learn about yourself? about the Lord?

Share your experience with a friend you can trust, asking him or her to

WHAT'S YOUR GOD LANGUAGE?

check in with you next month about how taking Communion has helped you remember the One who always remembers you.

Write a prayer, committing your steps to the Lord (see Psalm 37:5).

Week 3

INTEGRATION: Review the last two weeks. What has God taught you?

How will you integrate what you have learned into your life?

If there are ways you need to take action in the future, write them in your journal.

Now receive God's total grace and reflect upon His unalterable love for you—no matter how you feel you did on these spiritual exercises the last few weeks.

NOTES

CHAPTER 8

- 1 Dorothee Soelle, *Suffering* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975).

CHAPTER 9

- 1 Thomas Crum, *Journey to Center* (New York: Fireside, 1997), 56.
- 2 Guigo II, *The Ladder of Monks: A Letter on the Contemplative Life and Twelve Meditations*, translated by Edmund College and James Walsh (Kalamazoo, Mich.: Cistercian Publications, 1979), 67–68.
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- 4 Joan Chittister, *Wisdom Distilled from the Daily: Living the Rule of Saint Benedict Today* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990), 49.
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- 6 Larry Crabb, *The Safest Place on Earth: Where People Connect and Are Forever Changed* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 124.
- 7 Rodney Clapp, *A Peculiar People: The Church as Culture in a Post-Christian Society* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 194.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 34, 36.
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- 1 Steve Sjogren, *Conspiracy of Kindness* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Servant, 1993).

CHAPTER 11

- 1 Thomas Merton, *The Inner Experience: Notes on Contemplation* (San Francisco: Harper, 1959), 30.
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CHAPTER 12

- 1 W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, Volume IV (Old Tappan, N.J.: Fleming H. Revell, 1966), 235.
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CHAPTER 13

- 1 Thanks to my friend Nancy McDowell for sharing her meditative prayer model.

CHAPTER 14

- 1 Poem by Blake Steele, a mystic and a poet. Used with permission.

CHAPTER 15

- 1 Exercise adapted from Floyd W. Churn, "Nourishment for Peculiar Pilgrims on the Journey of Faith," DMin dissertation, Princeton Theological Seminary, 1995, 119.
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CHAPTER 16

- 1 Gary Thomas, *Sacred Pathways* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), 88.