

<b>Introduction</b>	.....	11
<b>CHAPTER ONE</b>	<b>BECOMING AWARE OF THE DIVINE</b> .....	15
Day 1	21 <sup>st</sup> century Christianity .....	16
Day 2	Awareness of God.....	21
Day 3	Appreciating the love of God .....	26
Addition One	Statistics on USA Christianity .....	31
<b>CHAPTER TWO</b>	<b>THE FRIENDSHIP OF JESUS</b> .....	35
Day 4	The friendship of Jesus .....	36
Day 5	Images of a human God .....	41
Day 6	More on listening to Jesus.....	45
Addition Two	The Cosmic Redeemer of the universe .....	50
<b>CHAPTER THREE</b>	<b>THE MAN FROM GALILEE</b> .....	53
Day 7	Enter the divine .....	55
Day 8	The kingdom of God .....	61
Day 9	The power of the Almighty .....	66
Day 10	Death which leads to victory.....	71
Addition Three	Questions about Jesus.....	76
<b>CHAPTER FOUR</b>	<b>I AM ALIVE!</b> .....	81
Day 11	I have risen! .....	82
Day 12	Living ‘in Christ Jesus’ .....	87
Day 13	The words of Paul.....	93
Addition Four	Different ways of speaking about Jesus .....	97
<b>CHAPTER FIVE</b>	<b>THE CREATION OF THE GOSPELS</b> .....	101
Day 14	The Gospels are precious.....	102
Day 15	The voice of the living God .....	107
Day 16	The story and the prayer .....	111
Addition Five	Examining the way you pray .....	114
<b>CHAPTER SIX</b>	<b>LISTENING TO JESUS IN MARK</b> .....	119
Day 17	Why did Mark write his gospel? .....	120
Day 18	Slowly revealing who I am .....	124
Day 19	A Jesus who suffers! .....	128
Day 20	Holy week drama .....	132
Day 21	The great events of Easter .....	136

<b>CHAPTER SEVEN</b>	<b>LISTENING TO JESUS IN MATTHEW</b> .....	141
Day 22	Matthew and his community .....	142
Day 23	The famous Sermon on the Mount.....	146
Day 24	Being a disciple in the kingdom .....	149
Day 25	The beginnings of the church .....	152
Day 26	The end approaches .....	155
<b>CHAPTER EIGHT</b>	<b>LISTENING TO JESUS IN LUKE</b> .....	161
Day 27	The mind of Luke .....	162
Day 28	Events in Galilee .....	167
Day 29	Moving towards Jerusalem .....	171
Day 30	The gospel of the outcast.....	174
Day 31	Jerusalem the city of destiny .....	177
<b>CHAPTER NINE</b>	<b>LISTENING TO JESUS IN JOHN</b> .....	183
Day 32	The prayer book of the New Testament ...	184
Day 33	God becomes human.....	188
Day 34	Jesus, the centre of our lives .....	192
Day 35	Reflections at the Last Supper .....	195
Day 36	A death which leads to glory.....	198
<b>CHAPTER TEN</b>	<b>JUST THE BEGINNING - COMMUNITY</b> .....	203
Day 37	Are congratulations in order? .....	204
Day 38	Your Christian community .....	208
Day 39	Celebrating the divine .....	212
Addition Six	Building community.....	215
<b>CHAPTER ELEVEN</b>	<b>SHARING WITH OTHER CHRISTIANS</b> .....	219
Day 40	Sharing with the young .....	220
Day 41	As they enter adulthood .....	225
<b>CHAPTER ELEVEN</b>	<b>SHARING WITH OTHER CHRISTIANS</b> .....	231
Day 42	Ways of exploring the scriptures .....	232
Day 43	The gospels revisited .....	237
Day 44	A theological background .....	244
Bibliography, scriptural and subject index .....		250

# ***A Friend within***

**How to pray in today's world**

Fr A McLean

(ar\_mclean@hotmail.com)



# ***A Friend Within***

**How to pray in today's world**

Fr A McLean

Available from Amazon.com  
and other retail outlets

Printed by CreateSpace, Charleston SC 2020

Copyright © 2020 by A. R. Mclean. No part of this book can be reproduced for commercial reasons in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, taping, or any retrieval system, without the written permission of the author.

All scripture quotations are from the New Revised Standard Version of the Bible, copyright © 1989 by the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. Used by permission. All rights reserved. The verses can be reproduced in their present form.

Fr. Frank Moloney's insights are printed with permission. Joy Cowley allows her creations to be reprinted for religious purposes.

**ISBN:** 9798643400035

1. New Testament-Gospels-Jesus.
2. Prayer-private-Jesus-Gospels.

## ***Foreword.***

Throughout the history of human kind there has never been a race or a tribe of people who have not looked to the divine or supernatural, to seek meaning regarding the existence of life. This search has crystalized in what we call major religions or spiritual entities. Some examples are Islam, Hinduism, Paganism, Judaism and Christianity.

This new revised book relates to Christianity and in particular seeks a personal way to live out its message, take comfort from the depth of its promise and reach a spiritual fulfillment.

Christianity is rooted in Judaism and reached maturity when Jesus Christ was born some 2000 years ago. Jesus' deeds and words are recorded by the early Christian Communities in the gospels. Within these texts the reader can know something of the life of Jesus, his philosophy, his theology and his extraordinary wisdom and promise.

Christianity contends Jesus is the son of God equal to the Creator of all things. Christianity contends further that Jesus loves and cares about each and every one of us regardless of our religious or spiritual persuasion. Jesus reaches out to all. Many Christians have heard his call or have had 'eye contact' with Jesus but for a myriad of reasons have left the room. This book is for them, but not exclusively. This book is for those who practice their Christian spirituality in a consistent manner, but not exclusively. This book is for all humankind whose journey is not yet complete. This work then has a universal appeal.

J. Perriam

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>Introduction to the second edition .....</b>	<b>10</b>
 <b>CHAPTER ONE      BECOMING AWARE OF THE DIVINE.....</b>	 <b>15</b>
Day 1                      21 <sup>st</sup> Century Spirituality .....	16
Day 2                      Awareness of God .....	21
Day 3                      Appreciating the love of God.....	26
Addition One          Statistics on USA Christianity.....	31
 <b>CHAPTER TWO      THE FRIENDSHIP OF JESUS.....</b>	 <b>35</b>
Day 4                      The friendship of Jesus.....	36
Day 5                      Images of a human God .....	41
Day 6                      More on listening to Jesus .....	45
Addition Two          The Cosmic Redeemer of the universe .....	50
 <b>CHAPTER THREE    THE MAN FROM GALILEE.....</b>	 <b>53</b>
Day 7                      Enter the divine.....	55
Day 8                      The Kingdom of God .....	61
Day 9                      The power of the Almighty.....	66
Day 10                    Death which leads to victory .....	71
Addition Three        Questions about Jesus .....	76
 <b>CHAPTER FOUR    I AM ALIVE!.....</b>	 <b>81</b>
Day 11                    I have risen!.....	82
Day 12                    Living 'in Christ Jesus'.....	87
Day 13                    The words of Paul .....	93
Addition Four        Different ways of speaking about Jesus .....	97



## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>CHAPTER FIVE</b>	<b>THE CREATION OF THE GOSPELS .....</b>	<b>101</b>
Day 14	The Gospels are precious .....	102
Day 15	The voice of the Living God.....	107
Day 16	The story and the prayer .....	111
Addition Five	Examining the way you pray .....	114
<b>CHAPTER SIX</b>	<b>LISTENING TO JESUS IN MARK .....</b>	<b>119</b>
Day 17	Why did Mark write his gospel? .....	120
Day 18	Slowly revealing who I am .....	124
DAY 19	A Jesus who suffers! .....	128
Day 20	Holy Week Drama .....	132
Day 21	The great events of Easter .....	136
<b>CHAPTER SEVEN</b>	<b>LISTENING TO JESUS IN MATTHEW .....</b>	<b>141</b>
Day 22	Matthew and his community .....	142
Day 23	The famous Sermon on the Mount.....	146
Day 24	Being a disciple in the kingdom.....	149
Day 25	The beginnings of the church .....	152
Day 26	The end approaches .....	155
<b>CHAPTER EIGHT</b>	<b>LISTENING TO JESUS IN LUKE .....</b>	<b>161</b>
Day 27	The mind of Luke.....	162
Day 28	Events in Galilee.....	167
Day 29	My Journey reaches Jerusalem .....	171
Day 30	The gospel of the outcast.....	174
Day 31	Jerusalem, the city of destiny.....	177

## **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

<b>CHAPTER NINE</b>	<b>LISTENING TO JESUS IN JOHN.....</b>	<b>183</b>
Day 32	The prayer book of the New Testament...	184
Day 33	God becomes human.....	188
Day 34	Jesus, the center of our lives .....	192
Day 35	Reflections at the Last Supper .....	195
Day 36	A death which leads to glory .....	198
<b>CHAPTER TEN</b>	<b>JUST THE BEGINNING.....</b>	<b>203</b>
Day 37	Are congratulations in order?.....	204
Day 38	Your Christian community.....	208
Day 39	Celebrating the divine.....	212
Addition Six	Building Community .....	215
<b>CHAPTER ELEVEN</b>	<b>SHARING WITH YOUNG CHRISTIANS.....</b>	<b>219</b>
Day 40	Sharing with the young .....	220
Day 41	As they enter adulthood.....	225
	<b>TEACHERS SCRIPTURAL RESOURCES</b>	
<b>CHAPTER TWELVE</b>	<b>A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING .....</b>	<b>231</b>
Day 42	The gospels revisited.....	232
Day 43	Ways of using the scriptures.....	237
Day 44	A theological & pastoral background .....	244
	Bibliography .....	250
	Scriptural Index.....	252
	Subject and Author Index. ....	254

## ***Ways of using this book***

- \* As a text book or discussion material in High School classes, youth groups or parish groups.
- \* Before the birth of a child or at a time when you have lost a loved one
- \* Useful for parents and teachers whose children are preparing for their first Holy Communion.
- \* As source of discussion for parents whose children are about to enter a Christian School.
- \* As a preparation for Marriage or before Confirmation.
- \* Suitable for a personal retreat or a Lenten exercise.
- \* As a study book which exposes the origins and message of the New Testament.
- \* At any time in which you feel the need to experience the close friendship of God.

A friend within has been written for the Christians of America. It is especially directed towards those young people who no longer find it easy to pray. The ideas would need to be modified for different classes, groups or individuals. This usually involves selecting and editing specific sections of the book.

## ***Introduction to the Second Edition.***

The purpose of this book is to offer a fresh approach to prayer. Many Christians have stopped attending church and no longer find prayer a meaningful experience. One person felt that trying to pray was like walking in deep fog.

These ideas apply especially to the young people of today who are being pulled away from the mystery of God's presence by the exciting action packed world in which they live. Some come from good Christian families or have attended Christian schools for over a decade and yet still walk away from their faith. Our aim is to provide a stepping stone to help Christians who no longer pray to once again find the divine in the traditional prayers of Christendom.

Our method of prayer consists of a daily two minute period of listening. You begin by thinking about the earthly image of Jesus and then slowly repeat his name.

The next step is to read a few words of the scriptures and using our imagination to wonder about what Jesus is saying to you. The focus is on becoming aware of the presence of God within your heart. This is a time of stillness and peace. Every time you listen to Jesus

**“Our interest is  
providing a  
stepping stone  
which will help  
Christians, who  
no longer pray, to  
once again enjoy  
the friendship  
of God.”**

speaking to you, you encounter your God in a different way. It is a time when you think about who Jesus is and what he is saying to you and what he would like you to do. This is an internal experience which requires imagination, awareness and wonder. Remaining aware of Jesus is the only requirement. This approach to prayer will be developed more fully throughout the chapters of this book.

The two minute prayer avoids personal thoughts, set prayers or inspired writings. These will only become powerful when you are able to experience the close presence of God. We also know that our way of prayer will mature only when it is combined with the liturgical worship and traditional methods of prayer used by the wider Christian community. Tolkien, author of “Lord of the Rings” attended church most of the days of his life. He liked to use traditional set prayers like the *Our Father*, the *Gloria*, the *Glory Be* and *psalm 112*. Community worship and traditional prayers of praise and thanks will always have a central place in Christian prayer.

**“The two minute  
reflection avoids  
personal  
thoughts, set  
prayers or  
inspired  
writings.”**

It could have been heavenly intervention or perhaps chance but we now realize that our way of seeking God is very similar to two methods of prayer which have been part of Christianity for hundreds of years. The first is the *Lectio Divina* or reading with God. This way of praying has been used by the monastic movement through the centuries. It is also present in the spirituality of many of the great saints of Christendom. The second is the writings of St Ignatius of Loyola. Ignatius taught us how we can become aware of our God by using our imagination and learning to listen to Jesus in his sacred words.

Our ideas first appeared in 2013 on the website [www.afriendwithin.com](http://www.afriendwithin.com). Two years later the first edition was published under the title: “A Friend Within”. This new edition is called “A Friend Within: Finding Jesus in today’s world”. It is now available on the website [www.afriendwithin.com](http://www.afriendwithin.com).

Francis Mooney SDB described our first edition as “A passionate and very intelligent (a rare combination) book.” Francis Moloney is the author of many books and was for 18 years, a member of John Paul II’s International Theological Commission. He is a former Dean of Theology and Religion at the Catholic University of America. This second edition has retained the same format as the first but with the help of the Lectio, Ignatius and knowledge gained with five more years of discussion and usage, the edition has been extensively revised.

Our first two chapters explain how the Lectio Divina and the spirituality of Ignatius can enrich the prayer of 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians. Beginning in chapter three Jesus speaks to you in the first person about his life on earth. This provides a practical way of experiencing his friendship.

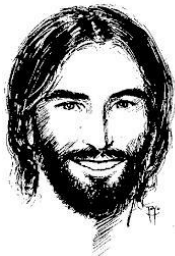
In the next chapter Jesus speaks about his involvement with his followers after his resurrection. In chapter five he discusses different ways that you can listen to him in the verses of the scriptures. Then in Chapter’s six to nine Jesus tells you how you can discover his presence in the four great gospels. Chapter ten looks at the close connection between being conscious of the friendship of Jesus and belonging to a Christian community. Chapter eleven discusses how we can help our young people to discover the presence of God. The twelfth chapter looks more deeply at how you can understand the scriptures and appreciate the theological bases for our prayer.

**“In Chapters  
three to nine  
Jesus speaks to  
you in the first  
person.”**

We wanted to make contact with the divine easy and simple and have limited our prayer time to two minutes each day. We have tried to be down to earth, enjoyable, interesting and humorous. We want young people to enjoy the read. Where possible we have only used words which ordinary people use. Our book offers many different ways of thinking about God. It is very much a practical manual on how to make the divine part of your daily life. The process is similar to mastering a new language or becoming proficient in a particular sport. Extensive footnotes and additions help clarify ideas, bringing substance and authority to the chapters and answers questions which interest 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians. This method of prayer is acceptable to all Christian traditions including those with a fundamentalist belief in the sacred word. Our approach has also proved very useful for many devout Christians and has been used by teachers and parents as a practical way of introducing an awareness of the divine.

**“We have tried  
to be down to  
earth,  
enjoyable,  
interesting and  
humorous.”**

This book has many authors. It is the product of the suggestions, responses and encouragement of numerous religious sisters, ministers and young people. They have recorded for you what is in their hearts.



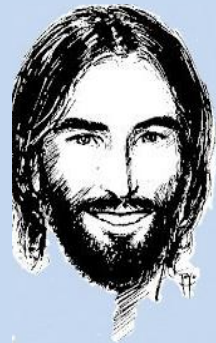




## Chapter One

# ***Becoming aware of the Divine***

*Many summers ago, in an old castle,  
in a distant land, a prince was born.  
He was the first son and his birth  
brought great happiness and joy to his people.  
They came to know him  
as their friend and their leader.  
His friendship reached into their hearts.  
His kindness touched their lives.  
When he was still quite young,  
he died for his kingdom.  
The people still live with the  
wonder of his presence.  
They long for the day when  
they will be together,  
For the whole world  
knows that their  
friendship is eternal.*



## **Day 1      21<sup>st</sup> Century Spirituality.**

### **The decline of Christianity.**

Christianity in our western world is facing a major crisis. For various reasons, a great number of Christians have lost their appetite for a personal God. This is reflected in the shortage of ministers and falling numbers attending Sunday worship. Church attendance in the United Kingdom has declined from 11% (with an average age of 37) in 1980 to 7.66% (with an average age of 43) in 2000. Estimates indicate that by 2020 church attendance will fall to 4.4% with an average age of 56. <sup>1</sup> In the Catholic school system, thousands of young people have been exposed to a daily period of Christianity for up to a dozen years and still walk away from their Christian Communities. This trend is not restricted to the young. It has become part of the lifestyles of Christians of all ages.

The Christian Community has responded in different ways. There are those who believe renewal depends on prayer. Some blame our secular society and continue with the pre 1960's method of teaching sound doctrine. Others argue that Christianity only expands when it reaches into the heart of a country or culture. Some have moved to modernise church services and allow teachings which tolerate different opinions. Conservatives and radicals have emerged. <sup>2</sup>

Parents who practice their faith have a totally different concern. They struggle to understand why their children have lost interest in Christianity and stopped attending church. This is the dominant situation existing today in many Western countries.

Many of these Christians still possess what can be labelled '21<sup>st</sup> century spirituality'. This term is used to describe those who believe in God and in the person of Jesus but no longer attend Sunday worship. If you belong to this group you will sometimes attend church at Christmas or when your parents come to visit.

---

1 Search "attitudes of Christians in Western world."

2 Some cultures have become Christian because of western colonialism and in areas like South America, 'conversion by the sword',

Those of you with children often have them baptized. Many of you want them to attend Christian schools. You are educated, treasure your own opinions and have developed a healthy brand of common sense. You enjoy succeeding at work, improving your home and learning about interesting things. Activities like competing in sport, holidaying in interesting places, hobbies, or working on your appearance can really stimulate you. Yours is a world of friends, family and happiness. You are good people who really care for other people.

Sometimes your beliefs differ from those of your traditional church communities but many of you still call yourselves Protestant or Catholic. You would like to know God better and still turn to God in times of trouble, but your busy lives make it difficult for you to experience the gentle touch of God.

### **Our changing life style**

Since the Second World War there have been three major changes to the life styles of our western world.

Stage one dominated in the 1950's and 60's. People's life styles were far different from what they are today. Evenings involved music, listening to the radio, card games and reading. The only McDonald you talked about was the one that had a farm. Sundays tended to be days of rest with limited sport and shopping. People learnt how to pray by being taught about their faith and reciting set prayers. Knowing the presence of God flowed naturally from living with people who were religious. The emphasis was on sound teaching and good example. The catechism was learned by heart. This method dominated Christian education. What parents and teachers said was seldom questioned. The preacher was always right.

***“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts”*** (Col 3:15).

A second stage emerged in the 1960's. Young and old became exposed to a variety of different values. Parents became more tolerant in the way they treated their children. Discussions and personal opinions became important elements in our education system. Life became hectic and more interesting and by the

turn of the century the values and pleasures of iPads, cell phones and television began to dominate. A combination of pre 60's and post 60's attitudes have become the norm in many areas of life. Religious education has not fared well in this new environment. In many cases an awareness of the divine has diminished and personal opinions and values have dominated the doctrines of the Christian faith.

In our times, a third stage in communication and teaching has emerged. Pre-60s knowledge and the post-60s opinions have been joined by the importance of emotions and feelings. They have always been part of a good book, great music, and powerful films. Now they are visible in the way television and newspapers advertise cars, diets, face creams and so many other products. In reality these three stages flow into each other and there are major differences between individuals, locations and cultures.

Living in the 21<sup>st</sup> century you still seek knowledge and can put a great deal of effort into obtaining degrees and becoming qualified in many areas, but often it is what you enjoy that dominates the way you live.

Electronic communication and social media are a natural part of your day. Your mind is continually being stimulated by new adventures and ideas which often generate diverse attitudes and values.

This is an interesting and exciting way to live but faced with so many choices, you have naturally limited your activities to those which give you pleasure or enrich your lives. Friendship was always important but now it often dominates your lives. This need for intimacy helps explain relationships, the popularity of Facebook, the internet, rock concerts and parties. As humans we tend to become what we love. Christianity is struggling to compete with this new fast-moving material world. This is not an easy time to be a Christian especially if you are trying to pass on your faith to your children.

***“These three stages flow into each other and vary between different individuals.”***

### **What is different about the United States?**

The United States has remained far more Christian than any other Western country. There has been a decline over the last few years especially among the young, but no other western country can boast a 31% attendance at church every week. These statistics will be discussed more fully in the addition at the end of this chapter.<sup>3</sup>

Why is it then, that in this land of Hollywood glamor and capitalism, Christians still practice their faith? They are still exposed to the same religious teachings as other Western Countries but there is one major difference. Starting at a very young age, parents in USA tend to share their feelings and dreams about God with their children. They have fun arguing about where God is. They share together what they say to God and how they feel about God. They tell each other what they imagine when they pray. They discuss why God fails to answer their prayers and about the best way to be aware of the divine. They speak of their happiness at knowing that Jesus is their friend and is always with them. In short, by sharing their personal feelings about their God, they have made God an essential part of the emotional needs and thoughts of their children. Even if future USA surveys indicate a weakening in the Christian faith, it is clear that, especially in the past, Americans have succeeded in creating an awareness of the divine in the hearts of their young.<sup>4</sup>

Christians from other cultures also practice their faith with pleasure and enthusiasm. You see this with immigrants from places like South East Asia, Polynesia and Mexico. Mexicans form the largest group of immigrants coming into the United States. They are approximately 85% Catholic. Again their faith can be traced back, not to their greater knowledge of Christianity, but to the strong emotional ties of their culture.

---

3 The 2018/ 2019 survey conducted by the Pew research center indicates that 65% in the USA call themselves Christian and approximately 31% attend religious services at least once a week..

4 Teaching this American approach to the young will be discussed more fully in chapter 11.

### **What can we learn from the United States?**

What our young need is parents, teachers and friends who will share with them their personal thoughts and feelings about the divine. They need environments in which they are encouraged to discover their own feelings about their God. This approach must become a life time experience starting at preschool and continuing into old age.

There are real consequences for both young and old who attend Sunday services without possessing an awareness of the divine. After years of going to church in this way, many of these Christians often find church boring and usually stop practicing their faith.

### **Hopes and dreams.**

A taxi driver and a minister went to Heaven. The taxi driver was given a beautiful mansion and the minister an old hut. The minister complained to St Peter. St Peter replied, "Well when you did your job in the pulpit everyone went to sleep but when this taxi driver drove his taxi everyone prayed like hell". No matter who you are or what you do, you are important to God. Now how would you respond to these questions?

**What music do you like?**

**What do you hope to  
achieve in your life?**

**Look up to the stars.  
Wonder at their greatness.  
What caused this tremendous reality?**

## Day 2 Awareness of God

Prayer is often defined as ‘the raising or opening of the heart and mind to God’. This definition is fine provided you understand that almighty God is always present, always loving, always watching and that prayer is simply becoming aware of this divine presence. This awareness is not about how well you concentrate or how pious you feel. It is about becoming conscious of the downward thrust of God’s eternal love.<sup>5</sup>

God is like a parent caring for a sleeping child. Parents take great delight when their child wakes and greets them with a smile or a word. In the same way God delights when you become aware of his presence. This awareness remains the constant element throughout prayer. The mind and the heart are important, but they only become powerful when they are combined with the awareness of God. Awareness is the glue which gives meaning and shape to all other aspects of personal prayer. Awareness of God comes from the heart. It is an experience within. It usually produces feelings of calm or peace. It is extremely personal. It puts on hold all other thoughts. It asks you to be still, to listen and to wonder. Talking with God does not require words. God knows already what we are thinking. It has little to do with being conservative or radical. It often journeys outside the mind into the land of imagination, love and creation. It is constantly changing. Sometimes it is strong and sometimes it is weak. This is the part of prayer which allows God to become part of the shifting sands of our lives. It is the aspect of prayer which is often neglected..

**“Awareness  
is the glue  
which gives  
meaning to  
all aspects  
of Personal  
prayer.”**

---

<sup>5</sup> Thomas Keating (*Open Mind....*) offers valuable insights into the difficulties which today's Christians have in experiencing the presence of God. [Contemplativeoutreach.org](http://Contemplativeoutreach.org) offers an introduction to Keating's thoughts.

**True awareness.** <sup>6</sup>

There are degrees of awareness. You know that sitting near a stranger in a park is totally different from the joy of talking to a close friend. The latter is filled with warmth and inspires immediate conversation.

It is this type of awareness that we seek with our God. It involves making space for God within your mind and pondering over the presence of the divine.

We have all treated God like a stranger in the park. It's easy to say 'I pray' or 'I believe' and then put the Creator on the back burner and exclude God from our thoughts. There have been times in our lives when you have told people 'I will pray for you' and never tried to become aware of the God within. You have all read beautiful prayers like 'Footprints' and failed to be aware of the God who is close. Sometimes completing

sets of prayers makes you feel good. Sometimes praying with words is similar to reading a poem. You can say grace before meals or take part in a church service without fully recognising the divine. If you are honest, you have often been remiss in these things.

**Footprints**

One night a man had a dream. He dreamed he was walking along the beach with the LORD. Across the sky flashed scenes from his life. For each scene he noticed two sets of footprints in the sand, one belonging to him and the other to the LORD.

When the last scene of his life flashed before him, he looked back at the footprints in the sand. He noticed that many times along the path of his life there was only one set of footprints. He also noticed that it happened at the very lowest and saddest times of his life.

This really bothered him and he questioned the LORD about it. "LORD you said that once I decided to follow you, you'd walk with me all the way. But I have noticed that during the most troublesome times in my life there is only one set of footprints. I don't understand why when I needed you most you would leave me."

The LORD replied, "My precious, precious child, I love you and I would never leave you! During your times of trial and suffering when you see only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you."

---

<sup>6</sup> In future chapter's true awareness of God will help to developing the ability to listen to God. Both are essential elements in our method of prayer.



This is why the chapters of this book will continually ask you to develop an internal awareness of the divine. In modern living, awareness of God is the stepping stone which brings meaning to set prayers and to the thoughts of others. Prayers which lack a true awareness of the divine can easily become empty and boring. Sometimes, especially for the young, this experience can do more harm than good. Here is a suggestion which you might consider: Never say or read a prayer without being aware of the presence of God. <sup>7</sup>

### **The power of repeating the name of God.**

This is a way of praying which is ingrained within your spiritual history. There is a beautiful story about John Cassian and his companion Herman. In the fifth century they travelled into the Egyptian desert to visit Abba Isaac, regarded as the wisest of the Desert Fathers. They wanted to ask him the secret of knowing God. Abba Isaac told them that his secret involved continually repeating one particular verse of scripture. The verse was “*O God, do not be far from me; O my God, make haste to help me.*” <sup>8</sup> This awareness of Jesus was also important for the Desert Fathers. They often thought of Jesus as they repeated words like ‘Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me’. <sup>9</sup> The repetition of these sacred words has remained part of monastic prayer though the ages. The name ‘Jesus’ remains the most important word in the private prayer of today. <sup>10</sup>

If you are a 21<sup>st</sup> century Christian, the chances are that you have not rejected God. It’s just that you live in an exciting and action filled world. Your mind and feelings have been exposed for thousands of hours to the people you see and love, to material things which stimulate you and to the many pleasures

---

7 Perhaps the lack of true awareness is a major reason why the divine is not a real experience in the lives of 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians

8 Basil Pennington (*Centering.....* 18ff) quotes from the Douly-Rheims Bible. He explains how the Desert Fathers gave a Christian meaning to Psalm 70:1 (71:1). They knew that by asking for God’s mercy and help they were pleading for something they were not worthy to receive. They were asking to receive the salvation of Jesus Christ.

9 Ibid.44.the verse is based on Mark 10:47. See Google ‘Jesus prayer’.

10 Ibid. 66.

of living. These things can fill your mind and leave little space for God. This conditioning is a real stumbling block to becoming aware of Jesus. Thinking of the presence of Jesus and repeating his name can be as simple as turning on an iPhone or a TV. Don't think about it. Just do it. Before you know it God is once again present with you.

When you enter a shopping mall you are confronted with noisy conversations and activities like drinking coffee or enjoying retail therapy. You meet a friend and start talking and very soon you become insensitive to the activities around you. The same thing happens when you repeat the word Jesus. You forget about your surroundings and direct your attention to the God who is with you.

***“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing”*** (1 Thess 5:16-17).

***“Remember, I am with you always”*** Matt 28:20).

### **Repeating the word Jesus throughout the day.**<sup>11</sup>

Repeating the word Jesus can be used anytime and anywhere during the day: when you are peeling potatoes, watching the ads on TV or waiting for traffic lights to change.

It can help you to become aware of how the divine is present in your friends, your hobbies, your happy moments and your sad lonely ones. Repeating this one word and thinking about the presence of Jesus can turn all your joys and worries into a spiritual experience. There are some Christians who repeat the word Jesus up to 100 times a day. This is their way of making the awareness of God part of their daily activities.

While God can be experienced within the beauty of nature, we have all become aware of God in the beauty of a rose or the stimulating prayers of others and then immediately found ourselves forgetting about God and enjoying the walk or being captured by beautiful words. In times of prayer repeating the name of Jesus answers a couple of practical problems. It provides you with a very simple way of becoming aware of your

---

<sup>11</sup> “When the Holy Name (Jesus) is repeated often .... the prayer is not lost by heaping up empty phrases” Pope John Paul II (*The catechism....* Par 2668).

God. It also helps you to avoid distractions by controlling your thoughts and allowing you to remain focused on the presence of the divine.

***“Call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*** (1 Cor 1:2).

### **God’s place in your life?**

Humans through the centuries have pondered over the presence of God in their lives and many answers have emerged. What are your personal thoughts about God? <sup>12</sup>

**WHAT DOES THE WORD ‘GOD’  
MEAN TO YOU?**

**WHAT THOUGHTS EMERGE WHEN  
YOU THINK OF HOW GOD  
CREATED THE UNIVERSE?**

**DOES GOD KNOW YOU? DOES  
GOD LIKE YOU?**

**WOULD YOU USE THE WORD  
‘LOVE’ TO DESCRIBE YOUR  
RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD?**

---

<sup>12</sup> You are stepping into the mystery of life - into an understanding of who you really are. Don’t be worried if you are struggling to understand. No one can fully understand.

## **Day 3      Appreciating the love of God.**

Your need for God's help can be random and spontaneous. Sometimes it is triggered by a major tragedy in your life or in the life of someone very close to you. But God's love for us goes far beyond our immediate needs or feelings. This is why St Ignatius asks those beginning his spiritual exercises to ponder over how God cares for us and how the ways God can lead to true happiness.<sup>13</sup>

Too often God is thought of as a God of rules who is no longer relevant in today's world. In fact the opposite is true. The teachings of Jesus are filled with the joy and happiness found in family life and in friends who care about you and are always there for you. He speaks of peace and justice not violence and suppression of the other people, kindness to others not personal needs and things of the heart not things material. This does involve hard work, success and the security of possessions but it is not dominated by money, personal importance or criticism of others. It stresses sharing and enjoying not loneliness, worry, stress, uncertainty and anger. The Almighty wants to lead you on a journey which will bring real hope and confidence to the way you live. He asks you to be at peace with who you are. He offers purpose and meaning to your life and the promise that it will lead to eternity. Because the divine love is often misunderstood let us spend some time thinking about God's relationship with us and why there is pain and suffering in your world.

### **Does God really answer your prayers?**

God does answer your prayers but the divine response is not always what you hope for. On a cold wet Saturday, twelve year old John prays that his football match will not be cancelled. In the next room his parents pray with great intensity and emotion that it will be. Someone is going to miss out.

---

13 St Ignatius' traditional 30 day retreat lasts for about 30 days. Warner Larry (Journey with Jesus) explains how Ignatius' asks those beginning this retreat to spend the first few days thinking about the great love of God.

God cares for you like a parent. A child asks for a second ice-cream but the parents know that it is better to respond in a different way, perhaps with a smile or a word of love. Your God sees things a lot clearer than you do.

### **Why is there suffering and sin in the world?**

God could have created a perfect universe with humans who always loved their Creator and never made mistakes. But the Almighty wanted something far greater and meaningful. Our God created humans with powers of freedom and self-awareness. Sadly we have used this freedom to turn away from God and to destroy the happiness of others. Many many times we have failed to support the starving, protect the environment or help the weak. It is this human failure that is the cause of suffering and sin.

**“You are not  
like the rest  
of creation.  
You are able  
to choose.”**

### **A God of immense Love.** <sup>14</sup>

Even though we fail, God's love is so strong that Jesus came to bring us a share in his eternal world. It is difficult to understand how the Creator of the universe still wishes to become our friend. As humans, and especially Christians, we still have the task of working with our God to control nature and prevent wars, sickness and poverty. God has still left us free to decide how we will cope with these challenges. We can choose to make the world a place of peace or we can allow personal greed to destroy it. <sup>15</sup>

***“God is greater than our hearts, and ... knows everything”***

1 Jn 3:20).

---

14 It would be wrong to blame Adam and Eve or Satan for all the sufferings in our world. Every human now has the God given ability to make our world a better place.

15 “Someday, after mastering the winds, the waves, the tides and gravity, we shall harness for God the energies of love, and then, for a second time in the history of the world, (we) will have discovered fire” Teilhard de Chardin (*Toward the Future....*86-87).

### **Why does God still allow those we love to die?**

While we can accept that it is our free will that is the cause of sickness and human disasters, the death of a young mother or a small child is difficult to understand.

Your personal understanding of God has a deep influence on how you understand human tragedy and death. If you only think of God when you are confronted by a major tragedy perhaps you regard God as a heartless person who refuses to remove your troubles. If you think God is a loving friend who offers complete happiness in eternity but leaves you free to make your world a better place then you will have a totally different understanding of evil, suffering and death.

Believing in the friendship of God and the promise of eternity can help you to understand that God is important and does care. This belief can give you the strength (usually through others) to deal with disasters and suffering. If you could look through the gates of Heaven perhaps you would understand a little more about what your life is all about.

Jesus, in the period leading up to his death cried out: "Abba, Father... for you everything is possible. Take this cup away from me" (Mark 14:36). It was only in death that his Father granted his request. Jesus experienced human pain as we all do.

**"It is only in  
Heaven that  
we will  
experience  
true justice  
peace and  
happiness."**

***"The sufferings of this present time are not worth  
comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us"***

(Rom 8:18).

### **Why do you feel that God has abandoned you?**

Doubting is a very human experience. You do it with your friends. You do it with your family and with yourself. It is also a normal part of your relationship with your God. The gospels are filled with people who struggle. Did God abandon them? Not a bit! A mother does not turn from her child? Neither does your

God turn from you no matter what you have done or how you feel. Perhaps this is the Creator's way telling you who is ultimately in charge of your world and of your lives.

### **Fulfilling your dreams?**

You have achieved so much in your life. You are educated. You have visited many places and taken part in many different experiences. You enjoy life and the company of your friends. Some of you are in love. Some of you are proud parents. You might never attain the status of a rock singer or a sporting star, but you are always looking for new things to explore and enjoy. Making God part of your dreams can become a new exciting experience. It requires just two minutes each day, the time it takes to dress or to clean your teeth. It is a new spiritual journey which will change your life forever.

***"I can do all things through him who strengthens me"***

(Phil 4:13).

### **Our daily two minute reflection.**

Our daily two minute reflection is our central method of experiencing the divine. It provides you with a practical way of turning away from your usual thoughts and become aware of the presence of the divine. It offers a simple method of the prayer based on the spirituality of St Ignatius of Loyola and the monastic movement. You are asked to spend two minutes every day using a few words from the scriptures to listen and ponder over what God is saying to you.

Initially you might struggle to become aware of the powerful presence of God. This is not unusual as being silent and using your imagination can be a totally new experience. You can feel like someone who has never played the piano learning to play "Chop Sticks". Your first attempts can be very awkward but with time and

**"You are asked  
to turn away  
from your  
thoughts and  
wait for God to  
be present."**

perseverance you can use both hands to belt out the melody.

You usually read a book from cover to cover. Often it is a good story which compels you to find out how it ends. These pages are different. In many ways they are like the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous or an instruction book of how to lose weight or stop smoking. They require that you break with the addictions of your past and learn how to develop new ways of thinking and acting. Being repeatedly reminded to stop reading and to be silent can become very annoying. This insistence is necessary as reading alone will never remove an addiction.

This first chapter has introduced three important elements of your two minute reflection. The first is awareness. The second is repeating the name of God. The third is acquiring a deep appreciation of the love of God. All this is wonderful theory but the hard yards are still in front of you. You can learn the techniques of a new language in a couple of weeks but it takes a long time to become a fluent speaker. It is the same with becoming aware of the love of God.

***“The love of Christ ... surpasses knowledge”*** (Eph 3:18-9).

## **Two minutes alone with your Creator**

- 1 Just relax your mind and take three deep breaths.
- 2 Softly and slowly repeat the name of Jesus.
- 3 Think of the great size and magnificent universe and for two minutes ponder these words from John 1:1-3.

**In the beginning was (God)...**  
**All things came into being through him”**

When distracted, simply repeat the name of Jesus.



## ***Addition One:***

### ***Statistics on USA Christianity***

#### **1    These statistics come from three surveys compiled by the pew research centre.<sup>16</sup>**

- a)    DECLINE OF CHRISTIANITY IN USA (2019).  
pewforum.org/2019/10/17  
This is the most recent survey of Christianity in the USA. It is limited in its scope. It compares the data from the Pew 2010 and 2014 studies and indicates a decline of Christianity in the USA.
  
- b)    RELIGION-LANDSCAPE-STUDY (2014).  
pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study  
This survey compares the religious beliefs and practices of all USA citizens for the years 2007 and 2014. This is a major study with a far wider scope than the 2019 survey.
  
- c)    RELIGION AMONG THE MILLENNIALS (2010).  
pewforum.org/2010/02/17/religion-among-the-millennials  
This source compares the religious beliefs and practices of 18 to 29 year old Christians in the USA.

---

16 These surveys were generated from phone call responses covering all of the USA. Like all surveys they are limited by sample bias, accurate responses and degrees of error. They still offer a sound guide to the presence and future religious trends within American society.

There is no indication as to how these phone calls treat those who are poor or have little English. Many of these would be the legal and illegal immigrants coming from religious counties.

## 2 The major findings of the 2018/19 Pew survey.

- a) Its major conclusion is that over the last decade those calling themselves Christian have fallen from 77% of the population to 65% and that those attending Christian churches at least once a week has fallen from 37% to 31%.
- b) These figures indicate that while the number of Christians has declined, church attendance among Christians has not changed and that it is at the same level as it was in 2009.

*“The nation’s overall rate of religious attendance is declining not because Christians are attending church less often, but rather because there are now fewer Christians as a share of the population.”<sup>17</sup>*

- c) A pew 2018 survey states that “The worlds most committed Christians live in Africa, Latin America and the US” and finds that 47% of all USA citizens (Christian and non-Christian) attend worship every week.<sup>18</sup>
- d) A very worrying trend is the way young people are moving away from organised religion. It finds that only 22% of young Christians attend church weekly. Other trends indicate Protestants and Catholic numbers are down and that born again evangelical Christians remain constant.<sup>19</sup>

---

17 Pew survey (2019), section entitled “Among Christians, little change in rates of church attendance”.

18 Pew survey “A Changing World: Global Views on Diversity, Gender Equality, Family Life and the Importance of Religion” (2018).

19 The 2010/ 2014 surveys provide more detail.

- a) 25% are Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, Lutheran belong to the Evangelical Protestant communities
- b) 14% are Presbyterian, Methodist, Baptist, Lutheran belong to Mainline Protestant communities
- c) 21% belong to the Catholic community.
- d) 7% belong to the Historically Black communities

### **3 FINDINGS OF THE 2010 AND 2014 PEW SURVEYS.**

These two surveys reveal that young Christians have the same beliefs as older Christians. The figures do not indicate how these beliefs affect their lives. The questions were not covered in the Pew 2018/19 survey.

All USA Citizens	18-29 year old Christians	Christians of every age
Prayer	75%	71%
Reading the scriptures	45%	45%
Eternity	75%	74%
Heaven	74%	74%
Hell	62%	59%
Miracles	78%	79%
Angels / demons	67%	68%

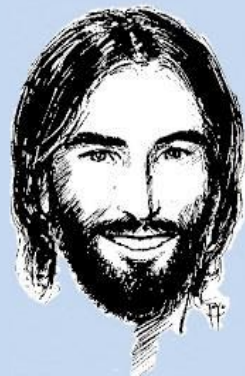
The percentage of practicing Christians has not changed. The fall in the number of practicing Young Christians over the last 10 years could have been filled by people who immigrate to the USA.



## Chapter two

# ***The Friendship of Jesus***

*It was the friendship of their Prince  
which captured their hearts.  
He shared in their lives and helped  
them in many ways.  
Together they looked after  
the horses and dug potatoes.  
They would sit and sip coffee  
and discuss the weather.  
He reached out to the young and to the old,  
to the rich and the poor.  
He brought a new hope to a divided people.  
The people still live with  
the wonder of his presence.  
They long for the day  
when they will be together,  
For the whole world knows  
that their friendship  
is eternal.*



## **Day 4: The friendship of Jesus.**

### **Praying to Jesus?**

The Christian tradition recognizes Jesus as the human, tangible presence of God. The Second Vatican Council speaks about Jesus as “the invisible God” who treats us as his friends and “moves among us” <sup>20</sup>

The astonishing truth is that God has revealed himself in Jesus and entered our world to bring us eternal life. That is why we call Jesus our Lord and our Savior. As the risen Lord he lives on in our hearts using us to spread his message of love to the entire world.

A Google search ‘praying to Jesus’ reveals many well-known prayers directed to Jesus. Praying to Jesus has a central place within the Protestant tradition. Seeking him in the scriptures is one of the great pillars of their belief. Praying to Jesus is also a very important part of Catholic devotion.

It is interesting to observe the expansion in those Evangelical Communities which focus on the friendship of Jesus. Perhaps this is telling us something about the spiritual needs of today’s Christians. Our approach is to set our awareness of Jesus within the biblical and theological traditions of Catholic and Mainline Protestants. This allows us to demonstrate how many of the popular and appealing elements of the Evangelical Traditions are present in the structures and beliefs of traditional Christianity. <sup>21</sup>

**“The invisible  
God who  
treats us as  
his friends  
and moves  
among us.”**

---

<sup>20</sup> Vac 11, Divine Revelation 2.

<sup>21</sup> Catholic theologians as diverse as Kasper, Schillebecckx, McBrien, and Rahner do not discuss praying to Jesus. It is also neglected by biblical scholars like Schnackenburg, Wright, Dunn, Brown and Fitzmyer. Our emphasis on being aware of Jesus reflects a pastoral and spiritual approach to the divine rather than a balanced theological understanding of God.

### **The friendship of Jesus.**

If you are part of 21<sup>st</sup> century Christianity, you will probably think of Jesus as a human person who walked your earth and lives on in your life. You have fond memories of him and most of you still consider him to be divine.<sup>22</sup>

Our aim is to provide ways of experiencing the friendship of Jesus within your heart. This is especially helpful to many of our young who have been kidnapped by the bright lights of the material world. Your two minute reflection is the most practical way of developing this deeper relationship. This is a time when you seek an awareness of the amazing presence of Jesus, listen to him in the words of the scriptures and learn to experience his friendship.

Friendship is different from knowledge. A person can obtain a PhD by researching the life of Hitler or Julius Caesar and never think about them as friends. Gaining knowledge can be something of a hobby. Throughout your lives you have been programmed to absorb information and enjoy learning new things. Knowledge clarifies who you are and provides you with a sense of achievement. In friendship, what you feel becomes just as important as what you think or know.

**“Friendship  
is different  
from  
knowledge.”**

Friendship begins when you share your thoughts with another person. Past experiences play a major part in developing human friendships. Many of you carry vivid memories of the way you were loved by your parents and enjoyed the company of your friends. Sometimes friendship just happens. You click with someone and over time you begin to speak to them about the things you have in common or about personal things in your life. Friends are important to you. You enjoy being with them and they enjoy being with you. They often dominate what you do and how you think and feel. This is the type of friendship that we seek with Jesus.

---

<sup>22</sup> The majority of 21<sup>st</sup> century American Christians we spoke to believe that Jesus is Divine. It is difficult to find accurate statistical data on this subject.

**A friendship filled with human feelings.<sup>23</sup>**

Friendship usually involves human feelings. This is the friendship present in a loving family. It is that love that exists between a husband and wife and their children. It is the bond of joy which is present when you share a meal at Thanksgiving or Christmas or talk to those you love on the telephone. Some of you have a real strong bond with your pets, your hobbies or your favourite sporting team.

Possessing this type of friendship is very natural and human. This is the type of friendship which Jesus had with his disciples. Your personal friendship with Jesus can be very similar. It is the simple awareness that he is always with you and will always care for you.

It's really important that you become aware of the kindness of God. God is not a policeman who will punish you. Your God wants to be part of your life and to share in your dreams. Your God does not take away your freedom or stop you making bad decisions, but God will always smile upon you with the concern of a friend. By listening to what Jesus has to say to you and appreciating what he has done for you, you can make his friendship as real and tangible as it is with your other friends. The great advantage is that deep within, you want this to happen.

**“The feelings we  
are speaking  
about are  
those which  
are present  
in a loving  
family.”**

**“May the Lord ....give you peace at all times in all ways”**

(2 Thess 3:16).

---

<sup>23</sup> In chapter one, pages 18-20, we spoke about how emotions and feelings are today's chosen method of advertising and how Christian families in the United States share their personal feelings about the divine with their children. We are simply applying this way of thinking to the way we pray.

The power of revealing these personal thoughts and feelings in the education of our young is discussed more fully in chapter three.



**Friendship depends on awareness and the ability to listen.**

An old nun was very sick. She would not drink the milk the doctor had prescribed for her. To make it more enjoyable the other sisters decided to add a little whiskey to the milk. She began to love her glass of milk and looked forward to it each

day. Her final words before she died were, "Whatever you do, do not sell that cow". Now she had the spirit! In becoming aware of Jesus you are seeking another spirit - the Spirit of God which will fill you with the fire and energy of the divine.

**"The heart and soul of prayer is about awareness and listening."**

The following chapters will ask you to listen to Jesus as you listen to your other friends. The emphasis will

be on neglecting your own thoughts and concentrate on what Jesus is saying to you. Failing to listen to Jesus is like skiing without skis.

Awareness of the divine and the ability to listen are the two great pillars which lead to the friendship of God. They complement and support each other. Awareness of God makes listening easier and listening deepens awareness.

If it has been a long time since you have thought about the presence of Jesus your initial experience can be hollow and empty. In your first attempts you may lack any appreciation of how Jesus speaks to you but if you persevere, all this can change. Awareness of Jesus

only comes by continually being still, thinking of your human image and then repeating the word 'Jesus'. Difficult journeys can lead to beautiful places.

Within the Christian tradition the roads to God are many. Our approach to prayer is especially useful for those Christians who are struggling to pray. Once the Almighty becomes real to you all methods of prayer becomes an unending goldmine.

**"Failure to listen to Jesus is like skiing without skis."**

### **Father Joe.**

You don't know Father Joe. He is an American priest. The American summer is hot, hot. Joe comes home about five or six o'clock. He is a big man but he is not big all over. It's mainly round his middle. Joe sits outside on a seat at the bottom of the garden. He provides himself with coffee and a cream bun (sometimes two!) and watches the sun go down. He just imagines Jesus is with him, repeats the word Jesus and listens to him speak through a scriptural verse. Sometimes he tells his friend about the people who were part of his day. Usually he just listens. He always seems to need a haircut and does not look very holy. If you asked him what he was doing he would reply, 'Just having a yarn'.

### **A Friend Within.**

You do not develop friends by reading a book on friendship. You must get out and communicate with people. You must listen to them and speak to them and eventually be happy in their company. Seeking the divine is exactly the same. There is a very wise American saying: 'You cannot play golf by reading or listening. At some stage you need to pick up the stick.'

**"You cannot  
play golf by  
reading.  
At some stage  
you need to  
pick up the  
stick."**

Put down the book. Become aware of your God.  
Listen to Jesus speaking to you. His words are as  
real as the ground you are standing on. (2 minutes)

***"I called you friends"*** (Jn 15:15).

***"You are my friend"*** (John 15:14).

When distracted just repeat the name Jesus.

## **Day 5: Images of a human God.**

### **The power of imagination.**

One of your most precious human gifts is the ability to imagine. It enriches your appreciation of music, films, books, videos and television. It allows you to enjoy the beauty of art, the mysteries of science and the wonders of nature. You often use your imagination to appreciate the love of your family and friends.

The senior citizens of today grew up without television. They would listen to the football on the radio and imagine the excitement as their receiver runs 20 yards for a touchdown. In their minds they had a vivid picture of the way the players and crowd were reacting. They could almost smell the grass.

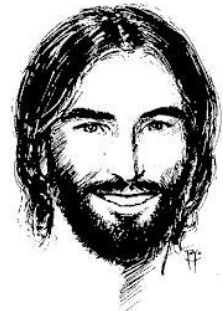
**“Your  
imagination  
is a great and  
precious  
gift.”**

### **Images of a human God.**

Imagination is at the very heart of our method of prayer. This gift helps you to create a mental image of Jesus which increases your awareness and your ability to listen to your God. As you continue through this book it will remain an important tool in developing your own unique way of being aware of your Creator.

***“He is the image of the invisible God”*** (Col 1:15).

As humans, you often use images to focus on the people you are thinking about or talking to. People in love enjoy looking into each other's eyes but usually details are not important. You treasure photos of your family and friends which no longer resemble their present appearance. Sometimes you will create an image of someone you have never met like a stranger on the phone or a character in a book. Very seldom do you have face to face contact with famous actors or sporting personalities but you still enjoy reading about them, thinking about them and



talking about them. You have never met Jesus in the flesh but this does not stop you from pondering over what he looks like and what he means to you.

We all use images in different ways. There is no right or wrong way. Some prefer to imagine Jesus with a particular face, perhaps looking directly at them with human expressions of laughter or concern. Others are aware of the closeness of his human figure or of the cosmic Jesus of the universe who is watching over you. Your image of Jesus can come from a picture or statue or a scene from the scriptures. The Christian tradition is filled with many different images of your Savior.

When you look at a statue of the Mother of God, you don't jump up and down and yell 'But that's not accurate'. You know it is just an image of Mary which helps you to focus on her presence.

What about taking some time now to think about your own personal image of Jesus and the kind of personality you imagine he possesses? Try focusing on his eyes and how he is looking at you. Let yourself imagine the sound of his voice. Strive to capture his feelings and the way he cares about you. There are two great advantages in this way of

thinking. Firstly it helps you to focus on the presence of your God. Secondly your image of Jesus will also be very useful as you continual to seek new ways of experiencing his life and listening to him speaking to you through his sacred book.

**“When you look  
at a statue of  
Mary you don’t  
jump up and down  
and yell ‘that’s  
not accurate.’”**

### **Joy Cowley.** <sup>24</sup>

Joy Cowley in her beautiful poem “Sacred Silence” provides you with a powerful way of putting aside your daily thoughts and using your imagination to become aware of your God.

---

<sup>24</sup> Joy Cowley (NZ Marist.... June 2, 2009), 21).

*“As we come near holy ground,  
we undress our minds  
and lay the garments of habitation  
at the side of the road.  
We do not carry the judgments  
that we place on others and ourselves.  
We let fall out notions of evil,  
our desire for goodness.  
These too, must go by the way.  
Next we take off our religious shoes,  
all those ideas about worship,  
and the words we use to measure God.  
They have a place in our lives  
but not in this inner sanctum.  
Do we feel naked?  
Do we feel vulnerable?  
Then it is time to proceed,  
bare and simple to the place  
where we will be clothed  
in the radiance of love  
far beyond human thought.”*

### **Daydreaming.**

Daydreaming is another important way of developing the friendship of your God. Many times during the day you can find yourself daydreaming over your future activities or your dealings with others. You can decide what you want to daydream about but usually it is unintentional and spontaneous. Daydreaming is a little like watching TV or a movie. It is usually relaxing and enjoyable and allows you to escape from the pressures of the world. Daydreaming often involves the feelings of the heart. You can smile as you hum the words of a popular song or feel the pleasure of planning what you are going to do or say. It's fun to dream.

This makes daydreaming an exciting setting for becoming aware of Jesus.

**“This is an  
exciting  
setting for  
becoming  
aware of  
Jesus.”**

When you feel the urge or if you feel you need his help, just think of Jesus and repeat his name. Daydreaming about Jesus requires just a flick of the mind. It's quick and easy. Feel good about yourself and know that you are not alone. Don't daydream for long but do it often.

The difference between planning and daydreaming	
Planning is..... Intentional Organized Focuses on people or activities Usually requires logic Needs concentration	Daydreaming is..... Often unintentional It just happens Loosing yourself in your thoughts Often centered on feelings All about imagination

### Coping with distractions

Our thoughts are often controlled by the great river of life. Its currents push you forward and control your days with so many thoughts and activities. If you wish to find the invisible God in these turbulent waters you need to quietly take yourself down below the surface of the water where the world has less importance and where silence and stillness reigns. It is in this quiet world of life that God can enter your thoughts and become present as a friend. Now it's time to pray.

Breathe deeply. Think of your image of Jesus. Slowly repeat his name. Read these scriptural words a number of times:

**Listen to Jesus say "I chose you"** (John 15:16).

Become aware of the magic which is Jesus

Does he care for you? (2 minutes)

When distracted, gently and slowly repeat my name

## **DAY 6: More on listening to Jesus.**

Prayer is about speaking and listening to the divine. Few would disagree with this statement but in practice the listening part of prayer is often ignored or neglected.

It is easy to recite prayers or sing hymns and not be aware of the presence of God. Everyone is guilty of this. Listening is totally different from speaking. It demands your full attention and has little room for your daily thoughts. Listening is a time when God's thoughts dominate yours. It is about receiving the wisdom of the divine.

**“You can use words to speak to Jesus and never be aware of his presence.”**

Listening to Jesus is not about hearing the sound of his voice. It involves all the human ways in

which we listen in our daily lives. A person can speak to you through a novel or a film and allow their thoughts to flow into your soul. Listening can involve becoming conscious of what a person is feeling or appreciating what they have done for you. You are often inspired by paintings, quotations or the actions of people you have never met. You listen to your friends speak to you through twitter, emails, texts and letters. Ideas and memories are not limited to words.

Using the scriptures to listen to Jesus is very similar to many of the ways that we listen. It simply requires that you put aside those thoughts which are filling your mind and allow the thoughts of God to possess you.

**The divine speaks to you in silence, in memories, in nature, in other people and in many other ways.”**

### **Listening to Jesus in the scriptures.**

In over 90 occasions the sacred word invites you to 'listen'. Listening to Jesus speaking to you through his inspired words is at the heart of our method of prayer.

***"This is my Son, my chosen; listen to him!"*** (Luke 9:35).

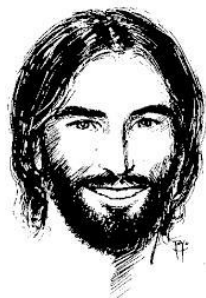
***"Listen to me, all of you, and understand"*** (Mark 7:14).

Only a few scriptural words are needed. It is the presence of Jesus and his divine friendship which brings power and meaning to his words. His words lead you away from your personal ideas about the Christian faith and set your thoughts towards what Jesus is saying to you. They open your heart to

**"Once you can  
listen to  
Jesus, then  
you are in the  
clover."**

the sometimes illogical and mysterious world of God. By listening to Jesus you are able to ponder over what he means to you, what he has done for you and what he asks of you. It allows your awareness of Jesus to become more concrete and alive. It deepens your friendship and draws you closer together. Once you are able to listen to Jesus, then you are in the clover.

Listening is made easier by using the various techniques discussed earlier. They involve being silent, letting go of your thoughts, thinking of your image of Jesus, repeating his name, using your imagination and knowing that Jesus is your friend. You do not need a big brain, but you do need a big heart. Your two minute reflection provides a daily framework in which you can listen to your God. In future chapters we will look more deeply into the ways you can become aware of the living voice of your Creator.





**So what have we spoken about so far?**

- 1 Awareness of God  
Being aware of God is not something that 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians find easy. It asks you to put aside your personal thoughts, relax in silence, and focus on the mysterious unseen God of the universe who is present with you.
- 2 A God who is human.  
When you think of another human you automatically form an image of what they look like. Forming a personal image of Jesus is no different. Even though you know your image comes from your imagination it is still a very powerful way of becoming conscious of your God.
- 3 Becoming friends with Jesus  
You know many things about Jesus from the memories of your past and from what he has done and said in the scriptures. Becoming friends with Jesus is very similar to the way you become friends with other human beings. He can become someone you can laugh with and enjoy. Someone you can share your thoughts with. Jesus is someone you can trust and respect, a person who will always help you.
- 4 Listening to Jesus in the scriptures.  
Friendship only exists if you are able to listen. This involves waiting for your God to speak. When you listen to Jesus speaking you are challenged with many questions. Why is he is saying this to me? What is he feeling? Why is he interested in me? What does he think of me? Can I appreciate the wonder of his presence? Silence is a positive activity. Jesus often speaks very softly. Sometimes you need to be very silent and listen very intently. Listening to Jesus in the scriptures is a central theme of this book.
- 5 The two minute reflection.  
Turning these ideas into practice in your fast-moving world is the difficult part. This is the reason why you are virtually coerced and pressured into spending two minutes each day pondering over the bond that exists between you and your God. Completing your daily reflection is a must, as old

habits are difficult to remove and new habits just as difficult to acquire.

The two minute reflection asks you to begin by being silent, focusing on the human image of Jesus, slowly and quietly repeating his holy name. The next stage is to listen to Jesus through a word or phrase from the scriptures. It is through listening with imagination and wonder that you can slowly become aware of the great friendship of your God. You need to pray this way every day. It simply involves wondering about the God who is with you.

6 Enjoy the presence of Jesus.

It does not matter if you are a bulletproof 17 year old or a 77 year old grandparent who cannot travel far without a walking stick; it is the things that you enjoy that occupy your time. Some of you know far more about console games than Einstein. Some of you can name all the major players in the NFL and AFL. Some of you are experts on cars, wines or race horses. Pleasure often dominates how you spend your time.

7 Dealing with distractions.

Being pestered with other thoughts is a perfectly natural experience. Your mind naturally travels back into the world you have just left. This can happen many times during your two minutes. Prayer is always an up and down ride and often your efforts can feel like failure. The simple answer is to put them to one side and gently repeat the word 'Jesus'.

8 Real effort is needed.

Being truly aware of Jesus and developing a bond of friendship with him can be extremely demanding and can take a long time, but it has a reward far greater than winning lottery. It is eternal. Acquiring these skills is very similar to becoming proficient in a particular sport, a musical instrument or a new language. As the Chinese say 'A journey of a thousand miles begins with one step'. The best way is your way. Make it your mission. Be like a marathon runner. Never give up.

**It only takes two minutes.**

Your two minutes can help you to discover your roots, straighten out your DNA and prepare you for the future. Sometimes inner peace is a dream which you would love to experience but seldom obtain. Genuine awareness of the Almighty can produce the same results as Pilates, meditation or yoga.

A business woman was required to travel from New York to Washington once a month. Because she hated flying she rewarded herself each flight with a packet of chocolate biscuits. One particular morning she was pleased to obtain an aisle seat. The chocolate biscuits rested on the empty middle seat. When she took her first biscuit during takeoff the man in the window seat also took a biscuit. She took another and so did he. She was getting really angry. Eventually there was only one biscuit left. He reached over, broke it in half and took his half. When the plane landed she was all ready to follow him out and give him a piece of her mind. As she rose to take her hand luggage out of the top locker, something fell. It was her packet of chocolate biscuits. It is often the other person's biscuits which give you enjoyment. Enjoyment frequently comes from people close to you. It's time for two minutes with your God.

Smile. Be loose. Take three large breaths.  
Think of your image of Jesus. Slowly repeat his name.  
Read these scriptural words a number of times:

***"It is Christ who lives in me"*** (Gal 2:20).

What is in the mind of Jesus Christ?

**Listen** to what Jesus is saying to you?

Why do you think you are important to your God?

When distracted, repeat your sacred word.

## **Addition two**

### ***The Cosmic Redeemer of the Universe.***

Your personal friendship with Jesus can be deeply enriched by pondering over how Jesus, your redeemer, was there at the creation of the world and is now part of that divine creative power which holds our universe together. Let's consider for a few moments the complexity of God's material world. You will need all the imagination you possess.

If a simple atom was expanded to the size of a football field then its nucleus would be one centimetre in diameter. Imagine the distance between the nucleus and the electron, the speed of an electron as it moves around its nucleus and the tremendous force which hold the atom together. This force is so strong that splitting certain atoms can cause an explosion which could destroy a large city. There are billions and billions of these atoms in one grain of sand and a grain of sand is a minute segment of our vast material universe. Your God is the mighty all powerful Creator who used these atoms to design a universe with over 1000 billion Galaxies each with about 100 billion stars comprising of billions and billions of invisible atoms. (These are USA billions). Your Creator has provided you with a small planet which is in continual motion receiving heat from the sun and 900 million tons of water every minute which rises to the heavens and falls back to the earth as rain. This makes for splendid rivers and mountains which offer a dwelling place for magnificent trees

**Without  
God's love  
there  
would be  
no earth.**

**You would  
have  
nothing  
and be  
nobody**

and animals. Our planet is spinning around the sun, not moving too close to overheat nor too far away to be lost in space. Imagine the forces involved in controlling the paths of our earth, our sun and the many other heavenly masses. Only the divine could produce this world of love, energy and movement in which children can laugh and civilizations develop.

But this is just the beginning of the story. God decided to become part of our world. Jesus became the incarnation of God taking a human form, making earth his home and sharing in our joys and sorrows.

You are a vital part of this unbelievable drama. You are seeking a God who has come to be your friend and who wants you to make your world a better place.

This is the Cosmic Christ, your Redeemer who continues today to be part of everything that exists. This is the God who created an incredible, complex universe with mind-boggling movement and energy. Amazement is too short a word.

If you are able to capture within your mind God's mighty role in creating and sustaining the universe, then you will possess a much richer and deeper understanding of Jesus. Without the Cosmic Christ, you and what you are would never be. <sup>25</sup>

**Jesus Christ is  
the “plan for the  
fullness of time,  
to gather up all  
things in him,  
things in heaven  
and things on  
earth”**

Eph 1:10

---

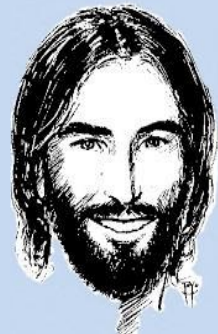
<sup>25</sup> We are not saying everything is God. We are simply affirming that God is present in everything. Our emphasis on the close friendship of Jesus does not mean that we can understand God. Jesus is both immanent (close and personal) and transcendent (beyond our thoughts and imagination).



## Chapter Three

# ***A man from Galilee***

*Their Prince was much more than a ruler.  
He was their friend.  
He understood their hopes and dreams.  
He left them free to accept his ways and  
slowly they came to believe in his wisdom.  
His kindness extended to  
everybody without exception.  
He brought smiles to the young,  
hope to those who had nothing,  
and security to the old.  
The people still live with the  
wonder of his presence.  
They long for the day when  
they will be together.  
For the whole world  
knows that their  
friendship is eternal.*



**An introduction to the next seven chapters.**

In the next seven chapters Jesus will speak to you in the first person. At first this might seem unusual but when you think about it God speaks directly to you in many ways. Praying the scriptures is one example. Reading prayers like “Footsteps” is another. Our hope is that this approach will reinforce your awareness of Jesus and help you to understand how he speaks to you in a human way. The words placed on the lips of Jesus in the following chapters are only the author’s interpretation of his thoughts. Some might feel they do not accurately reflect the mind of Jesus and the teachings of the scriptures and they may well be right. Again, our purpose is not to provide precise biblical knowledge; rather it is to experience the close presence of a friend. <sup>26</sup>

**“Christians  
have always  
believed that  
God speaks  
through the  
scriptures.”**

If you find the mystery and greatness of the divine in words like ‘Almighty’, ‘God’ or ‘Creator’ there is nothing wrong using your preferred word for the divine rather than ‘Jesus’.

**“Praying to God  
as our Lord and  
Creator will  
always remain  
central to our  
faith.”**

---

<sup>26</sup> The gospels normally refer to Jesus by his first name ‘Jesus’. The rest of the New Testament, all written after the resurrection, speaks of ‘Jesus Christ’. These two ways of referring to Jesus will be discussed in Addition four, p. 97-98.



## ***Day 7 Enter the divine.***

Hi. My name is Jesus. Many years ago we were quite close. Lately we have lost track with each other. I would really enjoy getting to know you again and renewing our friendship. Let me begin by speaking to you about the things in my heart. Then perhaps you could tell me a little about yourself. These words were not written by me but I hope they summarize the message that I want you to hear.

As you know I am God. I have no trouble creating stars and the beautiful things of nature, but what I would like from you is something different. I would like you to freely accept my friendship. This is the reason I became a human being. You are perfectly free to ignore my presence or just think of me once in a while, but if you do decide to become my friend you will become far more precious to me than any of my other creations.

### **Being a human being.**

I was always God, but I chose to become a human being and live the same way as you do. The scriptures tell you how I “emptied” myself “taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness” (Phil 2:7) and how I “increased in wisdom, in years, and in divine and human favor” (Luke 2:52).<sup>27</sup>

I was born in a stable and experienced the joys and frustrations of growing into an adult. I knew what it was like to be hungry. I never had my own room and I can remember complaining that I had nowhere to lay my head (Luke 9:58). I slept on the ground and travelled on foot. Like you, I was tempted to turn away from the world of God and to seek the material pleasures and praise of others. This happened when I was tempted in the desert (Mark 1:13), when Peter wanted to make me the Messiah (Mark 8:30) and during my agony on the cross (Mark 15:34).

I possessed the same emotions and problems which you experience. I remember weeping over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41-44)

---

<sup>27</sup> At some stage in his life the human Jesus probably came to realize that he was a prophet who promised eternal life to all humans and eventually the Messiah who was sent by the Father to make this possible. The human nature of Jesus is discussed at the end of this chapter.

and when Lazarus died (John 11:35). I became very angry with the sellers at the temple (Mark 19:45-46). I was called “a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners” (Matt 11:19). Some of my relatives thought I was out of my mind (Mark 3:21). I liked talking to people and enjoyed parties. I made friends and was happy in their company. I knew what it was like to be tired. Sometimes I got frustrated with people and became uncertain about my future. I had to work out the way I should live my life. Eventually this meant doing my Father’s will and dying a horrible death. Even in death my friends left me.

I should also explain that there are a lot of things about me which you will never comprehend. My divinity will always be a mystery to you. An IQ of 2000 would not help you to understand. Your knowledge about my 30 odd years on earth is limited to four short gospel stories. There are many gaps. You do not know what I look liked or what food I enjoyed. This does not matter. Being a friend goes deeper than knowledge.

**“I want you  
to know that  
I have  
experienced  
all your  
dreams and  
all your  
sorrows.”**

### **Dominated by God’s presence.**

If you asked me what was the motivating force in my human life I would reply that it was my awareness of God. I did not address my God in the traditional Jewish way. I used the Jewish expression Abba which you translate as Father. There is only one time when I did not call God Abba. This was my cry to God just before I died on the cross: “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Mark 15:34 uses the Aramaic Eloi, Eloi. Matt 27:46 uses the Hebrew Eli, Eli).<sup>28</sup>

God was not someone who lived far away or who punished humans. God was close to me. Abba was the center of my life. For over 25 years I called Joseph Abba. This was the way all Jewish children addressed their father. The same Hebrew word

---

<sup>28</sup> The Abba experience was the source of his strength, the center of his message and foundation of his life. Edward Schillebecckx (*Jesus....* 56).

is used by the Jewish children of today. I never thought of God as a human being. My Jewish faith prevented me from thinking of God in this way (Deut 4:15-20). Perhaps I saw in Joseph the kindness, strength and generosity which reminded me of Abba's love.

***“Abba, Father, for you all things are possible”*** (Mark 14:36).

Prayer was very important to me. I often spent time being alone with my Abba. My friendship with my Abba reflected the intimate and close friendship which all human beings should have with their God. I knew that my Abba was always there. Abba was my best friend. My prayer was simply being aware of Abba's presence. I knew we would always be together and I knew that my Abba would show me how I could bring the love of God to the human race.<sup>29</sup>

***“He got up and went out to a deserted place,  
and there he prayed”*** (Mark 1:35).

I was lucky in that I was guided by the Spirit of God. My conception came through the power of the Spirit (Matt 1:18) and I was baptized (Mark 1:10-11) and anointed (Luke 4:16) by the Spirit. You too have been given the same gift. You too have the power of Abba inside you.

### **My Jewish faith.**

My Jewish faith was important to me. It possessed many meaningful customs and rituals which brought me closer to the Creator. I followed the Jewish customs of fasting and almsgiving (Matt 6:1-18) and I also observed temple worship walking the 90 odd miles to Jerusalem for the Passover festivals. Most of my thoughts have their origins in my Jewish background and in the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament).

Three gospels record how I combined the great Jewish prayer, the ‘Schema’ of Deuteronomy 4:6 with a second command of

---

<sup>29</sup> The gospels often tell us about Jesus praying alone: Mark 1:35; 6:46 par, Matt 14:23, Luke 3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18; 9:28; 22:31.

love found in Leviticus 19:18. I knew that this is the way my Abba wanted me to live. These two commandments would occupy a central place in my preaching.

***“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these’”.*** (Mark 12:30-31, Matt 22:37-39, Luke 10:27).

Like today’s Christianity, my Jewish world possessed different religious groups. There were Pharisees, Sadducees, Scribes, Priests, Herodians and Essenes.<sup>30</sup> I spent time with some of their leaders. We ate together and argued about how we should live our Jewish faith. We all wanted to bring Israel closer to God but there were major differences in our approach.

I made friends with the poor, with women and with the Samaritans. I shared meals with tax collectors and sinners. I objected to the way both worship and the law were being used for personal status and gain. This is one of the reasons why I attacked the sellers at the Temple. Many of the leaders of Israel believed that these ways of acting were in conflict with their Jewish faith. They criticized my disciples for eating their food with unclean hands (Mark 7:5) and for failing to fast (Mark 2:18-21). Many regarded my views as that of an untrained carpenter’s son who was moving about the towns and villages criticizing their traditional beliefs. It’s no wonder they struggled to understand me.<sup>31</sup>

**“Many  
regarded my  
views as that of  
an untrained  
carpenter’s  
son”.**

<sup>30</sup> These groups will be discussed at the end of this chapter.

<sup>31</sup> Some Pharisees preached the need to follow the laws of the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) while Jesus stressed friendship and complete dependence on the presence of God. Jesus pointed out how the Pharisees would break their laws and save their son if he fell down a well on the Sabbath (Luke 14:5).

### **Reaching out.**

My followers came from many different backgrounds. Some were fishermen. Some were housewives. Telling them about my Father was not as easy as speaking about a friend at a wedding or a birthday. I needed to explain how the presence of Abba brought to their lives a new reality and how their lives were changed forever. It had a little to do with knowledge and a lot to do with humble acceptance and the opening of their hearts to God. I spent time getting them to wonder about God for I knew that when humans became aware of God, they would pray. My message was a message of friendship which had no boundaries. I wanted people to be overwhelmed with the eternal love of my Father.

I found myself preaching to a people consumed with money and material possessions. I was often frustrated and angry with their lack of faith and understanding. You know how easy it is to put all your efforts into improving yourself, making money and buying new things. The people of Israel were the same.

I told them how getting to heaven with money was as difficult as putting a camel through the eye of a needle (Mark 10:25) and then explained how everything is possible for God. There is nothing wrong with material things. It's just that they can consume your time and energy and prevent you from becoming aware of your God. This is one reason why I praised the poor as the ones closest to my Abba (Matt 5:3).

### **Commitment.**

All these things I have spoken about will only become real if you spend time each day wondering over how they apply to your life. Spending two minutes with me each day seems a light load but it does require real personal commitment. You are a bit like Harry Potter or Luke Skywalker. You have power in your mind and in your heart and in your bones. It is the power and presence of God. Like these two heroes, you are asked to fight with obstacles and personal attachments so that you can discover the true meaning of your life.

**“You will  
need Harry  
Potter’s  
courage.”**

Many of you know what it is like to diet. No hamburgers or chips in an effort to restore that beautiful body you once possessed. You know how difficult it is to fulfill your dreams. Success often involves times of failure and sometimes weeks, even years, of commitment and hard work.

The big danger is you can reflect on God's kindness for a few weeks or months and then other things can fill your minds and your daily awareness of God can drop off your activity list. It is easy when you are tired or suffer from overload to slip back into your old ways. You need to remember that however long is the night; the dawn will bring new light. You will need Harry Potter's perseverance, courage and determination.

All this sounds a bit like the way a sports coach talks to his or her team at half time. Well I spoke to my friends in a similar way. We are not playing friendly here. This is about you and your God and your future.

### **Time to listen to me.**

Smile. Relax. Breathe deeply. You are with a friend.  
Think of your image of me and repeat my name.  
Read this verse a couple of times.

**"In my Father's house there are  
many dwelling places"** (John 14:2).

#### **Listen to me.....**

I am speaking about your future.

#### **Listen to me.....**

I am speaking about why I became a human being.

#### **Listen and wonder.....**

Just allow Jesus to be with you.

## Day 8 The kingdom of God.

### The Kingdom of God.

I had a remarkable message. My presence on earth had brought the unconditional love of God to the human race. I needed to find a way of explaining my Abba's new presence in human life. I chose as my central theme the Jewish idea of 'Kingdom'. As I did with the word

The words Jesus speaks are the subjective words of the author. The genuine words of Jesus are only found in the scriptures.

Abba, I developed and modified the meaning of kingdom to reflect the new friendship which my father was offering. This new kingdom is not about battles or castles. It was centered on the new spiritual presence and power of God.<sup>32</sup>

I spoke with joy and excitement about how my Abba wanted to enter the hearts of all his people and lead them to eternity. It was a message of hope to a broken people, especially those tied to a life of uncertainty and turmoil. I told my friends how my Father's kingdom was not just the property of the learned. It is a gift which everyone could receive: the good the bad and the doubting. This new experience was totally different from anything human history had encountered.<sup>33</sup>

***"The kingdom of God has come to you"*** (Luke 11:20).

***"The kingdom of God is among you"*** (Luke 17:21).

---

32 The Jewish people knew about the Kingdom of David. They longed for the time when Israel would again be strong. Jesus' idea of the kingdom was radically different. It can be described as the unconditional love of the Father for all humanity made visible in the person of Jesus. See John Fuellenbach (*The Kingdom....* 235) and Joseph Fitzmyer (*A Christological....* 48ff).

The term occurs 120 times in the Gospels and is found 90 times on the lips of Jesus. Jesus uses the word 'Church' only twice (Matt 16:18 & 18:17).

33 When his disciples asked Jesus how they should pray, Jesus responded with the prayer we now know as the Our Father (Matt 6:9ff//Luke 11:2ff).

Matthew's prayer focused on the two great beliefs which dominated his life. He begins by praising his loving God whom he called 'Abba'. We translate this word as 'Father'. He then calls on his Father to bring God's 'kingdom of Heaven' to our world. He concludes by asking his Father to help us (give us our daily bread), to forgiving us (as we forgive others) and to protect us (from temptation and evil). The Our Father is discussed on page 148.

**God's kingdom explained through parables.** <sup>34</sup>

It was natural for me to use parables to speak about my Father's kingdom. As Jews, we belonged to a story telling culture. Preachers often used stories with interesting characters and everyday activities to explain their teachings. Notice the great variety of subjects and characters and the down to earth approach to my message.

**“ My parables  
are stories  
about the  
presence of  
the divine.”**

My parables are far more than stories. They are vivid lessons which proclaim how the Kingdom of my Abba will reign forever in the hearts of all believers and how there can be real consequences for those who neglect this invitation. They speak about my eternal friendship and inspire you to observe my two great commandments: You must learn to love the Lord your God and you must love your neighbor as yourself (Mk 12:30-31). These stories have been beacons of wisdom and inspiration which have offered Christians unique and beautiful insights into the way they should respond to the presence of the divine in their lives. <sup>35</sup>

The power and drama of these stories will only emerge if you are fully aware that I am speaking directly to you. Praying my parables and sayings is about listening to a friend. It is also about placing yourself inside the stories. You are the ground on which the sower sows. You are a wicked tenant who places your needs before those of your master. You are a laborer in the vineyard. You need to become the Good Samaritan. You need to seek the treasure of life. You are the lost sheep and the lost son whom God seeks to save.

---

34 The greatest parable is the presence of Jesus. His life has brought us the friendship of God and this friendship is eternity.

35 The parables also remind us that each one of us must help to bring the kingdom of God to earth. As our God has shown us kindness and mercy, we too must show kindness and mercy in our approach to poverty, human rights, violence, a sustainable environment and wars between nations.

A beautiful summary of the way we should live the parables is found in the Matthew's beatitudes (Matt 5:1-10). See page 148.





**Explaining God's Kingdom through words and sayings.**

I want you to imagine me preaching in the city streets and on country roads to all who would listen to me. Those passing were taking animals or food to the market or hurrying home to prepare their evening meal. The scene would have been filled with the noise of people and animals. Like all public preachers I needed to use words and sayings which would capture people's imagination and make them stop and listen. Most of my sayings are easy to understand and have the same clear message as my parables. Sometimes I exaggerated and used hyperbole as many human preachers do. You know what a person means when they tell you it is 'raining cats and dogs' or 'I could eat a horse and the hoofs as well'. You do not take what they say literally but you can catch the humor in their words and realize how they are exaggerating to emphasis their message.

**"I often used  
hyperbole  
in my  
preaching."**

Now in my preaching I exaggerated with expressions which my Jewish friends would find interesting and sometimes funny. Some of these sayings remind you that I am a human who laughs as you do.<sup>36</sup>

***"Why do you see the speck in your neighbor's eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye?"*** (Matt 7:3).

***"Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for bread, will give a stone or if the child asks for a fish, will give a snake?"*** (Matt 7:9-10)).

***"Go and tell that fox from me"*** (Luke 13:32).

The fox was Herod Antipas who beheaded John the Baptist.

---

<sup>36</sup> Praying the parables requires that you are aware of the presence of the divine and that you listen to what Jesus is saying to you and what he is asking you to do. Understanding the details of the story is secondary. Jesus preached in Aramaic which was his native language. He probably spoke a little Hebrew and used Greek to speak to Pilate at his trial.

I did not live in one location but travelled with my followers around the towns and villages of Israel announcing my Abba's kingdom with miracles, parables and sayings. My life style was similar to that of John the Baptist or many of the Essene communities.<sup>37</sup>

**Just two minutes listening to me.**

Smile. Be still. Be silent. Breathe deeply. Listen.  
Repeat my name until you know I am close.

Read or recall the parable of the sower (Luke 8:5-8).

**JESUS is the sower.  
He brings friendship  
and salvation**

**YOU are the ground.  
You are looking up at the seed  
of love which is falling on you.**

Are my gifts destroyed by the *birds of pleasure*?

Is your heart *filled with rock* and cannot listen?

Are you controlled by the *thorns of life*?

I am close. My power and strength  
surrounds you. How will you respond?

---

<sup>37</sup> Justin Taylor proposes that Jesus' life style was similar to that of the Essenes. He and others argue that, like the Essenes, baptism (John 3:22, Matt 3:11, John 4: 1-2) and the meals Jesus shared with his disciples (given a deeper meaning at the Last Supper) were communal rites of purification and initiation which continued to be used by the post resurrection church. See Justin Taylor (Where did Christianity come from? ... 8).

## Day 9 The power of the Almighty.

### **Miracles and the forces of evil.** <sup>38</sup>

By bringing the Kingdom of God to earth I unleashed a force greater than all the 1000 million galaxies in the universe. This force was the heavenly power of God whose presence would one day shatter forever all pain and sinfulness and offer to the human race an eternal redemption.

The words Jesus speaks are the subjective words of the author. The genuine words of Jesus are only found in the scriptures.

***“I am ... the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come”*** (Rev 1:8).

My miracles are a natural consequence of the coming of God’s kingdom. They are an important part of my gospel story. Almost one third of Mark’s Gospel (209 verses out of a total of 666) deal directly or indirectly with miracles. Miracles were signs that the kingdom of God was slowly destroying human misery and the dark forces of evil.

When I cured a sick person, the removal of the sickness publicly announced to Israel that the power of Abba lived within me and that my preaching carried divine authority. Miracles are a reminder to you that one day, every tear, every pain, every worry will be terminated.

By far the greatest miracle is my birth, death and resurrection. My presence within you is your own personal miracle. This miracle of friendship is eternal. It has changed your life forever.

***“Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him p and he was able to stand”*** (Mark 9:27).



<sup>38</sup> See Raymond Brown (*NT Essays....* 172). Miracles are discussed more fully in note 2 in the addition which follows this chapter.

**Evil spirits, sin and sickness.** <sup>39</sup>

Many of my Jewish friends believed that their lives were dominated by evil forces. These forces of evil, the dark arts, took various forms: possession by demons, the power of Satan, selfishness, the craving for material things, Roman suppression and sickness. Many Jews believed that sickness was caused by sin and evil in the world. <sup>40</sup> Roman occupation was understood to be due to Judea's sins.

Your world no longer identifies human sickness with evil spirits but, make no mistake, the dark arts are still very real in your lives. These demons express themselves in jealousy, pride, hatred, greed, war and terrorism. They cause your hearts to be dominated by pleasure, power and wealth. They make it very easy for you to forget about the thousands of children in your world who have no food.

***“The Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory”*** (Mark 13:26).

**The end of the world.**

Before I reveal to you how my death and resurrection opened Heaven's gates, let me tell you my thoughts on the end of the world. As Jews we had our own way of speaking about the final times. We often described this period with a type of language called Apocalyptic. Apocalyptic language uses the images like darkness over the earth, singing angels, the coming of the son of man, chariots in the sky and earthquakes. Its purpose was to give people hope and to remind them of God's coming victory over the dark forces of the earth. I used some of these apocalyptic expressions to describe my death and my final victory over evil. <sup>41</sup>

---

39 The scriptures clearly state that Satan exists. Satan is often portrayed as a human with a tail and pitchfork. Satan is not a material being but a spirit. The word Satan comes from Hebrew and means adversary. Peter was an adversary to Jesus when Jesus commanded him to “Get behind me, Satan!” (Mk 8:33).

40 Paul, in condemning the abusive behaviour of the Christians during the celebration of the Lord's Supper, warned that evil actions can lead to sickness and death: “That is why many of you are weak and ill and a good number have died” (1 Cor 11:30). This idea is also present in John 5:14.

41 During his life Jesus found apocalyptic expressions a useful way of describing God's

***“The sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken”*** (Mark 13:24-25).

***“I watched Satan fall from heaven like a flash of lightning”*** (Luke 10:18).

***“As the Sun was setting ... the sick ... were brought to him. Demons also came out of many, shouting, ‘You are the Son of God’”*** (Luke 4:40-41).

Our Jewish Apocalyptic writings are very similar to some of your TV programs, movies and books. Many of them are filled with images of monsters, strange aliens from other worlds, evil magical characters and heroes who always win. These heroes often save the world with only seconds to spare. In your world science fiction and horror movies have a great following.

Some of you believe that the images contained in these apocalyptic verses are a true record of the future. Others think that my words are Jewish images which contain religious truths but not necessarily the detailed record of what will happen. Your personal understanding of these matters has little bearing on your search for your God. The only danger is you spend time convincing others that your opinion is the correct one and losing sight of how I am telling you to live your life.<sup>42</sup>

**“Our Jewish Apocalyptic writings are very similar to some of your TV programs, movies and books”.**

---

ultimate victory over evil. Bernard Byrne makes an important distinction between the religious message of the scriptures and the apocalyptic writing style used to describe the message. (*The Hospitality...* 163ff). Apocalyptic writings are discussed at the end of the chapter.

42 This illustrates how the fundamental approach to the scriptures differs from a non-fundamental approach. What is important here is to remember that what the gospel words say to us is far more important than what the scholars say. Francis

My message is clear. The end of the world will be a time of judgment when the dark arts will be destroyed forever and the kindness of my Father will become visible to all. This time will mark the end of human history. It will be God's Olympics when the winners will stand in glory. I have not revealed when this will happen but I have made it very clear that there is a Heaven and a Hell. My Gospel writers continually speak of these realities.<sup>43</sup>

***"In accordance with his promise, we wait for new heavens and a new earth"*** (2 Peter 3:13).

***"What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the human heart conceived, what God has prepared for those who love him"*** (1 Cor 2:9).

***"But about that day or hour no one knows"*** (Mark 13:32).

### **Be creative.**

You now know that this book is like a prayer manual which asks you to continually experiment and discover your personal way of being aware of the divine. This read is all about being different and changing your life. Go back and pick out a verse which catches your eye. Wonder and ponder. These inspired words tell my story. It is the story of a God who follows the ways of his Father and invites you to a new life. Tomorrow choose another verse and come to know me in a different way. Let me touch your heart. Try and understand for yourself who I am.

You might move outside your comfort zone and imagine the two of us sharing activities like: Travelling together on route 66, climbing a mountain, dancing, sharing a hamburger, watching a film together or just talking about nothing in particular. You could include other activities in your prayer like: Clicking your fingers, closing your eyes, humming, walking together in a park, drinking coffee, waiting for me to speak, being completely still, using music, speaking to me out loud, writing down what I

---

Moloney (*Living Voice* ....ix).

43 A Christian understanding of Heaven, Hell and the final judgement is discussed on page 78 at the end of this chapter.

am saying to you, breathing deeply as you repeat your words or imagining how I am smiling at you. Avoid doing some of these things in public. It might confirm what many of your friends think about you!

Someone once said: "Life should not be a journey to the grave arriving safely in an attractive and well preserved body, but rather to skid in sideways, chocolates in one hand, iPhone in the other, body thoroughly used up, totally worn out and screaming "WOO HOO what a ride!" Do you agree or is it all too much?

### **A nickel and a peanut.**

If I was a betting person perhaps I would bet two nickels to a peanut that you have skimmed over the two minute reflections. This happens to most people. This is because when you start reading a chapter of this book you can find it quite difficult to stop reading and become aware of an unseen God. The greatest challenge facing you as you read these chapters is to ensure you give priority to your reflections. Completing your daily reflections is a must. Reading alone cannot bring you an awareness of the God within. Two minutes a day sounds simple but it is easy to neglect especially when you are tied or busy.

### **Listen to Jesus for two minutes.**

BE STILL. BE SILENT. BREATHE DEEPLY  
THINK OF MY IMAGE. LAUGH. REPEAT MY NAME.

***"I am ... the Lord God, who is and  
who was and who is to come"***

(Rev 1:8).

DO YOU FEEL THAT I AM CLOSE?

**Listen and wonder**



## **DAY 10      *Death which leads to victory.***

I knew that Abba was using me to bring his redemption to the human race. I knew I was a threat to the Jewish religious institution. I had publicly embarrassed the Jewish Leaders and temple authorities and claimed to have a unique relationship with God. It was clear to me that things were not going to end well.

***“I tell you, something greater than the temple is here”***

(Matt 12:6).

### **A meal of great promise and eternal friendship.**

The night before I was crucified I shared a final meal with my friends. This was our last supper together on earth. I wanted them to know that I would always be with them. I wanted to provide a way in which they could continually celebrate my life and always share in my presence. I offered them bread and wine telling them that this was me, my body, my blood, my person, my friendship and that when they celebrated my presence in this way, I would always be with them. Today you too can share in this new covenant of my love.

***“Take, eat; this is my body”*** (Matt 26:26).

***“This is my blood of the new covenant”*** (Mark 14:25).<sup>44</sup>

***“Do this in memory of me”*** (Luke 22:19).

For many Christians, especially Catholics, the Eucharist meal is the supreme way of celebrating our eternal salvation and the presence of Jesus in bread and wine.<sup>45</sup>

### **A death which redeems.**

---

<sup>44</sup> The Jewish scriptures often speak about the covenant of peace and justice between the people of Israel and their Creator (“You shall be my people and I will be your God” Ezekiel 36:28). At his Last Supper Jesus proclaims a ‘new covenant’ - a new redemptive covenant of love given to all (Mark 14:25).

<sup>45</sup> The importance place of the Eucharist in the gospel story will be discussed on pages 162, 195-197 and 212.

The story of my death is a story of love. It was a death which was more difficult than I ever imagined. I was rejected by my nation and my religion. I was an embarrassment to my family and most of my disciples abandoned me. Even Peter claimed that he never knew me.

***“He denied (Jesus) before all of them, saying, ‘I do not know what you are talking about’”*** (Matt 26:70).<sup>46</sup>

Through my Agony in the Garden, my trial and my death on Calvary I suffered as few humans do completed the work of my Father on earth. Let yourself ponder over this mystical truth. It is the greatest story ever told. This is why you, who believe in me and call me Savior and Redeemer. This is the way that I opened my heart to you and brought new meaning to your life. When life becomes impossible think of my friendship and what I have done for you. If you are lost or cannot cope, think of me. I have been there. Many of my followers believed that my earthly life ended in failure. Very soon it would become clear to them that this was just the beginning.

**“Placed beside  
this great  
truth, your  
earthly dreams  
are rather  
small.”**

***“I am deeply grieved... remain here,  
and keep awake”***  
(Mark 4:34).

***“I tell you, today you will be  
with me in Paradise”***  
(Luke 23:43).

**Becoming aware of the death of Jesus.**



<sup>46</sup> Most organizations tend to glorify their foundation members. The gospel writers would not have invented a story which embarrassed Peter, their leading apostle. This is an example of how the scriptural writers remained faithful to the stories they received. Raymond Brown (*The Death of...* 615).

There is no Christian walking this earth that can capture fully this unbelievable historical experience. The best you are able to do is to continually wonder and ponder over how God lived a human life to the full and changed forever who we will become.

<i>Sorrowful and troubled</i> .....	(Matt 26:16)
<i>Abba, Father, Remove this cup</i> .....	(Mark 14)
<i>Struck on the face</i> .....	(John 18:22)
<i>Flogged</i> .....	(John 19:1)
<i>Thorns placed on his head</i> .....	(Matt 27:30)
<i>Spat on</i> .....	(Matt 27:30)
<i>Struck on the head with a reed</i> .....	(Matt 27:30)
<i>Away with him! Crucify him</i> .....	(John 19:15)
<i>Led away to be crucified</i> .....	(Matt 27:31)
<i>Carrying his cross</i> .....	(John 19:17)
<i>9 o'clock - crucified him</i> .....	(Mark 15:25)
<i>12 o'clock - darkness over the whole land</i> .....	(Mark 15:33)
- <i>I am thirsty</i> .....	(John 19:28)
- <i>Father, forgive them</i> .....	(Luke 23: 34)
<i>3 o'clock - Cried out with a loud voice</i> .....	(Mark 15:34)
- <i>My God, why?</i> .....	(Matt 27:46)
- <i>Breathed his last</i> .....	(Mark 15:37)

### **Who are you in these stories?**

Are you a faithful Mary Magdalene?

Are you a runaway disciple?

Are you an ever loving Mother?

Are you a denying Peter?

Are you a hesitant Pilate?

Are you a condemning priest?

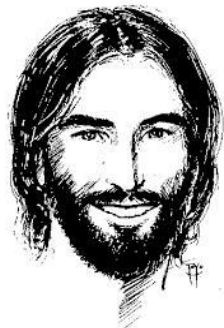
Are you a betraying Judas?

Are you a sideline Jew?

Are you a repentant thief?

Are you not interested and  
continue to watch TV?

**If I were to return today.**



What would happen if I returned to earth as a human being and told my story today in your culture? Well, I would need to get used to photocopiers, iPhones and traffic lights. I would still enjoy going to parties and talking to my friends. I would speak with words and ideas that are part of your world but my message to you would not change very much. My dream would still be to make you aware of the presence and friendship of God. I would not be slow to condemn selfishness and neglect of the starving. Would it make any difference? Perhaps! Perhaps not! Even if I performed miracles your television sets would be overloaded with experts who would be convinced it was trickery. Experiencing your God will always require trust and faith.

### **“Who do you say I am?”**

(Mark 8:29, Matt 16:15, Luke 9:20). <sup>47</sup>

While I was on earth people flocked around me, treating me like a famous actor or a modern rock star. They knew that I possessed the power of God to cure sickness and forgive sins. You are remarkably like my followers. You know that God has entered your lives and that I am your friend, but you still struggled to grasp the full meaning of my love.

Some of my early followers associated me with the Jewish prophets of old like Elisha and Isaiah. Some thought I was their Savior, the Messiah. Others thought of me as an eschatological prophet. <sup>48</sup>

There is no need for you to seek a detailed appreciation of the way my followers thought of me. What is far more important is your personal understanding of me. This sacred wisdom only becomes a reality when you allow me to enter your heart.

**My dream is that you will spend time with me.**

**“They  
struggled to  
grasp the full  
meaning of  
my love”.**

---

<sup>47</sup> In three different Gospels, Jesus asks you this question: “Who do you say I am”? This is a question which can only be answered by each individual person. Edward Schillebecckx (*Jesus....* 171).

<sup>48</sup> The names given to Jesus: Son of man, eschatological prophet, Messiah, Saviour are discussed in addition four (Pages 97-99).

All humans dream about the future. For some it is becoming a sports star. For others it's professional success. Many seek true love which will lead to the joy of family life and children. For many, it is simply the dream of being able to provide food for their children. Often dreams are very personal like looking attractive or being accepted. Sometimes you dream about passing exams or going to exotic places. The human spirit is filled with dreams. They fill your heart and push you forward to new horizons. My dream is that you will understand me by listening to me.

**Time to listen.**

BREATHE DEEPLY. BE HAPPY.  
THINK OF YOUR IMAGE OF ME. REPEAT MY NAME.

I am looking directly at you.  
**I am speaking to you.**

***"I am the way, the truth and the life"***

(John 14:6).

**LISTEN LISTEN LISTEN**

ARE YOU AWARE OF MY PRESENCE

Be silent and let my words enter your heart.

**Are they important to you?**

**What will you do?**

## ***Addition Three***

### ***Questions about Jesus you have always wanted to ask.***

#### **1. DID JESUS KNOW THAT HE WAS GOD?**

Two scholars offer their thoughts. Karl Rahner explains how everybody has 'self-awareness' which is simply being aware you are alive. He argues that this is different from 'objective knowledge' like knowing your mobile number or how far it is to the nearest fast food outlet. Rahner argued that Jesus was aware that he was the divine redeemer (self-awareness) but chose to struggle and learn as all human beings do (objective knowledge). Edward Schillebecckx reminds us how we will never be able to understand the psychology of Jesus.<sup>49</sup>

#### **2. WHERE DID JESUS OBTAIN HIS HUMAN WISDOM?**

His early life was formed by his parents, by experiencing the piety of his Jewish faith, from living in rural Galilee and from people like John the Baptist. Galilee was the setting of many of his parables. It was the Spirit of God and his unique relationship with his Father that helped him to develop his own understanding of Abba, the Kingdom of God, the importance of love, his destiny and the Father's gift of eternity.

#### **3. DOES JESUS WORK MIRACLES IN OUR LIVES?<sup>50</sup>**

Surprisingly the scriptures do not use 'thauma', the Greek word for miracle. Matthew, Mark and Luke use the word 'dynamis' (meaning powerful deeds). John uses the Greek words 'erga' (works) and 'semeia' (signs). The gospel writers wanted us to

---

49 (Karl Rahner (*Dogmatic....* 193-215). Edward Schillebecckx (*Jesus....* 257).

50 In New Testament times, Medical conditions like epilepsy (Mark 9:14-29), or arthritis (Luke 13:10-17) were directly connected with Satan and his kingdom. Raymond Brown (*New Testament Essays*, 173).

look beyond these spectacular events. They wanted us to understand how Jesus carried within him the salvation of God. You will never fully understand how God touches your life. Some believe that God often intervenes in our world. Others speak of God's intervention being built into creation. While not everyone has encountered the miracles reported in the scriptures, most of you have felt the hand of God at some time in your life. You have all experienced what Therese of Lisieux calls 'miracles on the small scale'.

#### 4. WHY DO SOME OF THE SAYINGS OF JESUS SEEM SO UNCHRISTIAN?

Jesus used words like *"Let the dead bury their own dead"* (Luke 9:60) and *"Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple"* (Luke 14:26). He was not being disrespectful to his family or the dead. He was using hyperbole language to impress on his followers that nothing, absolutely nothing, was more important than accepting the unending life offered by his Father. We often use hyperbole and exaggerated language. Expressions like 'the devil is in the fine print' or 'hardwired for violence' are not meant to be taken literally. Their purpose is to catch your attention and to emphasize a particular way of thinking.

- \* When Jesus spoke about bringing not peace but a sword (Matt 10:34) he was telling you that being a Christian will be hard work. His directive to buy a sword (Luke 22:36) asks you to be prepared for anything.
- \* The expression *"If your eye causes you to stumble, tear it out"* (Mark 9:47) urges you with powerful imagery to get rid of your faults.
- \* In his expression *"my mother and my brothers are those who hear the word of God and do it"* (Luke 8:21) Jesus was not rejecting his family. He was telling his followers how they too are family.
- \* One parable which is difficult to understand is the parable of the unjust servant (Luke 16:1-8). Perhaps the unjust servant was simply returning his commission. Perhaps we are being told in a creative way how kindness to others is more important than personal gain! What do you think?

5. HOW ARE THE APOCALYPTIC WRITINGS USED IN THE NEW TESTAMENT?

The Jewish Apocalyptic style of writing involves scenes of great battles, turmoil on the earth, heavenly animals, seals and trumpets, dragons and the heavenly court. The New Testament Book of Revelation (also called the Book of the Apocalypse) is an example of this style of writing. In our times Dr. Who, Superman and Lord of the Rings contain similar images. Matthew, Mark and Luke are not apocalyptic writings, but you can recognize a hint of apocalyptic language in the stories of Jesus' birth, temptations, baptism, miracles, transfiguration, descriptions of the end of the world, death and resurrection. It was normal for these three gospels to highlight these stories of divine intervention with a little of the color, drama and mystery of this popular language. The Apocalyptic writing style is absent in John's gospel.<sup>51</sup>

6. HOW DO CHRISTIANS SPEAK ABOUT LIFE AFTER DEATH?<sup>52</sup>

Jesus spoke about Heaven and the fires of Hell, but there are many things which we cannot understand. We do not know what a glorified body is like, whether there is any time in Heaven or how the fires of Hell affect a glorified body.<sup>53</sup> Many Christians believe in a purgatory where flawed humans are made worthy to live with God. Many Christian communities celebrate funeral services which ask God to remember those who have departed from this world (2 Macc 12:46). The parables found in Matt 18:23-35 and Mark 12:1-11 tell us how there will be a time of judgement. Our biblical tradition confirms that there will be a particular judgement when we die (Luke 16:19-31) and a general judgement at the end of time (Matt 25:31-46).

7. HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE THE POLITICAL WORLD OF JESUS?

---

51 Eschology is the study of what will happen at the end of the world. The scriptures often use the Apocryphic writing style to discuss these things. The word apocryphal has a different meaning. It refers to the Apocryphal Gospels and other writings which are not found in the scriptures (see p. 239).

52 Joseph Fitzmyer (*A Christological Catechism*... 50) remarks that this question has as many answers as there are heads to think about it.

53 74% of Americans believe in Heaven. 59% believe in a Hell (Pewforum.org in "affiliations: US Religious Landscape Survey" 33).



The Romans needed stability in Palestine to protect its eastern border and the waters around the Egyptian Delta. Egypt was their source of grain. In Jesus time Pontius Pilate was the Roman Governor of Judea and Herod Antipas and Philip (two sons of Herod the Great) were the Roman hit men who controlled and collected taxes from the Jewish population. Their family, the Herodian's, were Roman trained civil rulers allied to the Romans. The Priests controlled the temple and its festivals. The Sadducees based their Jewish beliefs on a strict interpretation of the early books of the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). They doubted that humans would rise from the dead or that unclean spirits, souls and demons existed. <sup>54</sup> Scribes were professional academics who taught their own understanding of the Torah.

The Pharisees were a prominent Jewish group who developed their particular ways of interpreting the Old Testament. <sup>55</sup> They were probably not involved in the death of Jesus. About 50 years after Jesus' death after the destruction of the temple by the Romans, the Pharisees became the spiritual rulers of Israel. The Essene communities consisted of Jews who developed their own rituals and lifestyle separate from the Jerusalem temple. Some lived a monastic lifestyle. The Dead Sea scrolls came from this sect. John the Baptist and even Jesus and his followers could have followed a similar life style. <sup>56</sup>

All these political forces would have been concerned that a carpenter's son from a small village in Galilee was walking round telling everyone that a new kingdom of God has come into their territory. This was the environment in which God chose to redeem the world.

---

<sup>54</sup> William Burton. (*Significance of .... 285-290*).

<sup>55</sup> John Meier (*A marginal Jew.... 3: 338ff*). Jacob Neusner (*From Politics.... Xiii*).

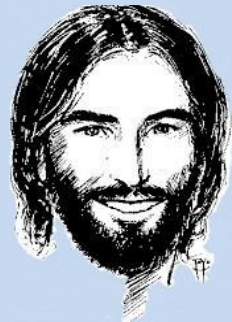
<sup>56</sup> See Justin Taylor 65 and 84.



## Chapter Four

# ***I am Alive!***

*Village life continues to be filled  
with so many things.  
Their prince now lives in another world  
and yet he is still close to them,  
still part of their lives.  
They can still hear his laughter  
and see his smile.  
They still tell him their secrets  
and how they feel.  
The people still live with  
the wonder of his presence.  
They long for the day  
when they will be together.  
For the whole world knows  
that their friendship  
is eternal.*



## Day 11 I have risen!

Nothing could prepare my friends for the horrible experience of my death and then the joy of my resurrection. It dominated their thoughts and emotions and brought new meaning to the things I had said and done. This was a time of astonishment and great excitement.<sup>57</sup>

These words have been placed on the lips of Jesus by the author of this book. This is to help you to listen to Jesus and to feel his closeness. They are not his words. The words of God are only found in the scriptures.

The coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost brought the power of my resurrection into the hearts of all those who believed in me. This is the Spirit of God which possessed me during my earthly life. It is the same Spirit which continues to guide and direct you and the Christian Communities of today.<sup>58</sup>

***“God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us”*** (Rom 5:5).

***“The Spirit of God has made a home in you”*** (Rom 8:9).

### Recollections from the heart.

My friends knew I had changed history forever. I was no longer the human friend who walked with them on earth and brought the kingdom of God into their lives. As they prayed together about what I said in my earthly life, they slowly came to understand how, even though they could not see me, I was still alive and had never left them.

They did not have access to Google or to the knowledge stored in libraries as you do. The only internet they knew about was what happened between two boats on the Sea of Galilee. Their knowledge about me was based on firsthand experience.

---

<sup>57</sup> The resurrection of Jesus was unique and beyond logic. Raymond Brown (*An Introduction to the New Testament*.... 105).

<sup>58</sup> In Paul there is no real difference between ‘Christ’ and ‘the Spirit’ or between the ‘life in Christ’ and the ‘life in the spirit’. See James Dunn (*Jesus and the Spirit*.... 318). In 2 Cor 3:17, Paul speaks of Jesus being the Spirit of God. He was also aware of the difference between the Father Son and Spirit (2 Cor13:13).

They struggled to find words to explain my resurrection to new gentile converts and to those who belonged to the Jewish faith. They returned to their Hebrew scriptures (the Old Testament) for inspiration. Here they found the words and theology which helped them to understand the meaning of my death and resurrection.<sup>59</sup>

With the knowledge that I had risen they retold my sayings, parables and miracles and forged new ways of speaking about me. Their faith in me took on a deeper richer meaning. My hope is that you too, will capture this miracle of friendship within you.<sup>60</sup>

***“We, who are many, are one body in Christ”*** (Rom 12:5).

***“In the one Spirit we were baptized into one body”***  
(1 Cor12:13).

**My eternal message spreads.**<sup>61</sup>

My disciples, led by Peter, continued to proclaim my salvation to all who would listen. Another apostle emerged. For many years he was violently opposed to me but eventually he came to know me in a special way. His name was Paul. It was Paul who became a champion of the Christian Gentles.

**“The joy and excitement of my redemption spread rapidly into the cities and towns of the Roman Empire”.**

Belief in me spread rapidly into the cities and towns of the Roman Empire. Christian communities began to emerge. Baptism and the Eucharist became important ways in which

---

59 Rom 1 & 2, Cor, and Gal quote the Hebrew Scriptures eighty-six times. There are only a few quotations in Phil, Col and 1-2 Thess. These letters were written for predominately Greek communities.

60 God has given us the gift of faith to respond to his redemption. Christians must develop this faith within their hearts. The importance of faith is a constant theme throughout the New Testament (Mark 1:15, Rom 1:17, Rom 1:17, Rom 3:24, Gal 2:16, Gal 3:23) especially in the gospel of John (1:12, 20:30).

61 “The apostles handed on to their hearers what he had said and done, but with that fuller understanding... which they now enjoyed.” Vatican II (Divine Revelation 19).

our friendship was expressed and lived. Believing in me was never an individual experience. Justin Taylor suggests that the traditions of the Essene sect had a major influence on the origins and development of both Baptism and the Eucharist.<sup>62</sup> My disciples did not think of me as the Creator God but their biblical writings honored me in many beautiful ways. These sacred words have inspired Christians through the centuries to celebrate my friendship and my presence. You too must make these words ring aloud within you.



***“To the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty ... now and forever”*** (Jude 1:25).

***“Continue to grow in the grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”*** (2 Pet 3:18).

***“Call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ”*** (1 Cor 1:2).

In this period, oral stories about my human life began to circulate. Some were written down. My sayings and miracles started to be grouped together and the basic account of my crucifixion began to take shape.<sup>63</sup> Many of these oral traditions and writings grew out of prayer and public worship. Different communities added their own rich understanding of me as their risen Redeemer.<sup>64</sup>

These Christians understood how my parables, sayings and actions spoke to them of how they must live their lives. They knew that their prayers must make them better people and their beliefs must lead to a real concern for others. For some like Peter and Paul this involved being missionaries and

---

62 Justin Taylor (*Where did Christianity....* chapter two)

Acts 2:37-42 describes the importance of Baptism in the early church. The celebration of the Eucharist is recorded in 1 Cor 11:23-26.

63 Raymond. Brown (*A Crucified Christ....* 20).

64 See Martin Hengel (*Between Jesus....* XIII). The primary purpose of 1<sup>st</sup> Century history was not to record exact facts but rather to support political, ethnic and religious positions. Edward Schillebecckx (*Jesus....* 77).

spreading my message of redemption.

***“Just as you did it to one of the least of these... you did it to me.”*** (Matt 25:40).

### **Community Tensions.**

My early Christian communities were made up of two different cultures with two distinct languages: the Aramaic of many Jewish Christians and the Greek of Gentiles and countless Jews living in the wider Roman world. After the resurrection many of my Aramaic speaking disciples who believed in me continued to remain loyal Jews who prayed in the temple (Acts 2:46).

At the same time belief in me spread throughout the Greek-speaking Roman Empire.<sup>65</sup> Many of these Greek-speaking Christian converts did not keep the Sabbath and neglected other Jewish laws. Paul became their champion. At times things got really heated. <sup>66</sup> These tensions were highlighted in the dispute over circumcision (Acts 15). Paul argued that his male-speaking converts did not need to be circumcised. Many of my Aramaic-speaking believers felt that this Jewish custom was an essential part of Christianity. There are perhaps many adult converts through the centuries who are very relieved Paul's views prevailed. The one thing that united my early church was their unwavering belief in me as their Lord and Savior. Perhaps there is a lesson here for the Christians of today.

My communities were never leaderless. I lead my followers while I was on earth. After the resurrection Peter took over this role.

---

65 With the martyrdom of Stephen (Acts 7:54-60) in the early 30's the Greek speaking Christians moved away from Jerusalem. Some travelled the 400 miles to Antioch which is located in the south east corner of Turkey. It was here believers in Jesus were first called Christians (Acts 11:26, 28). These Christians developed a Greek understanding of the Christian message and began to spread this message into their Greek speaking world. See Martin Hengel (*Acts and ....* 106).

66 At one stage Paul called the ideas of those who opposed him 'shubala' meaning rubbish (Phil 3:8). The King James Version translates the word as "dung", the New Jerusalem Bible uses "filth", the New Revised Standard Version and the New American Bible use "rubbish". Today some translate the word as 'bullshit'. Skubala could be shortened to "sk" and used as a texting abbreviation among your friends.

Paul had a lot to say about the beliefs and practices of the Greek communities. Christians were required to live the beliefs of their communities and to be guided by their leaders. <sup>67</sup>

***“As God’s chosen ... clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience”*** (Col 3.12).

***“You are Peter and on this rock I will build my community”*** (Matt 16:16).

### **The importance of listen to me.**

If you are reading this book by skimming over all the scriptural quotes without spending time thinking about what I am saying to you or if you are failing to complete the reflections, stop reading and quickly sell the book. You might get more for it if the cover still looks new!

- 1 Take three deep breaths.
- 2 Focus on your my image and repeat my name.
- 3 Read my words two or three times.

***“It is Christ who lives in me”*** (Gal 2:20.)

- 4 Listen to what I am saying. What am I feeling?
- 5 You are with a friend. Be still and ponder the presence of your God.

---

<sup>67</sup> In 1 Cor 5:11-13 Paul speaks about excommunicating those who are not living a Christian life: “I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who is sexually immoral ... a drunkard or robber. ....’Drive out the wicked person from among you’” See also Matt 18:15-17.



## **Day 12 Living in 'Christ Jesus'.**

### **The mind of Paul.**

Paul believed with all his heart that I was alive and living within him. His whole being, his life and all his dreams were centered on my presence.

While on earth I preached about the kingdom. What is interesting is that Paul did not cling to my idea of kingdom but used instead the phrase 'in Christ Jesus'.<sup>68</sup>

In the same way my Gospels almost always referred to me as 'Jesus'. Paul preferred to use phrases like 'Jesus Christ' or 'our Lord Jesus'. For him these titles better explained how I was now alive and living as the risen Lord. Paul spoke in ways which reached the hearts of his Greek speaking world. It is remarkable how many of his ideas and expressions have remained part of our Christian heritage.

Paul's letters do not repeat my exact words but they are filled with my thoughts and beliefs. Because they belong to the scriptures - the inspired words of God - they contain my thoughts and beliefs. It is through them that I speak directly to you.<sup>69</sup>

The words Jesus speaks are the subjective words of the author. The genuine words of Jesus are only found in the scriptures.

***"All of you are one in Christ Jesus"*** (Gal 3:28).

***"That Christ may live in your heart"*** (Eph 3:17).

***"Christ... is the source of my strength"*** (Phil 4:13).

***"It is no longer I who live... Christ who lives in me"*** (Gal 2:20).

### **Understanding Paul's letters.**

---

<sup>68</sup> The kingdom is mentioned 14 times in Paul while phrases similar to 'in Christ' occur 155 times. The terms 'Kingdom of God' and 'in Christ Jesus' are similar in meaning. Both proclaim the divine power and presence in the hearts of believers. It is normal for different generations to focus on words and images which are meaningful to them. The Second Vatican Council emphasising just 3 of the 95 odd scriptural symbols which it could have used to describe the church. Fuellenbach (*The Kingdom of God*..... 254).

<sup>69</sup> Revelation and, inspiration are discussed more fully on Pages 232ff.

Let us spend today discussing the origins of Paul's letters. I hope this will illustrate the difference between those who believe the words of scriptures are literally true and those who do not. I think it is very important that in issues such as these, everyone respects the sincerity of others. This clears the air and allows you to listen with your both eyes to views which differ from the way you think and believe. <sup>70</sup>

All agree that the New Testament contains 13 letters which begin with a greeting from Paul. No problem! That's until some (but not all) biblical scholars have come to the conclusion that six of the letters were written after the death of Paul. Below are the opening verses of the seven letters all scholars believe were written by Paul.

AD 50?	1 Thessalonians 1:1.....	"Paul, Silvanus, Timothy...."
AD 52	Galatians 1:1.....	"Paul, an Apostle...."
AD 53-55	1 Corinthians 1:1.....	"Paul, called by God ..."
AD 53-55	2 Corinthians 1:1.....	"Paul, an Apostle...."
AD 55	Philippians 1:1.....	"Paul and Timothy...."
AD 55	Philemon 1:1.....	"Paul, a prisoner..."
AD 56	Romans 1:1.....	"Paul, a servant...."

Obviously those who believe Paul wrote 13 New Testament letters know they were all written before the death of Paul. Most scholars agree that both Peter and Paul were martyred in the mid-60s. <sup>71</sup>

Those who believe Paul did not write six of the epistles which bear his name offer dates similar to the following. <sup>72</sup>

AD 60s	2 Thessalonians 1:1.....	"Paul, Silvanus, Timothy...."
--------	--------------------------	-------------------------------

---

70 David Horrell (*An Introduction....* 125).

71 Raymond Brown and John Meier (*Antioch and....* 97) conclude that about AD. 64-67 Peter and Paul were martyred in Rome during Nero's persecution of the Christians. They believe that Peter probably died by crucifixion very close to the present St Peter's Basilica and that Paul died on the Ostian Way where he is commemorated by various churches.

72 Raymond Brown (*An Introduction....*) tells us that 50% of scholars believe Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians (P. 591), 40% believe he wrote Colossians (P. 600), 20% believe he wrote Ephesians (P. 621), and 10 to 15% argue that 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy and Titus were all written by Paul (PP. 654, 673 and 639). For Hebrews see Raymond Brown (*An Introduction....* 693).

AD 60s	Colossians 1:1 .....	“Paul, an Apostle....”
AD 90s	Ephesians 1:1 .....	“Paul, an apostle....”
AD 90s	1 Timothy 1:1 .....	“From Paul, Apostle....”
AD 90s	2 Timothy 1:1.....	“From Paul, Apostle....”
AD 90s	Titus .....	“Paul, Servant of God....”

Does this expose an early Christian cover-up similar to what proposed in Brown’s ‘The Da Vinci Code’? Not really. If you asked Paul he would say: ‘Well they used my ideas and called me the author. You use my ideas and call yourself the author. I ask you, who is closest to the truth?’ It was natural for 1<sup>st</sup> century writings to ascribe authorship to a mentor or hero. It was their way of teaching a remarkable person’s message to a new generation of believers.<sup>73</sup>

### ***Honouring Fundamentalism***<sup>74</sup>

Other Christians disagree and hold the very plausible position that if an epistle says it was written by Paul, then it was written by Paul. Many sincerely believe when the scriptures speak of God creating everything, God is telling you that the theories of evolution are wrong. And when Jesus tells you how the end of the world will occur that’s how it will happen. They find the whole discussion irrelevant and unimportant. This is a perfectly acceptable way of understanding the scriptures.

Over 30% of American Christians sincerely believe that the words of the scriptures are spoken by God and are absolutely true. These Christians also use their common sense and acknowledge that when God tells you that your prayers will be answered it does not mean that your favorite football team will

---

<sup>73</sup> David Horrell (*An Introduction....* 131).

<sup>74</sup> In 2010, 22% of mainline Protestants believe in this fundamentalist position. 23% of Catholics hold this position. This compares with 59% of Evangelical Protestants and 62% of Black Protestant churches who believe in this approach. See [pewforum.org](http://pewforum.org) “Religion among the Millennials”<sup>14</sup>. These statistics sometimes indicate a Christian preference rather than a set position. In reality a great number of Christians consider that both views are important  
The Pew Research Centre (and other writings) use the terms ‘literal and ‘fundamental’ in the same way. We have followed the majority of scriptural scholars in defining ‘literal’ as “the truth the author intended the text to mean” and ‘fundamental’ as believing the “exact meaning of the ancient words”..

always win. This way of understanding the scriptures offers a very clear and concrete way of listening to God. Those who hold this position really understand the sacredness of the holy bible and know they can listen with confidence to God speaking to them.

The majority of Christians believe that God speaks to us through the ideas and customs of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century biblical authors and that these authors are not always interested in precise historical or factual details. These Christians also believe that the message of God must always be honored and respected.

Sometimes in these chapters our comments follow this latter approach and contradict the fundamental meaning of the sacred words.

There are several reasons why we need to discuss these two approaches to the scriptures.

- 1 It is important to know and tolerate what other Christians honestly believe about the scriptures. As a Christian you need to appreciate how both paths lead to Jesus. Who is right? In prayer, I do not think it really matters!
- 2 Scholars sometimes disagree about the original meaning of the inspired text. Pages 241-242 discuss how difficult it is to grasp the exact literal meaning of some verses. Differences of opinion will always be present but these have little effect on what God is telling us.
- 3 Once you have found praying the scriptures interesting and useful, then you will naturally want to know more about the sacred books. Just don't become one of those people who spend more time reading books about scripture than actually praying the sacred text. In surfing the internet or reading books you will come across many strange and weird ideas. The sacred books are often misquoted and used to support personal opinions. You know of numerous individuals and sects who use the scriptures to create their own doctrines. There is no need to waste your time refuting them or justifying your own position. This can become a real distraction to becoming aware of the God within you.

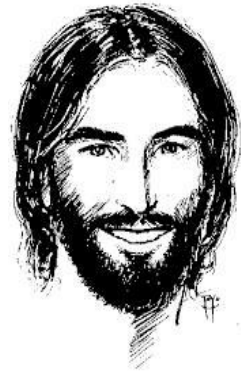
***“If you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another”*** (Gal 5:15).

***“We who are many are one body in Christ”*** (Rom 12:15).

***“I urge you, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, not to have factions among yourselves...”*** (1Cor 1:10).

### **Ways of making your reflection a richer experience**

1. Your minds never rest. There is always a list of the things which you should do and others which you have forgotten to do. Sometimes during your two minutes of listening you can suddenly remember something urgent that needs immediate attention. Sometimes you start thinking of God and then find that another thought has captured your mind. These experiences happen to everyone. Your response must be to gently put aside what has distracted you and begin again. A few minutes delay will not change what you need to do.
2. The monks of times past like to use the image of a cow which fills its stomach with grass and then settles down quietly and chews its cud. In a similar way you can read a little scripture and then be still and chew over my words. Try it and see if it works for you. There is no need to actually chew.<sup>75</sup>
3. Imagine again your delight when a small child asleep in your arms slowly awakes and gives you a beautiful smile. I would like you to become aware of me and smile at me.
4. Many sporting coaches no longer ask their players to concentrate. They believe that this approach can cause tension and hinder the natural flare and the instinctive reactions of their players. They prefer the word awareness. Unlike concentrating, awareness allows you to listen to what I am saying to you and at the same time relax and enjoy my



---

<sup>75</sup> Basil Pennington (*Centering....* 22).

presence.

5. Some find being still and being silent helps their awareness of the divine. Many find there is great benefit in thinking of nothing, letting your body go limp, and wait for God to come to you.
6. Others believe that if you close your eyes while eating an ice cream or a chocolate you become more sensitive to the taste and it seems to last longer. Find out if closing your eyes helps you to focus on your God.
7. Books speak about Jesus but you can only find me within your heart.
8. Breathe deeply. This really helps you to relax.

**Listen to me for two minutes.**

You can spend two minutes listening to a friend on the telephone or you can spend two minutes listening to your God. One will be forgotten. The other will be remembered forever.

Relax. You are with a friend. Think of your image of me and repeat my name till you are aware that I am close.

Gently and slowly be aware of your God.

**“Live in harmony with one another ...  
do not claim to be wiser than you are”**

(Rom 12:16).

I am asking you, who is a person who you struggle to tolerate?

I am asking you, who is a person you have offended with your tongue?

I am asking you, what action will you take?

## **Day 13 The words of Paul.** <sup>76</sup>

To help you to grasp the great reality of my presence I have divided Paul's words into three categories. These categories do not expose the true richness of Paul's thought, but they do offer you a simple way of listening to me speaking through his words.

The words Jesus speaks are the subjective words of the author. The genuine words of Jesus are only found in the scriptures.

- 1 Living with my presence.
- 2 Living without my presence.
- 3 Living in my presence forever.

### **1<sup>st</sup> category: Living with my presence.** <sup>77</sup>

Paul uses many various words to celebrate my presence within you. Pondering over these words helps you to nourish your imagination and to appreciate how the power and friendship of God is always with you. Here are some of Paul's words.

living in Christ Jesus	a new creation
God's temple	washed clean,
set free in Christ Jesus	sanctified
life in the spirit	Sons of God
children of God	made alive by God
sharing in his glory	one body in Christ
joint heirs with Christ	being forgiven
justification by grace	salvation
justified by faith	redeemed
transformation	reconciled

---

<sup>76</sup> Paul's words sometimes have various meanings and are used in different ways. There is no attempt to define Paul's theology or to fully discuss his concepts. Even a summary is beyond the scope of this book. Paul's thoughts are greatly influenced by his Jewish past. This includes his central ideas on covenant, justified by faith and his ideas on the end of the world. See David Horrell (*An Introduction....* 409ff).

<sup>77</sup> Joseph Fitzmyer (*A Christological....* 83).

***“You are God’s temple and God’s spirit dwells in you”***

(1 Cor 3:16).

***“It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me”***

(Gal 2:20).

***“That Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith”***

(Eph 3:17).

***“God....has made us alive together with Christ”*** (Eph 2:5).

**2<sup>nd</sup> category: Living without my presence.**

Paul’s communities said they believed in my presence but they still struggled to live Christian lives. This was the problem I had with my earthly disciples and it is the same problem that I have with you today. Paul confronts you many times asking you if you still *“Profess to know God, but ... deny him by (your) actions”* (Tit 1:16). He uses a variety of phrases to describe what human life is like when I am not present. Sometimes he is speaking about human life before my redemption. At other times he uses these words to describe those who reject my presence. He also tells you how failure is very human and how every sunset is followed by a sunrise.

Here are some of the ways Paul describes living without me.

sin	unclean
made by human hands	mortal flesh
power of darkness	the God of this world
blind minds	death
sinful flesh	natural inclinations
life for themselves	things on the earth
unbelievers	old creation
lack of freedom	evil

***“Make sure that no one traps you ... by some second-hand, empty, rational philosophy based on the principles of this world instead of Christ”*** (Col 2:8 )



**3rd category: Living in my presence forever.**

Paul knew that the efforts of his struggling communities would one day be rewarded with a life beyond. He brings the same promise to you as you struggle to be my friend. Paul is speaking about your heavenly graduation.

***“The world as we know it is passing away”***

(1 Cor 7:31).

***“When the tent that we live in on earth is folded up,  
there is a house built by God for us, an everlasting  
home”*** (2 Cor 5:1).

***“Set your minds on things that are above, not on things  
that are on earth”***

(Col 3:2).

There is a real advantage in using these three categories. If your verse belongs to the first category, you are immediately aware that I am speaking about my close presence with you. If your verse is part of category two you know that I am speaking to you about your failure to respond to me. Your thoughts are no longer on Paul, on the particular problem he is discussing or on the people he is talking to. You automatically focus on the two most important dimensions of your prayer. Firstly, on the human God who is with you and secondly, on your need to listen. It does not matter if you do not understand the exact meaning of the verse during your reflection. That is something for the future.

**“In prayer –  
when you  
read these  
words, your  
focus turns  
immediately to  
the presence of  
Jesus who is  
with you.”**

**A man driving a car.**

A man was driving down a street when a speed camera flashed its nasty light. He was sure he was not speeding so he drove past the camera a second time. It flashed again. Really annoyed he went past a third time at ten miles per hour. It still repeated its dreaded flash. A couple of days later as he was about to write his letter of complaint he received three letters in the mail. Each one contained a ticket for not having his seat belt on. It's easy to get things wrong. It's easy to forget the most important thing in your world.

**Just two minutes of listening to your God.**

What about reading these verses two or three times and then ponder over those words which are meaningful to you. In prayer what is important is that you use them to focus on my close presence, what I have done for you and how I am your friend who is always with you.

BE STILL. BE SILENT. BREATHE DEEPLY.

THINK OF MY IMAGE AND REPEAT MY NAME TILL I AM CLOSE.

**LISTEN**

**"For from him and through him and  
to him are all things"** (Rom 11:36).

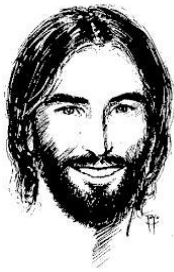
**"That Christ may dwell  
in your heart"** (Eph 3:17).

LISTEN      WONDER      LISTEN

## ***Different ways of speaking about Jesus.***

### **JESUS.**

The four gospels use the name 'Jesus' (without the addition of Christ) over 500 times. Jesus (Yeshua in Hebrew) received this Christian name from his parents. This was what his followers called him during his earthly life. It remains today our favorite way of thinking about our God.



**“Jesus’  
remains our  
favorite way  
of thinking  
about our  
God.”**

### **JESUS, WHILE ON EARTH, CALLED HIMSELF SON OF MAN.**

Jesus, when he walked our earth, described himself as the ‘Son of Man’. The phrase is found on the lips of Jesus about 80 times, far more often than any other name. <sup>78</sup>

### **HOW DID THE HUMAN JESUS THINK OF HIMSELF?**

While on earth Jesus could have thought of himself as preaching the word of God like the great prophets Isaiah Jeremiah or Elijah.

The gospels tell us how Jesus used apocalyptic language like “the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory” (Mk 13:26). He might have been influenced by the 9<sup>th</sup> century Galilean prophet Elijah (1 Kings 18) who spoke about returning

---

<sup>78</sup> Brown suggests that its use could have reflected Jesus’ special relationship with his Abba. In the gospels Jesus uses this phrase in different ways. Sometimes he describes himself as a human being (Mk 2:10, Mt 11:19). At other times he describes himself as the suffering son of man (Mark 8:31, 9:31). There are also times when Jesus use the phrase to speak about Jesus returning to our world in glory as an eschatological prophet (Mt 24:30-31).

to the earth before the end of the world. Jesus may have thought of himself as an eschatological prophet.<sup>79</sup>

Perhaps Jesus believed that he was the Messiah who would suffer (See page 137). Mark tells us that just before his crucifixion Jesus accepted this title (Mk 14:62). Those who came in contact with Jesus probably struggled to understand who he really was.

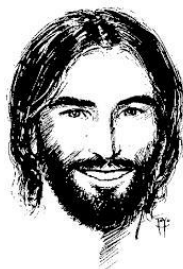
### **JESUS CHRIST.**

The gospels call Jesus by his first name, Jesus. They were speaking about his life on earth. The rest of the New Testament books speak about Jesus Christ. The name Jesus (without the addition of Christ) is seldom used. Paul uses 'Jesus Christ' 140 times and equivalent titles like 'Christ the Lord' about 30 times. The name 'Christ' did not come from Jesus' parents. It is not a surname like O'Connor or Lopez.<sup>80</sup>

### **MESSIAH AND CHRIST HAVE THE SAME MEANING.**

The New Testament also refers to Jesus as the Messiah. The word 'Christ' has exactly the same meaning as 'Messiah'. In Luke 2:11 and Rom 9:5, the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) uses the word Messiah while, in the same verses the New Jerusalem Bible (NJB) uses the word Christ.<sup>81</sup>

**“The words  
Messiah and  
Christ have  
the same  
meaning.”**




---

79 Dale Allison (Constructing Jesus.... 32) and many other scholars support this understanding of Jesus..

80 The title Christ is used 529 times in the New Testament. See William Davis and Allen Allison (*The Gospel....* Vol II, 594-601).

81 In post resurrection New Testament times, the title Christ meaning Messiah became the normal way of speaking about Jesus..

### **POST RESURRECTION TITLES: SON OF GOD AND LORD.**

Jesus was also honored with the words 'Son of God' and 'Lord'. The New Testament uses these words as titles to proclaim their belief in Jesus and to praise him in prayer. Both these expressions had Jewish origins. They were also used to honor the Roman Emperor and pagan deities.<sup>82</sup>

### **THE POST RESURRECTION USE OF REDEEMER AND SAVIOR.**

In our times these words have become sacred expressions of who Jesus is and what he has done for us. They have a similar meaning to Messiah or Christ. The New Testament calls Jesus Savior (Acts 5:31, John 4:42). The title is also used to refer to God (Titus 3:4, 1 Tim 1:1). The Scriptures do not call Jesus Redeemer, but its meaning is similar to Christ or Messiah.<sup>83</sup>

### **OTHER NAMES USED TO DESCRIBE JESUS.**

The early Christian communities also praised me with names like the King, Son of Man, Son of David, Servant, Adam, Lamb of God, Logos and light of the world.

### **PRAYING TO JESUS.**

Praying to Jesus often involves reflecting on what the earthly Jesus said and then listening to Jesus as the risen Lord. Our approach makes no distinction between Jesus and Jesus Christ. What is most critical is for you to experience in your way the close friendship which Jesus has for you.

---

82 The title 'Son of God' was used in the early creedal and liturgical prayers of the New Testament. Both titles proclaim the greatness of Jesus and his special relationship with his Abba. The expression 'Son of the blessed' has the same meaning. (1 Cor 16:22, Rom 1:3-4, Mark 1:11).

The title Lord refers to the Creator in both Old and New Testaments. When the New Testament calls Jesus Lord it associates Jesus with the divine. John 20:28 clearly uses Lord to call Jesus God. Lord can also mean Sir or Master as in Matt 24:45.

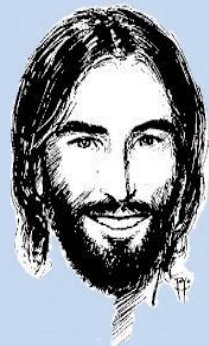
83 Fitzmyer believes that Christians have every right to call Jesus the redeemer as the word is at the very heart of who Jesus is in the New Testament story. (*A Christological....* 111).



## Chapter Five

# ***The creation of the Gospels***

*Every day they pondered over  
the beautiful letters and  
stories their Prince had left them.  
They felt close to him as they  
listened to his words and shared  
his dreams with their children.  
His writings made them laugh  
and filled them with joy  
and helped them to understand  
that he would always be their friend.  
The people still live with the  
wonder of his presence.  
They long for the day when  
they will be together,  
For the whole world knows  
that their friendship is eternal.*



## **DAY 14    *The Gospels are precious***

Old people were important. Some were the living legends who knew me well. Many shared in the horror of my death and the miracle of my resurrection. They had experienced the power of my Spirit at Pentecost and the joy of living in my Christian communities. Like Paul, they called me Messiah, Lord and Savior and

These words have been placed on the lips of Jesus by the author of this book. The actual words of God are only found in the scriptures.

prayed through me to my Father. But they were slowly leaving for eternity and their experiences were leaving with them. There emerged a growing need to record my gospel, the ‘Good News’ of my salvation.<sup>84</sup>

### **The sacred words are dominated by my presence.**

These gospel stories reach far beyond human history. They reveal a God who entered our world as a human being and who by his birth, life, death and resurrection brought us a share in the world of God. This great miracle of human redemption is the central message of the gospels. It dominates the sacred text. This is what the gospels proclaim to young and old; to conservatives and radicals; to theologians and children; to saints and sinners; to Christians long ago and Christians who live today. Pondering over the following verses can help you to loosen up some of that grey matter and come to know the magical world of God.

**“The first  
believers were  
eyewitnesses to  
the power and  
glory of God.”**

**"It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me"**

(Gal 2:20).

**"In Him we live and move and have our being"**

(Acts 17:28).

---

<sup>84</sup> Page 232 offers a fuller discussion on the meaning of “Gospel”.



## Interviews.

In three different locations the authors Matthew, Mark, Luke and John took up their pens. I asked the four writers a couple of questions.<sup>85</sup>

Where did you live?

Mark: Rome, Italy.

Matthew: Antioch, Syria.

Luke: Around Ephesus, Turkey.

John: Ephesus, Turkey.

What year did you publish?

Mark: Late 60's AD.

Matthew: Late 80's AD.

Luke: 80's / early 90's AD.

John: late 90's AD.

Who did you write for?

Mark: Jewish Christians.

Matthew: Jews & Gentiles.

Luke: Gentile Christians.

John: Jews & Gentiles.

Did you like the Pharisees?

Mark: No!

Matthew: No No!

Luke: They were OK.

John: No No No!

How do you describe Jesus?

Mark:

A suffering Messiah.

Matthew:

A great redeeming teacher.

Luke:

Our Lord and Savior.

John:

A God living within us.

What's special about your Gospel?

Mark:

My Gospel was the first. It possesses the oldest traditions. The others used my style.

Matthew:

My Jesus is a great teacher. I am proud of my Our Father and my Beatitudes.

Luke:

I have the best Greek and the most interesting parables. Prayer and God's Spirit are important to me.

John:

My Gospel is a prayer book about how Jesus

is God living within you.

What's your favorite music?

Mark:

'Satan goes down, down.' Great stuff!

Matthew:

'Galilee horn blowers.' Unbelievable sound!

Luke:

'Walk with me. Do not flee.' Comforting.

John:

'Pulling your leg trio' By Abba Son & Spirit.

---

85 Some believe that the gospels of Matthew, Mark and John were written by the apostles with these names. The majority of scholars argue that these gospels were completed by other Christians after the death of the Apostles. Luke was not one of the twelve.

**The force of four.**

The four gospels provide you with a rich feast of religious thought and prayer. Reading them is like admiring a beautiful diamond set in gold. The diamond is my redeeming presence. Each gospel reveals the beauty and splendor of my presence from a different viewpoint. The gold consists of the Christian communities which preserve and protect the sacred texts.

The writers told my story in a way that was meaningful to their different communities. Mark's community was experiencing persecution from the Roman emperor Nero. He portrays me as a suffering Redeemer. Matthew's community probably needed to be united against their Jewish world. He emphasizes how I am present with them as God's great redeeming teacher. Luke wanted to unify Christianity, and explain its place within his Greek world. In John, I am God living within the hearts of all who believe. If you only possessed John's Gospel you would not know that my mother's name was Mary. If you only had the gospels of Mark and John you would know nothing about my birth. Only Luke contains parables like the Pharisee and the Tax Collector and the Good Samaritan.

My preaching would have filled many books. My gospel writers did not attempt to record all the things I said and did. It was my message of redemption that was important. The Second Vatican Council tells us how "The sacred authors... selected certain... elements... others they

synthesized or explained" (Vatican II (Divine Revelation 19) so that they would be meaningful to their communities.<sup>86</sup>

Your world possesses many classical works of literature and art which will be treasured for generations to come. The Mona Lisa and American Constitution were both created in a different age but they still speak in a vivid and emotional way to the people of today. So do the scriptures. They take you on a journey back through time and place you in direct contact with the words and actions of the redeemer who walked your earth.

**"They take  
you on a  
journey back  
through  
time".**

---

<sup>86</sup> Pages 232ff speak about the purpose and sources of the New Testament books.

**“Following me.”**

Your friendship with me also involves both your awareness of me and your actions. These two aspects of the Christian life depend on each other. Without awareness of God actions can lead to personal glory. If you do not live as a Christian your prayers can become hollow and self-serving. Your prayer becomes true prayer when it transforms the way you act. You can pray longer than the Pope but if your actions are unchristian then you are not being a friend of God.

Living a Christian life occupies a major place in my gospel writings. 131 times in the New Testament you are invited to follow me. My parables, miracles and sayings are all filled with directives on how to be a better person. Paul is particularly strong on asking his communities to live my ways.

**“Imagine  
a world  
filled with  
kindness.”**

One of the most practical ways of serving me is by being kind. Kindness has been called the fruit of prayer. There are so many situations each day where a word of support, a listening ear or a smile could bring joy to another person. It is often pride, personal opinions and laziness which prevents you from helping others.

Perhaps your success in forgetting about your own needs and listening to and encouraging others provides a clear indication of how much you are committed to your God. This is why it is important that you finish your prayer time with a resolve to be more Christian. You must put the ball in the hole.

Serving your God in acts of kindness is an important part of your Christian belief. This is especially true of people who find listening to an unseen God difficult and unrewarding. Like many of my saints you could be one of those people who struggle to feel the closeness of God. The beautiful story of the

**“Your prayer  
becomes true  
prayer when  
it transforms  
the way  
you act.”**

Pharisee and the tax collector is a reminder to us that those who struggle with prayer can be closer to God than those who know how to pray. Perhaps your first class seats in the heavenly court will be issued to you because of what you did rather than the way you thought.

### **Listening to your friend.**

Becoming my friend requires you listen to me speaking to you.

THINK OF YOUR IMAGE OF ME.  
BREATHE DEEPLY.  
BE STILL.

REPEAT MY NAME.  
BE SILENT.  
LISTEN.

You are very close  
You are looking at me.  
I ask you a question.

***“Lord, when was it that we  
saw you hungry ...and gave you food”***

(Matt 25:37-39).

Continue to look at Jesus. Listen to how he replies:

***When “you did it to one of  
the least of these members  
of my family, you did it to me.”***

(Matt 25:40).

Jesus is still speaking.  
What does he want you to do?

## **DAY 15      *The voice of the Living God***

### **How did the early Christians listen to the word of God?**

A great number of my first century Christians could not read or write. The gospels were often proclaimed aloud within their communities with great emotion and drama. These Christians came to love my stark and controversial language and my stories from everyday life. You call these stories parables or sayings.

The words Jesus speaks are the subjective words of the author. The genuine words of Jesus are only found in the scriptures.

**“In every  
verse I speak  
directly to  
you.”**

Many of my stories and sayings would have been learned by heart and repeated in their homes and among their friends and children.

They knew that I was still living with them and they came to understand how the gospel words contained my

voice, the voice of their living God. They realized how in every verse I was speaking directly to them and that my words and actions applied to their lives and their world. Phrases like:

‘Their God’ (Heb 8:10) became ..... My God  
‘Jesus said to her’ (John 20:17) became.....Jesus said to me  
‘Thomas answered’ (John 20:28) became .....I answered  
‘Jesus touched him’ (Mark 1:40) became .....Jesus touches me  
‘There was a rich man’ (Luke 16:1) became..... You are the rich man  
‘One was a Pharisee’ (Luke 18:10) became .....You are the Pharisee  
‘He laid his hands on them’ (Matt 19:15) became.....on me

### **Mary Magdalene.**

This is how a friend of mine reflected on the story of Mary Magdalene. When she was growing up she was told that the Mary Magdalene of Luke 8:2 was the same person as the town sinner in Luke 7:37ff who washed Jesus’ feet and dried them with her hair. She now understands that they are two different people. My friend now knows that Mary Magdalene is now regarded as a female role model whose faith and courage is

illustrated by her loyalty at the crucifixion and her important role in the resurrection stories. Over a period of days she began to wonder about how Luke 8:1-3 applied to her own life.

- Vs 1     *“Soon afterwards he went on through cities and villages  
... The twelve were with him,*
- Vs 2     *as well as some women who had been cured of evil  
spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Magdalene, from  
whom seven demons had gone out,*
- Vs3     *and Joanna, the wife of Herod’s steward Chuza, and  
Susanna, and many others, who provided for them  
out of their resources.”*

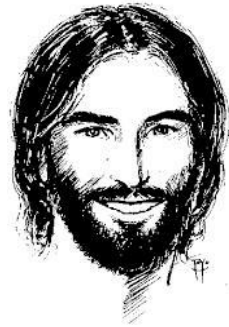
My friend found out that Magdalene was a town on the Lake of Galilee. An Aramaic translation is ‘fish factory’. She thought about Mary being known within my community as ‘Mary from the fish factory’. She pondered over how I had removed seven demons out of Mary. Seven is the perfect number so Mary’s demons were big big. She knew how, in my time, demons and evil were often associated with mental and physical impairment. Perhaps Mary was disadvantaged by an illness like epilepsy, bipolar personality or some physical deformity. Part of the miracle could have been her emergence from loneliness to acceptance and importance within a loving Jesus community. My friend thought about what ‘provided for’ meant. She asked a few questions and found out that the same word was used in Luke 4:39 to describe how Peter’s mother in law provided food for my disciples. Perhaps Mary helped the community by cooking, gathering wood or fetching water. Mary, the physically challenged disciple, could have served her new friends in very simple ways.

Providing ‘out of their own resources’. Does this refer to wealthy women buying things? Perhaps not! The precious ‘resources’ could have been faith, service, prayerfulness, openness and love. Perhaps Mary’s Christian virtues were so strong that she led the pack when it came to being a follower. It would be very much my style to choose a person such as Mary Magdalene to proclaim to the world that I had risen.

My friend saw in Mary Magdalene a parable about herself. She often returns to these verses and sees herself in the story. The

parable reminds her that in the world of God the important people are not the rich, the admired, the leaders or the people with words. Rather they are those who see the goodness and love in all the people they meet. She now understands that while she cannot choose who will love her, she can always choose how she loves others.

My friend knows that most biblical writers do not speak of Mary as physically challenged. She knows that her interpretation is probably a long punt from what Luke intended. What is more important to her is that the text has served her well in her personal discovery of her God. Finding the divine is all about the way God touches your soul. Provided you respect the teachings of your Christian community, you are free to allow the words of scripture to speak to you in your own way.<sup>87</sup>



### **A way of living as a Christian.**

Revealing your personal feelings about God with your grandparents or people who are very sick can be the most precious and beautiful gift you can bring to them. Sharing the way you imagine and feel about Jesus is a very powerful way of making Jesus real to both you and to those close to you. As Mark Twain said, “kindness is the language the blind can see and the deaf can hear”. Will you consider being kind to someone today or do you just like the idea?

### **The family outing.**

A family was out for a drive. As they passed a church dad told everyone to be silent as he wanted to touch base with God. Tim, the youngest teenager complained, but Susan his sister reminded him that everyone had to be quiet when he was on his mobile. Jim then asked dad what he thought of when he

---

<sup>87</sup> This does not allow a person to create a personal view that is contrary to the traditions of the Christian faith. This would be the case if someone decided that Mary Magdalene was married to Jesus. For a discussion on the criteria determining this process see Sandra Schneiders (*The revelatory...* 164-167). Also see *Evangelii Gaudium* 2013, 152.

prayed. ‘Jesus on the cross’ was his reply. The teenagers burst into laughter. ‘Dad, you are so old fashioned. Jesus is here with us. He is a friend, he is laughing with us and we are enjoying being together.’ The mother came to the rescue: ‘Well Tim if you ever have teenagers you will also think of Jesus on the cross.’ The story reminds us how we can pray anywhere, how we can think of the divine in our own way and how we can enjoy arguing with our friends about the best way to pray.

### **Our two minutes with a friend.**

Gary was having a garage sale. A minister bought a lawn mower but returned it a few days later, complaining that it wouldn’t start. ‘It’ll start’ said Gary, ‘but it has been with me a long time and it only responds to a bit of rough language.’ The minister was shocked. ‘I have not used that kind of language for 30 years.’ ‘Just keep pulling on the starter rope’ replied Gary, ‘and it will all come back to you.’ Not that funny. Well still laugh. Humor is an instant vacation and puts you in the right mood to pray.

Relax. A couple of deep breaths will do.  
Think of my image and repeat my name.  
Continue until you are fully aware that I am  
present. Now listen to me.

***“As the Father has loved me, so I have  
loved you; abide in my love”***

*(John 15:9)*

***“As the Father has loved me, so I  
have loved you; abide in my love”***

*(John 15:9).*

Think about the magnificent love that God must have for you. See if you can hear the whispering of your God. What is he saying to you?



## Day 16 The story and the Prayer

A useful method of praying the scriptures is to recognise the difference between the story and the prayer. The story is about understanding what I am saying. The prayer is about listening to what I am saying.

These words which Jesus speaks are the subjective words of the author. The genuine words of Jesus are only found in the

### THE STORY

THESE ARE THE INSPIRE WORDS WRITTEN WITH THE GUIDANCE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

### THE PRAYER



HERE ARE SOME OF THE WAYS OF LISTENING TO WHAT I AM SAYING TO YOU.

*"God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit"* (Rom 5:5).



I am the God who lives within you. I am your friend.

*"Just as you did it to one of the least of these members of my family, you did it to me."* (Matt 25:40).



'To love another person is to see the face of God'.  
(Words from Les Miserables).

*"God... calls you into his own kingdom and glory."*  
(1 Thess 2:12).



You will never die! You will Live with me forever.

*"O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!"* (Rom 11:33).



A treasure worth more than all the gold in Fort Knox.

*"You are my friend"* (John 15:14)



Nail it to your soul!

*"Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up"* (1 Cor 8:1).



Knowledge about this world has a short use buy date.

*"In him we live and move and have our being"* (Acts 17:28).



Impossible to grasp, but as real as the setting sun.

*“If you hear my voice  
open the door, I will  
come in...”* (Rev 3:20).

→ You are usually asleep.  
God is forever knocking.  
You need to open the door.

*“Be still and know that  
I am God!”* (Psalm 46:10).

→ Silence is the perfume of God.

### **The Gospels proclaims the presence of God.**

Much of your life consists of using your mind to work out the meaning of things and the best way to do things. This is the natural human way of living.

The difficulty is that you tend to use this same approach when you ponder over the scriptures. You have probably spent many hours reading the scriptures, listening to sermons on the scriptures and seeking in your own mind what the sacred words mean to you. What proportion of that time have you spent being aware of the God who is present with you and who is speaking to you? This is the problem which we all face.

My gospels contain a story which is eternal. Its wisdom reaches far beyond the dreams of this world. It is more about God than your own thoughts. It is more about listening than thinking. It is more about friendship than knowledge.<sup>88</sup>

### **There is stillness in breathing.**

We have suggested that you begin your two minute reflection by breathing out two or three times. This is another way of relaxing, forgetting about early thoughts and preparing yourself to pray. It helps to relax your muscles after breathing out. Breathing can be used in different ways. You can exhale very slowly or pause between breaths. Some find it useful to imagine breathing the divine in and all evil and tensions out. You must experiment.

---

<sup>88</sup> The presence of the divine in human life is the central theme of both the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) and the New Testament.

### **Another way of listening to me.**

Try something new. Seek out a very silent place. Sit upright in a chair. Be very still. Let your imagination fly. Be overwhelmed by the size of the universe and the Cosmic Christ who is present in all that exists. Think of Jesus and repeat his name. Become aware of the silence and stillness. Now listen. What is Jesus saying to you? What are you feeling? If it works for you today, do it again tomorrow.

If it does not work try pondering over a couple of biblical words which speak to you about me. True awareness of the Divine comes to us in many different ways.

**“Let the word of Christ dwell in you”** (Col 3:16).

**Then he opened their minds to understand  
the scriptures”** (Luke 25:45).

***“I am with you always”***  
(Matt 28:20).

### **What follows?**<sup>89</sup>

In the next four chapters I want to tell you a little about the background to my four gospels but my main thrust is to continue to provide you with a smorgasbord of ways in which you can listen to me speaking to you.

---

<sup>89</sup> These chapters will highlight the unique themes found in the different gospels and how they speak in different ways about the redemption of Jesus. A deeper study would reveal how verses of these gospels are often linked in more fragmented and complex ways.

## ***Addition Five***

### ***Examining the way you listen.*** 90

You can only marvel at the beauty and simplicity of your quarter back who under pressure, creates a touch down by throwing a 50-yard ball just over the heads of the defenders into the hands of your receiver. What you do not see are the hours of practice spent in developing the skills to execute such an exciting spectacle. Prayer is similar. No one can pray perfectly but every person can achieve better results by understanding new ways and practicing new skills.

We must never forget that our search for God is wide reaching and involves using the spiritual wisdom of many centuries. In the last couple of chapters, we have offered numerous ideas on how to enrich this experience. Below is a list of suggestions which could help you to examine and discover the best way for you to become aware of your God. Choose a number between 0 (no use to me) and 10 (really helps me to pray).

#### **The beginning of your reflection.**

- |   |   |            |
|---|---|------------|
| 1 | Have you spent enough time pondering over the power and love of your God?   | 0 ..... 10 |
| 2 | Do you usually have a daily time and place for your time of listening?  | 0 ..... 10 |
| 3 | Your mind is usually cluttered with many things. Can you relax and let go of your thoughts? Do you take three deep breaths? | 0 ..... 10 |
| 4 | Do you begin by repeating your word for Jesus until you know he is close?   | 0 ..... 10 |

---

90 In most of our activities we experiment and develop ways of improving how we do things. This applies to many activities in our lives: learning to cook, singing, public speaking, helping other people, playing sport, playing a musical instrument or enjoying your particular hobby.

- |   |   |            |
|---|---|------------|
| 5 | Do you use your imagination? It brings so much pleasure to the television, books, films and music which you enjoy.            | 0 ..... 10 |
| 6 | Do you recall your image of Jesus? It helps create within your mind a God who has a human personality and who is your friend. | 0 ..... 10 |
| 7 | Do you know the joy of knowing Jesus? Do you know he is your friend?  | 0 ..... 10 |

### **The Heart of your reflection**

- |   |  |            |
|---|--|------------|
| 1 | Are you able to listen to what Jesus is saying to you?   | 0 ..... 10 |
| 2 | Usually you would select a word or a verse from the scriptures. Do you read these two or three times?  | 0 ..... 10 |
| 3 | Can you experience the presence of your God in the stories and characters of the scriptures?   | 0 ..... 10 |
| 4 | Can you let yourself enter the characters and their feelings? Can you appreciate how the stories are about you?  | 0 ..... 10 |
| 5 | Can you imagine Jesus is looking directly at you? Can you respond to what he is saying to you? Can you talk about your problems and share your feelings? | 0 ..... 10 |
| 6 | Are distractions a problem? Most people find they are a continual nuisance.  | 0 ..... 10 |

### **The conclusion of your reflection.**

- |   |   |            |
|---|---|------------|
| 1 | When distracted, do you think of your image of Jesus and repeat his name Jesus? | 0 ..... 10 |
|---|---|------------|

- |   |   |            |
|---|---|------------|
| 2 | Do you finish by saying thanks and leave with a resolution to act differently?                        | 0 ..... 10 |
| 3 | What has Jesus asked you do? Do you appreciate that prayer is only true prayer if it involves change? | 0 ..... 10 |
| 4 | Did you decide what action you should take?   | 0 ..... 10 |

**Are the following ideas helpful to you? <sup>91</sup>**

- |   |   |            |
|---|---|------------|
| 1 | Be committed. The challenge is to spend two minutes each day listening to Jesus. You don't become good at sport by just running around the block each night | 0 ..... 10 |
| 2 | Experiment. Create your own two minute reflection. Keep searching for ways that help you to be aware of your God.   | 0 ..... 10 |
| 3 | Share your feelings about God with members of your family, in group discussions or with your friends.   | 0 ..... 10 |
| 4 | Spend time daydreaming about Jesus. Think of the presence of Jesus and repeat the name of Jesus throughout the day.   | 0 ..... 10 |
| 5 | Think of the presence of Jesus and repeat the name of Jesus throughout the day.   | 0 ..... 10 |
| 6 | Go to church knowing that it is a home of God. Let the music and the words enter your soul.   | 0 ..... 10 |
| 7 | Begin your day by asking Jesus to be part of all your thoughts and actions.   | 0 ..... 10 |
| 8 | Do you think about the size and beauty of the universe and just wonder?   | 0 ..... 10 |

---

<sup>91</sup> These pages could be photocopied and used regularly by you, in a class or with friends. As the doctor says, "*Visit me again in two months.*"

**How well do you use traditional ways of praying?** <sup>92</sup>

- 1 SEEKING GOD IN YOUR PERSONAL THOUGHTS.  
 Do you make Jesus part of your dreams? 0 ..... 10  
 Can you share you worries with Jesus?  
 Can you be still and thank Jesus for his  
 creation and his salvation?
  
- 2 SEEKING JESUS IN THE SPIRITUAL THOUGHTS  
 AND PRAYERS OF OTHERS.  
 This is a powerful method of prayer which 0 ..... 10  
 stirs your imagination and brings to your  
 mind beautiful images of God's love. This  
 is a method used in retreats, books,  
 traditional prayers and inspirational  
 thoughts.
  
- 3 SEEKING GOD IN OTHER PEOPLE.  
 In your home you have pictures of those 0 ..... 10  
 you love. Do you ask your God to look  
 after them? Do you think of those in  
 trouble -people close to you and those you  
 know who are sick or struggling?
  
- 4 SEEKING GOD IN NATURE.  
 Do you wonder at the beauty of nature? 0 ..... 10  
 Do you ponder over how God has created  
 the billions of stars in the sky, the hills  
 and valleys of the land and the world  
 which is our home? Do you think of the  
 greatness of the Almighty?

---

<sup>92</sup> Traditional prayers of thanks and praise will always have a central place in Christian spirituality. Our method of prayer provides a stepping stone which brings real meaning and power to these forms of prayer. It is also offers a very powerful way of becoming aware of the friendship and presence of Jesus.

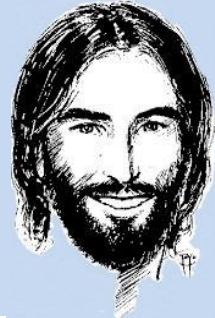




## Chapter Six

# ***Listening to Jesus In Mark.***

As they pondered over his writings,  
they realized how difficult it was  
for him to unite their kingdom.  
He was often misunderstood  
and not appreciated.  
Only slowly did they come to know  
his dreams and his goodness  
and how they must live like him.  
The people still live with  
the wonder of his presence.  
They long for the day  
when they will be together,  
For the whole world knows  
That their friendship is  
eternal.



**DAY 17 Why did Mark write his gospel?**

93

The majority of scholars believe that Mark wrote his gospel in the city of Rome around 68 AD. Rome had become a splendid capital with many temples and monuments. There was also much poverty. The population was about half a million of which 10% were Jewish.<sup>94</sup>

The words Jesus speaks are the subjective words of the author. The genuine words of Jesus are only found in the scriptures.

In July 64 AD, a nine day fire destroyed two thirds of the city. The Emperor Nero blamed the Christians and in a brutal persecution, he killed many of my followers including my friends Peter and Paul. The Roman historian Tacitus tells how Christians were tortured to reveal their fellow believers. He describes the horrible punishments that were inflicted on them: “They were covered with beast’s skins and torn to death by dogs; or they were fastened on crosses; and when daylight failed, were burned to serve as lamps by night.”<sup>95</sup> Nero’s persecution must have created confusion and chaos within Mark’s community. Many would have lost their loved ones. Some probably gave away their Christian practices. Others would have been under investigation, perhaps denying they were Christians or simply running away to avoid Nero’s police.

**“..torn to death  
by dogs ...  
fastened on  
crosses ...  
burned to serve  
as lamps by  
night”**

---

93 This chapter and the next three chapters will highlight many of the gospel themes. This should help you to appreciate the message of Jesus and make it easier for you to listen to what he is saying to you.

94 Some argue that the gospel could have been written close to Syria. Perhaps Mark is the John Mark mentioned in Acts 12:12.

95 *Annales* 15:44. Google search “Tacitus 15:44”.

### **What did Mark want to tell his persecuted community?**

Firstly, he needed to explain who I really was. He portrays me as a person filled with the power of God who came to bring God's kingdom to earth. As he unfolds his story, you will learn not only of my glory, but just as important, my suffering. The story of my death occupies about half of his gospel.<sup>96</sup>

Secondly Mark wanted to explain what it means to be my disciple. I had shown how a life given for others leads to salvation. Mark wanted to make sure that his community understood how sharing in my salvation involved sacrifice and human effort. This required a complete conversion to my ways. Its intensity is like that of a Super Bowl final. A key word in Mark is "immediately". He uses it twice as often as the rest of the New Testament.

**He portrays me  
as a person  
filled with the  
power of God  
who came to  
bring God's  
kingdom to  
earth.**

Thirdly he wanted to discredit Judaism. Approximately one in three of his gospel episodes tell of my disputes with the Jewish leaders. This could reflect the fierce competition between Marks' persecuted Christians and the well-respected Jewish faith. His condemnation of the Jewish leaders is also a condemnation of the evils that are very real in your world.

### **HOW DID MARK CREATE HIS STORY?**<sup>97</sup>

Mark probably had at his disposal many written and oral stories about my life. Some probably came directly from Peter or perhaps other eyewitnesses. Others would have evolved through the liturgy and teachings of earlier Christian communities. His skill was to unite them together so that they created a portrait of me which touched the hearts of his community. Mark's work

---

<sup>96</sup> Patrick Hartin (*Explaining the....* 35) believes that Mark 1:1, 1:11 and 9:7 identify Jesus as divine. This is also the view of the *Navarre Bible: The Gospels*. While many scholars disagree, perhaps Mark did believe Jesus to be divine but deliberately proclaimed his divinity in a way which respected those Jewish Christians who, through their lives, had prayed only to the God of Israel.

<sup>97</sup> For Peter see Martin Hengel (*Acts and....* 92) and the *Navarre Bible*, 192.

was inspired by the Spirit of God which descended on my first believers at Pentecost. His Gospel can be divided into five parts.

Part one:	1:1 - 1:13 .....	The beginning of my public ministry
Part two:	1:14 - 8:21 .....	My words and deeds are rejected
Part three:	8:22 - 10:52 .....	I am a suffering Messiah
Part four:	11:1 - 13:37 .....	Holy Week in Jerusalem
Part five:	14:1 - 16:20 .....	My death and resurrection

### 1:1- 1:13. PART ONE: I BEGIN MY PUBLIC MINISTRY.

#### ***The beginning of the Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God*** (Mark 1:1).

In the first verse of his gospel, Mark provides a summary and answer to the mystery of who I am. I am the Christ (meaning Messiah or Redeemer) who brings the kingdom of God to earth. I am the Son of God who redeems the world.

In Mark, both the God of the Heavens and the evil spirits know I am ‘the Holy One’ and ‘the Son of God’. But Mark hides this secret from my disciples until after my death. This was his way of revealing how I was not a Messiah who would defeat the Romans but a suffering Messiah whose death would lead to eternity. Perhaps this was Mark’s way of telling his community that it is only after suffering and hardship that they can understand my true identity. The verses below illustrate his approach.

<i>“Jesus Christ, Son of God”</i> (1:1)	used by Mark.
<i>“You are my beloved Son”</i> (1:11)	used by God, privately to Jesus.
<i>“The holy one of God”</i> (1:25, 34)	used by spirits.
<i>“The Son of God”</i> (3:11)	used by spirits.
<i>“Son of the Most High”</i> (5:7)	used by spirits.
<i>“You are the Messiah”</i> (8:30)	used by Peter incorrectly (see 8:33).
<i>“This is my Son”</i> (9:7)	used by God.
<i>“The Messiah, the Son”</i> (14:61)	used by Jesus to the high priest.
<i>“This was God’s Son”</i> (15:39)	used by the Centurion (the first man).

Mark wisely plays down the role of the Romans in my crucifixion. He turns the Centurion into a hero (Mark 15:39) making him the first human to recognize me as the true Son of God. His community had experienced enough hardship from Imperial Rome. Mark's Gospel does not record how I was born. These details are found only in Matthew and Luke.

This gospel begins by telling you three stories. Firstly he uses John the Baptist (Mark 1:2-8) to proclaim my presence on earth. Secondly through my baptism (Mark 1:9-11) he reveals how God's power is within me. Thirdly he tells you how I was tempted (Mark 1:12-13) as all human beings are. These stories highlight how I have come to earth, how I possess the power of God and how I am human. Mark will develop these three themes often contrasting them with the ways of the Jewish leaders whom he portrays as insincere and 'missing the boat'.

**"You are my Son ... with you I am well pleased"** (Mark 1:11).

1:1 .....	Mark's introduction
1:2-8 .....	John the Baptist proclaims my presence
1:9-11 .....	My baptism
1:12-13 .....	My temptations

### **A time to listen to your God. (2 MINUTES)**

Smile. Relax. Breathe slowly in and out. You are with a friend.  
Think of my image and repeat my name until you know I am close.

Listen to me speaking the first words in Mark's gospel.

***I am "Jesus Christ, the Son of God"***

*(Mark 1:1)*

BE AWARE OF YOUR GOD

LISTEN

PONDER

Are you really aware of my presence?

Let that question roll around in your mind.

## Day 18 Slowly revealing who I am.

### 1:14 - 8:21. PART TWO: MY WORDS AND DEEDS ARE REJECTED.

In the second section of his gospel Mark slowly reveals who I really am. He challenges you to discover how I am from God and how I have come to be your friend.

I call together my first disciples and travel around Galilee proclaiming God's eternal kingdom. I reveal myself as a healer and Savior and tell through parables and powerful deeds (miracles) how God's kingdom has come to earth. I urge my disciples to follow me but they do not fully understand. The Jewish Leaders also reject me. Contrasting my love and friendship with the ways I am rejected is a major theme in Mark.

The words Jesus speaks are the subjective words of the author. The genuine words of Jesus are only found in the scriptures.

***“Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him”***  
(Mark 4:41).

These chapters tell my story through a collection of episodes which seem to follow a random order and have little in common. I have divided the episodes into three categories to help you to see more clearly the intentions and vision of Mark.

Firstly my miracles (powerful deeds) are stories of compassion and kindness but their real meaning is to help you to understand how the power of God has come to earth. Miracles are important to Mark. He provides you with nineteen.

Secondly, both my calls to be my disciples and my parables explain in dramatic ways how you should live as kingdom people and how you should respond to my offer of redemption. Mark's gospel has four parables. Matthew and Luke possess over a dozen.<sup>98</sup>

Thirdly the rejection episodes describe how you fail to accept my friendship. These three categories provide you with a simple

---

<sup>98</sup> Mark's four parables are the sower (4:1-9), the growing seed (4:26-19), the mustard seed (4:30-32), the wicked tenants (12:1-11).

background for praying the words of Mark. This is similar to the way I placed Paul's thoughts into categories to help you to focus on my presence. It is important to remember that you are not just reading history. You are reading about my desire to be part of your life and how you need to respond to me as a Christian.

1:14-15	Summary.....	A summary (I am presence)
1:16-20	Parable / Call .....	I call four disciples (I call you for 2 minutes)
1:21-28	Miracle .....	Synagogue exorcism (Remove old ways)
1:29-39	Miracle .....	I heal Peter's mother-in-law & others (I bring happiness)
1:40-45	Miracle .....	Healing of the leper (I bring to you peace)
2:1-12	Miracle (1st conflict story).....	Healing of the paralytic (I will help you)
2:13-14	Call/parable .....	I call Levi (This is Matthew) (I call you every day)
2:15-17	Rejection (2nd conflict story .....	Eating with sinners) (Just be kind to all)
2: 18-22	Rejection (3rd conflict story.....	Question about fasting) (Put me first)
2:23-28	Rejection (4th conflict story) .....	Plucking Grain on the Sabbath (The ways of God)
3:1-5	Rejection (5th conflict story) .....	Healing on the Sabbath (Does this apply to you?)
3:6	Rejection .....	Jewish rulers reject me (Do you reject me?)
3:7-12	Summary.....	Healing by the sea (I am with you in times of trouble)
3:13-19	Call /parable .....	I call the 12 (I call you)
3:19-35	Rejection .....	I am rejected (Do you too turn away?)
4:1-20	Parable /call .....	Parable of the sower (Let me grow in your heart?)
4:21-25	Parable /call .....	Light under a tub, a measure (Speak of me to others)
4:26-29	Parable /call .....	Parable of the growing seed (You too must grow)

4:30-34	Parable /call .....	Parable of the mustard seed (We can grow together)
4:35-41	Miracle .....	1st calming of the storm (Calm my heart Lord)
5:1-20	Miracle .....	Healing of the Gerasene demoniac (I can heal you)
5:21-43	Miracle .....	Jairus' daughter & a woman's faith (Do you believe in me?)
6:1-6a	Rejection .....	Negative reaction from his family (Do you turn away?)
6:6b-13	Call /parable.....	12 Commissioned (You too are called)
6:14-29	Rejection .....	Opinions about Jesus & death of John (Death is for all)
6:30-44	Miracle .....	The loaves and fish (Jewish story) (I am your bread of life)
6:45-52	Miracle .....	I walk across the water (Jewish story) (My power is with you)
6:53-56	Miracle .....	Healings (Jewish story) (I bring you mercy)
7:1-23	Rejection .....	The rituals of the Pharisees (Jewish story) (Externals are not enough)
7:24-30	Miracle .....	A Phoenician girl is healed (Gentile story) (I will protect you)
7:31-37	Miracle .....	Healing of the deaf man (Gentile story) (Your God is hidden in everything)
8:1-10	Miracle .....	2nd story of loaves and fish (Gentile story) (I give you the Eucharist)
8:11-21	Rejection .....	from the Pharisees & my Disciples (Will you too turn away?)

In all these verses I am speaking directly to you. You are inside and part of these stories. You are Peter's mother in-law and the leper. The miracles you receive are not dramatic cures, rather small personal insights into who you really are. I am speaking to you about your life. You must decide how you will reply. Read the following verses. If one catches your attention spend some time pondering over what Jesus wants you to do.

**“Jesus... touched him... and he was made clean”** (Mark 1:40).

In your dreams and in your troubles and in I will touch you and give you strength.



**“He... called to him those whom he wanted”** (Mark 3:13).

I am calling you to friendship, to kindness and to eternity.

I will lead you to new places you have never been.

Only I know your future.

**“He has gone out of his mind”** (Mark 3:24).

Perhaps some people don't like you or think you act strangely. There are times when people think you have lost your pedals. Well there was a time when people thought I was out of my mind. I know what it is like to feel alone and be misunderstood.

**“Take heart, it is I; Do not be afraid”** (Mark 6:50).

In times of pain, loneliness and failure I am always with you.

**“Makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak”** (Mark 7:37).

Are you moving through the days of your life without listening to me or speaking to me? Let me help you?

**(They) “have nothing to eat”** (Mark 8:2).

I will bring the food of strength and meaning into your life.

**Listening to me. I am your friend.**

In the parable of the deaf man  
my miracle allows him to hear.

In the same way I want to  
open your hears so that  
you too can hear me.

**“‘Ephphatha’ .... ‘be opened’** (Mark 7:34).

Just think of my close presence with you and ask  
me to open your ears so that you can

**Listen to me.**

## Day 19 A Jesus who suffers!

### 8:22 - 10:52. PART THREE: JESUS, A SUFFERING MESSIAH.

Mark begins this section by using the themes of miracles, disciples and suffering.

He divides his verses into three cycles. In each cycle I predict my death, how my disciples failed to understand me and how I instructed them in discipleship.

It is not a coincidence that these three cycles are surrounded by two miracles about healing blind eyes. It is my hope that your eyes will also be opened and that you too will come to know me as a very close friend. These verses are about you. I am speaking to you. You are part of the drama. <sup>99</sup>

The words Jesus speaks are the subjective words of the author. The genuine words of Jesus are only found in the scriptures.

8:22-26 1<sup>st</sup> MIRACLE (at Bethsaida) ..... I heal blind eyes

1<sup>ST</sup> CYCLE: I predict my death. My disciples fail to understand.  
I instruct them.

8:27-30 Disciples ..... Peter's profession is rejected

8:31- 33 Sufferings ..... 1<sup>st</sup> prediction of my death

8:34 – 9:1 Disciples ..... You too must struggle

9:2-12 Miracle..... Transfiguration

9:14-29 Miracle..... Healing of the epileptic boy

2<sup>ND</sup> CYCLE: I predict my death. My disciples fail to understand.  
I instruct them.

9:30-32 Sufferings .....2<sup>nd</sup> prediction of my death

9:33-37 Disciples .....True greatest

9:38-41 Miracle ..... Strange exorcist

9:42-50 Disciples ..... Leading others astray

10:1-12 Disciples .....Teachings on divorce

10:13-16 Disciples ..... Blessing the children

---

<sup>99</sup> The divisions used in chapter's eight to ten are inspired by Francis Maloney (*Living Voice*.... 45-64). The structures and themes of all the Gospels have been simplified to help you focus on the person of Jesus and the spiritual message of the text.

- 10:17-22 Disciples ..... The rich young man  
10:23-31 Disciples ..... Rewards of discipleship

3RD CYCLE: I predict my death. My disciples fail to understand.  
I instruct them.

- 10:32-34 Suffering ..... 3rd prediction of the passion  
10:35-45 Disciples ..... James and John do not understand

10:46-52 2<sup>nd</sup> MIRACLE (at Jericho) ..... I heal blind eyes

These three cycles continue Mark's efforts to explain who I really am. In Mark 8:29 Peter comes close to understanding my identity. His profession of faith, "You are the Christ" acclaims me as the Messiah or Savior of the world. I rejected this title as many of my followers believed that the Messiah was a worldly king who would destroy the Roman occupation.<sup>100</sup>

Mark wanted to highlight how I am a suffering Messiah (or Christ) who would bring God's redemption through human pain and death. Three times he uses verses which called me the 'suffering Son of Man' (Mark 8:31; 9:30; 10:33). I would like you to think about me in this way and to realize that your Christian life sometimes follows a similar path.

Woven into these cycles is the story of the transfiguration (Mark 9:2-12). This event demonstrates how even though I would suffer the power and authority of my Abba would always be with me.

Here are a few verses from these Chapters. Cast your eye over them and see if one or two catch your attention. These are the ones you could use in your two minute reflection.<sup>101</sup>

**"Prayer should  
accompany  
the readings of  
Sacred  
Scripture"**

Vatican II: Divine Revelation 25

100 In the 1<sup>st</sup> Century BC, many Jewish people believed that the coming Messiah would restore the earthly power of God. See Page 61.

101 Francis Maloney (*Living Voice*.... 35, n6) tells us that Mark's gospel is dominated by two great themes: The story of Jesus and response of his disciples.

**“This is my Son, the Beloved. Listen to him”** (Mark 9:7).

I speak to you in the scriptures, in your church and through other people. How well do you listen to me?

**“The son of man must undergo great suffering”** (Mark 8:31).

Good people often suffer. True justice will only come in Heaven.

**“His sight was restored and he saw everything clearly”** (Mark 8:25).

Your busy life is a handbrake to becoming who you really are. Perhaps you are often blind and unable to see me and feel my presence? Be still and have faith and I will open your eyes and come to you.

**“Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all”** (Mark 9:35).

Is pride the reason why you are intolerant towards others?

**“What will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life?”** (Mark 8:36).

What is the real value of power, status and material things? Is it limited to fifty years of importance and rich children?

**“He ... went away ... for he had many possessions”** (Mark 10:22).

Possessions are not limited to money or material things. You are only truly rich when you unearth the meaning of your life. The most prized possessions are love, happiness and friends. These are the gifts which bring that inner peace and contentment which we all seek. See me as your friend and be rich now and forever.

In reading these verses, it is important that you experiment and use your imagination to discover the method of prayer which helps you to soak in my love. The moment you stop using your imagination you are in big trouble.

### **WHAT DOES MARK TELL YOU ABOUT DISCIPLESHIP?**

Mark's community would know first-hand how Peter and the other disciples were slow to understand and seem to lack true faith in me. Perhaps this was Mark's way of saying: 'Look, in the beginning my first disciples lacked faith but see what they were able to do when they fully accepted my call.' Mark wanted to tell his fearful community that, no matter what they had done or

how difficult their life was, following me would lead to eternal glory. Mark is saying exactly the same thing to you.

### **A Question?**

Here is a question for you. It is a question seldom asked by preachers. What was the message of the last sermon you listened to? Has it brought you closer to your God? Ten to one you have forgotten. This is why your daily reflection is so important. It speaks not just to your mind. It allows your God to enter your heart and to speak to you as a friend. Only by listening can you discover the friendship of God.

### **Listening to Jesus speaking to you.**

If you are having one of those bad hair days, have lost your iPhone or lack any kind of spiritual feeling don't let it bother you. Sometimes prayer can be like melting ice-cream. Times like this can become one of your finest prayers. Prayer is about trying to be aware of me. It is not about you feeling good.

Begin by repeating my name ten or twenty times.  
Slowly become aware of my presence.

LISTEN TO ME SPEAKING TO YOU

***“Let the little children come to me”***

(Mark 10:14).

You are so small compared to the size and power of creation  
and yet so precious to the God who is your friend.

Ponder over this great truth.

Day 20 Holy Week Drama.

11:1 - 13:37. PART FOUR: HOLY WEEK IN JERUSALEM.

In these next three chapters of Holy Week, I enter Jerusalem in triumph. I cleanse the temple and prepare to leave my disciples. My comments on the withering fig tree and my parable about the wicked tenants (Mark 12:1-

The words Jesus speaks are the subjective words of the author. The genuine words of Jesus are only found in the scriptures.

12) condemns Israel, for failing to accept me. Mark intensifies my disputes with the Jewish leaders by introducing five more conflict stories.<sup>102</sup> You must ask yourself if these stories apply to your life.

In chapter 13, I turn my thoughts to the future and to my return in glory. I speak many times about the final cosmic battle. This was the way many of my disciples understood the end of the world. These verses are a reminder to you that my presence with you will continue far beyond the busy material world in which you live.

11:1-10	.....My entry into Jerusalem
11: 10-14	..... The fig tree (Israel condemned)
11:15-17	..... Cleansing of the temple
11: 18-19	.....Jewish leaders plan my death
11:20-25	.....The fig tree withers (Israel condemned)
11:26-33	(1st conflict).....The authority of Jesus
12:1-12	..... Wicked tenant parable (Israel condemned)
12:13-17	(2nd conflict)..... Tribute to Caesar
12:18-27	(3rd conflict) .....The resurrection
12:28:34	<b>(4th conflict).....The two great commandments</b>
12:35-37	(5th conflict) .....David’s son is Lord

102 Earlier, in Mark 2:1 - 3:5 (Page 125), Mark groups together 5 conflict stories between Jesus and the Jewish leaders. Now in 11:27 to 12:37 Mark records 5 more conflict stories. The Parable of the wicked tenants comes between conflict one and two.

## **The Great commandment**

*This is one of the great theological statements of Christianity.*

***“You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’.”***

(Mark 12:30-31).

The word love is not always about emotions or pleasure.  
It can be translated as “to give and to share”.

I have loved you by giving and sharing my life with you.

I ask you to give and share your time with me  
and showing kindness to other humans.

103

12:37-40	.....	Scribes and Pharisees are condemned
12:41-44	.....	A widows' gift
13:1-24	.....	Predictions of the end <sup>104</sup>
13:24-27	.....	The coming of the Son of man
13: 28-31	.....	Promise of Heaven
13:32-37	.....	Mark's conclusion: take heed

***“His poor widow has put more in than all who are contributing... all she had to live on”*** (Mark 12:43-4)

This verse speaks in a beautiful way about living as a Christian.  
A widow with nothing gives all that she has. Her example must  
move us to give and share a little of our time with our God.

---

103 Mark 12:29-33 records how Jesus combined the Schema of Deuteronomy 4:6 to the second commandment of love found in Leviticus 19:18.

These verses are also found in Mt 22:34-40 and Luke 10:25-28

104 In Chapter 13, Jesus uses the popular 1<sup>st</sup> century apocalyptic style of preaching which was discussed on page 78.

***“Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes  
in the name of the Lord!”*** (Mark 11:9).

Do you praise your Lord when he comes into your mind?

Do you praise your Lord when something wonderful happens?

Do you praise the Lord when you awake each morning?

***“Keep alert; for you do not know when  
the time will come”*** (Mark 13:33).

On the last day there will be many surprises. Many of the things which make us important and which people admire in us could be our failings. Many of the things we considered as failures, (being forgotten and humiliated, suffering with illness, grieving over someone we love) might become our greatest achievements.

### **HOW DOES MARK SPEAK ABOUT THE JEWS?**

In Mark, I criticize both my own disciples and the Jewish people, but I reserve my sharpest words for the Pharisees and those who would think and act as they do. In Mark chapters 1 - 7 my arguments with the Jewish authorities slowly intensify. During chapters 8 - 10 they become quite confrontational and finally in the Holy Week chapters of 11 - 13 it is open war. This probably reflects the arguments and bitterness between Mark's community and the Jewish leaders of Rome. Mark has 11 references to Pharisees. None of them are friendly. They are not just stories from the past. Each one speaks to you about the things in your world which keep the two of us apart.

### **HOW WOULD YOU DESCRIBE MARK'S STYLE?**

Mark's gospel was a popular work of limited vocabulary but with more wisdom and structure than is commonly recognized. Important words like 'follow me' are often repeated. Mark wrote in Greek and used editorial asides to help his readers understand Jewish customs (Mark 7:3) and Aramaic phrases. You are told how the Aramaic 'Talitha Cumi' means little girl (Mark 5:41) and 'Ephphatha' translates 'be opened' (Mark 7: 34). Mark uses Latin terms like Legion (Mark 5:9 & 15) and Denarius (Mark 6:37, 12:15, 14:5) and reports what I said when I prayed alone (Mark 14:36-42). He repeats stories. Mark 6:34-44 is repeated in Mark 8:1-10 and Mark 4:35-41 is repeated in Mark 6:45-52. Adding the same story from his different sources could



indicate respect for their origins. His gospel is filled with the sufferings of Good Friday. He is well versed in the Greek version of the Hebrew Scriptures using them directly 19 times. He speaks with passion and honesty. Some examples can be seen in Peter's three-fold betrayal (Mark 14:66-72), my anger (Mark 1:41, 3:5), my terror and anguish of Good Friday (Mk 14:34) and how my family believed that I was mad (Mark 3:21).

### **WHAT IS SPECIAL ABOUT MARK?**

T. S. Eliot tells us how great poems are ones which create new forms. Mark was the creator of the Gospel form. He was able to combine his traditions about my life with the needs of his post-resurrection community. Mark's gospel found immediate acceptance throughout the Christian world. In just over 15 years, both Matthew in Antioch and Luke in Ephesus used Mark's style, order and words as the basis for their gospels. Matthew retains over 90% of Mark. Luke uses over 40%.

Mark's gospel proclaims my presence in every age. It reaches into your hearts and challenges you to respond. It speaks of my eternal love and reminds you of the ways in which you can destroy that friendship.

### **TIME TO LISTEN TO YOUR GOD.**

You have my cell phone number. You can always reach me by entering your sacred word and listening to my thoughts. It is a free call and there are no monthly charges. Ring me and let's chat for a couple of minutes.

**You shall love the Lord with all your heart.....**

(Mk 12:30-31)

PONDER OVER HOW THESE GREAT  
COMMANDMENTS APPLY TO YOUR LIFE

## Day 21      The great events of Easter.

### 14:1 - 16:20. PART FIVE: MY DEATH AND RESURRECTION.

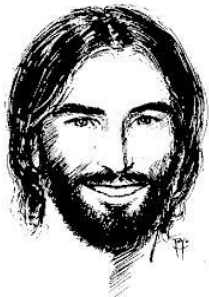
Mark's story reaches its climax in the three great events of Easter. The night before I died, I offer my body and blood to all Christians in every generation. My suffering and death finds meaning in the glory of my resurrection - an ending most suitable for a persecuted community. These great acts of redemption complete Mark's efforts tell my story and to inspire his Christian friends.

The words Jesus speaks are the subjective words of the author. The genuine words of Jesus are only found in the scriptures.

#### HOLY THURSDAY.

At the Last Supper I offer you a way of reliving my redemption and sharing in my eternal presence. At Gethsemane I speak to all Christians who through the centuries have been too tired or busy to spend time with me.

14:1-11	.....Conspiracy, anointing & betrayal (Will you turn away?)
14:12-17	..... Preparations for Passover (Do you set aside time to meet me?)
14:18-21	.....I foretell my betrayal (Do you betray me?)
14:22-25	.....Institution of Last Supper (A gift from your God)
14:26-31	..... Peter's denial predicted (Do you deny me?)
14:32-52	.....My passion begins at Gethsemane (I will help you to accept your future)



**“This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many”** (Mark 14:24).

**“Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep awake one hour?”** (Mark 14:37).

**The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak”** (Mark 14:38).

**GOOD FRIDAY.**

Giving up your life is the greatest form of love. Soldiers give their lives for their country. Parents give their lives for their children. All those who love you have given parts of their lives to make you who you are and to provide you with happiness and security. In a similar, but divine way, I gave up my life to bring redemption and unending life to you and to the whole of the human race. <sup>105</sup>

14:53-65	.....	Before the Jewish Sanhedrin
14:66-72	.	Peter's denial
15:1-14	.....	I am delivered to Pilate, Jesus or Barnabas
15:15-20	.	I am scourged and given a crown of thorns
15:21-27	.....	The road to Golgotha, crucifixion between two thieves
15:28-32	.....	I am mocked on the cross
15:33-41	.....	Death on the cross, witnesses
15:42-47	.....	My burial

**“Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed one?”**

**Jesus said ‘I am’**” (Mark 14:62). <sup>106</sup>

Even though I was suffering I want the chief priest to know that I was still the redeemer of the world. I want you to know that even if uncertainty and doubt enters your world I will always look after you.

**“I do not know this man”** (Mark 14:71)

Sometimes you are just like Peter. There are days when you ignore me. Peter changed. He became a real friend. Can you do the same?

**“The curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom”** (Mark 15:38). <sup>107</sup>

I died on the cross and change creation forever.

**“Truly, this man was God’s son!”** (Mark 15:39).

Do the words of the Roman soldier live in your heart?

---

105 Mark continues to contrast the love of Jesus with the failings of his disciples..

106 After it became clear that Jesus would suffer, he accepts the title Messiah.

107 Mark’s writings contain history but a trace of apocalyptic language is also present (see pages 67 and 78).

## EASTER SUNDAY.

This day provides an answer to why you exist. I am present and my presence will never end. The mysterious love of Easter Sunday lives within you. Choose one of the verses below. Read it a couple of times and wonder.

**“you are looking for Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has been raised; he is not here.”** (Mark 16:6).

**“When they heard that he was alive ... they would not believe it”** (Mark 16:11).

**“So then the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God”** (Mark 16:19).

## Mark’s longer ending. <sup>108</sup>

16:1-8	.....	Women at the tomb
16:9-1	.....	I appear to Mary Magdalene
16:12-13	.....	I appear to two disciples
16:14-18	.....	My disciples are commissioned
16:19-20	.....	I ascend to my Father in Heaven

## Do you believe in Guardian Angels?

In Mark 16:5, a young man announces that I have risen. In Matt 28:2 it is an angel. In Luke 24:4 it is two men and in John 20:12 it is two angels. Angels are mentioned many times in the gospels. They are spirits with no human form but they are often described as humans or creatures with wings. We are not told how they were created. They are usually thought of as the messengers of God. <sup>109</sup>

---

<sup>108</sup> There are many scholars who believe that Mk 16:9-20 was a later addition to the gospel. It could be that the original ending was lost or never existed. Whatever happened these verses have always been regarded as part of the inspired word.

<sup>109</sup> It was an angel who spoke to Joseph (Matt 1:20) and Mary (Luke 1:26) in the stories of my birth. The Gallup poll records that 89% of Christians believe in angels ([news.gallup.com/poll/193271/americans-believe-god.aspx](http://news.gallup.com/poll/193271/americans-believe-god.aspx)).

What do you think about Guardian angels? The scriptures warn us never to hurt “these little ones; for, I tell you, in Heaven their angels always see the face of my Father” (Matt 18:10). Do you think you have a special guardian Angel? How do you know? Could you describe how you feel about your guardian angel? This is a great talking point for families and classes. There are some angels that don’t have wings. We call them friends

### **Mum will not be pleased?**

A minister came to a small country town to celebrate a wedding. Beds were scarce and he agreed to sleep in the same room as the family’s seven year old boy. Before getting into bed the boy knelt down by his bed. The minister, wanting to show good example, knelt down by his bed. The boy looked at him and said “What are you doing?” The minister replied, “The same as you”. “Well” replied the boy, “you will be in big trouble with mum in the morning. The toilet container is on my side of the bed”.

### **Experiencing my resurrection.**

Just close your eyes and gently become aware of the whiteness which seems to be present in the blackness. Imagine you are looking into a thick mist in which nothing is visible. Slowly allow your imagination to catch movement in front of you. Look again and a person is slowly appearing and moving towards you. It is me, your Lord. I come close and you see my face. I am smiling at you. I sit beside you. You remain very still as you wait for me to speak. You hear the words, ‘How are you my friend?’ I look at you. No words are said. It is a time of wonder and beauty and peace.

For a couple of minutes listen and ponder over what the angel on Easter morn is revealing to you

**“He has been raised”** (Mark 16:19)

What does this mean to your life?

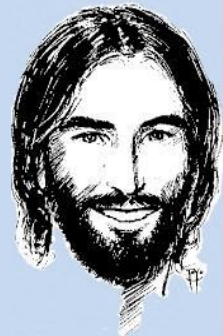
**Just Wonder**



## *Chapter Seven*

# *Listening to Jesus in Matthew*

*Each day they would read the  
thoughts he had written.  
Every sentence is filled with  
his wisdom and concern.  
They taught their children about living  
with his kindness and tolerance,  
and grew to appreciate  
the wisdom of his ways.  
The people still live with  
the wonder of his presence.  
They long for the day when  
they will be together.  
For the whole world knows that  
their friendship is eternal.*



## **DAY 22      Matthew and his Community.**

Matthew's gospel was created in the city of Antioch just 450 miles north of Jerusalem. Christianity had arrived in the city very soon after Pentecost. There are indications that Matthew's community was urban, educated and affluent. Matthew uses the word 'city' 26 times.<sup>110</sup>

These words are not the genuine words of Jesus. The words of Jesus are only found in the scriptures.

Through the years the predominantly Jewish community with ties to Judaism slowly evolved into one dominated by Gentiles. You can see how the gospel possesses two different sets of sayings, an older Jewish tradition and a newer Gentile vision.

<sup>111</sup>

a) The older Jewish tradition:

- 10:5-6      Go nowhere among the Gentiles.
- 15:24      Go only to the lost sheep of Israel.
- 5:21-24      Importance of Mosaic Law (Sanhedrin & sacrifice).
- 23:2-3      Obey the Synagogue authorities.

b) The newer Gentile tradition:

- 5:20-48      Jesus criticizes the Mosaic Law six times.
- 2:1-12      The Gentile Magi pay homage to the new born child.
- 3:15-17      The Gentiles have seen a great light.
- 28:26-8      Go teach all nations ... (universal salvation).

After the destruction of the Jewish temple in AD 70<sup>112</sup> the Jewish leaders began forcing Matthew's Jewish Christians out of the Synagogue. During the 80's the community responded

<sup>110</sup> Antioch is 375 miles north of Jerusalem. It was the Christians of Antioch who sent Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey (Acts 15:1ff).

<sup>111</sup> In the late 40's disputes started to emerge over the need for Gentile converts to observe Jewish customs. In AD 50 The Jerusalem conference (Acts 15) decreed that Gentiles need not be circumcised (See pages 85-86).

<sup>112</sup> The Roman destruction of the Jerusalem temple destroyed the central symbol of Jewish worship and forced the Jewish Faith to restructure and purify their beliefs. In this new setting the Pharisees and the synagogue had a dominant role. We see this tension echoed in Mt 10:17 which predicts that Jesus' disciples will be scourged in the synagogues and in Mt 4:23, 9:35, 12:9, 13:54 where we are told how Jesus taught in 'their' not 'our' synagogues.



with the creation of a unique Gospel story written by a convert from Judaism called Matthew. His gospel indicates he was a Jewish scribe who was well trained in the Mosaic Law. He is the only evangelist who quotes from both the Greek and Hebrew translations of the Old Testament. If Matt 13:52 is not a conscious self-description, it certainly happens to fit him: *"Every scribe ... is like the master of the household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old"*.

Matthew created a unified vision of God's revelation which was centered on my presence. He begins by telling you how "God is with us" (1:23) and ends with "I am with you always" (28:20). I am portrayed as the exalted Lord and great teacher who brings to earth the Kingdom of God and fulfills the dreams of the Jewish people. This emphasis, together with its strong links with Israel's past, its vision of church and its universal mission, made this gospel one of the great foundation documents of Christendom. The gospel was completed in the late 80s.

Matthew's principal source was the Gospel of Mark. He generally follows Mark's story line and uses over 90% of Mark's 11,300 Greek words. Matthew's gospel is twice as long as Mark's. Matthew removed the following phrases from Mark's Gospel. Perhaps he felt that they did not suit my image.

*"He has gone out of his mind"* (Mark 3:21).

*"Who touched my clothes"* (Mark 5:30).

*"He could do no deed of power there"* (Mark 6:5).

*"Where am I to eat?"* (Mark 14:14).

*"Distressed and agitated"* (Mark 14:33).

Matthew also had his own sources <sup>113</sup> and he used material which he shared with Luke. Matthew the Apostle is important in this gospel. This is the only gospel where the Apostle Matthew is called 'a tax collector' (Matt 10:3) and his name, Levi (found in Mark 2:14 & Luke 5:27) is changed to Matthew (Matt 9:9).

---

113 Matthew's personal sources provided him with ten parables, a number of sayings, his infancy stories and a few passion traditions. As he did with Mark, Matthew reshapes the material he shared with Luke (see Q source on page 233) to emphasize the divine power of Jesus.

# How did Matthew structure his Gospel?

Matthew introduces my story with his accounts of my birth. He then divides my public life into five sections each concluding with a major sermon. Notice below how my five sermons end with words similar to ‘and when Jesus finished these sayings’. Matthew highlights my central theme, the Kingdom of God (or its equivalent, the Kingdom of Heaven) as I did. Most of his parables, miracles and sayings relate to the kingdom. His gospel story concludes with the drama of my passion, death and resurrection. Throughout this gospel you can listen to the story of my life and how my presence has changed your world forever.

1:1-2:23	INTRODUCTION..... I come as a child.
3:1-4:25	MY WORK BEGINS.....I prepare for my public ministry.
5:1-7:29	1 <sup>ST</sup> SERMON ..... and preach my Sermon on the Mount. <i>"Now when Jesus had finished saying these things" (Matt 7:28-29)</i>
8:1-9:34	DISCIPLESHIP ..... I work miracles.
9:35-11:1	2 <sup>ND</sup> SERMON ..... and preach about discipleship. <i>"Now when Jesus had finished instructing his 12 disciples" (Matt 11:1).</i>
11:2-12:50	THE KINGDOM ..... I explain the kingdom of God.
13:1-13:53	3 <sup>RD</sup> SERMON .....and preach about this kingdom. <i>"When Jesus had finished saying these parables" (Matt 13:53).</i>
13:53-17:27	THE CHURCH ..... I prepare my disciples for the future.
18:1-19:1	4 <sup>TH</sup> SERMON ..... and preach on my church. <i>"When Jesus had finished saying these things" (Matt 19:1).</i>
19:1-23:39	THE FUTURE .....I attack Israel and, prepare for my death.
24:1-26:1	5 <sup>TH</sup> SERMON.....and preach on the final times. <i>"When Jesus finished saying these things" Matt 26:1).</i>
CH 26-28	CONCLUSION ..... I become your Savior. CH 26 ..... Holy Thursday. CH 27 ..... Good Friday. CH 28 ..... Easter Sunday.

**1:1 – 2:23. The introduction: I come as a child.**

Matthew begins his gospel by telling you about my background and how I was born. He informs you how I came from Abraham, the father of Judaism (Mt 1:2-17). Luke's more gentile approach traces my ancestors back to Adam (Luke 3:23-38). Matthew follows the Jewish custom and proclaims the story of my birth through the eyes of Mary's husband Joseph. This differs from Luke who relates my story through the person of Mary. Matthew's account of my birth is filled with the mystery and wonder of Christmas. These verses are much more than history. My coming is happening within you every day of your life. <sup>114</sup>

- 1:2-17 Genealogy of Jesus ..... I am human & Jewish.  
1:18-25 Joseph accepts me as his son. .... Do you accept me?  
2:1-12 The wise men pay homage. .... Do you honor me?  
2:13-21 Flight into Egypt & return. .... Difficult times!  
2:22-23 My family settles in Nazareth. .... Can I settle with you?

***Listen to me tell a story through the words of Matthew.***

The wise men travelled many miles to pay homage to a small child who would bring a new divine meaning to human life. Their wisdom reminds you about something greater than TV or iPhones. Their story challenges you to look deeply into the way you live your life. Do you pay proper homage to the small child who would become the redeemer of the human race?

**Relax.** Think of the birth scene of Jesus.

**Read** the words of the wise men and

**Make** them real within your heart.

***“We have come to pay him homage”*** (Matt 2:2).

---

<sup>114</sup> In Matthew chapters one and two we learn about 'where Jesus came from' (Mt 1:2-17), 'how' he was born (Mt 1:18-25), 'who came to worship him' (Mt 2:1-12) and 'what' happened after his birth (Mt 2:13-23).

## **DAY 23 My famous Sermon on the Mount.**

In Chapters three and four Matthew introduces my public life in a similar way to Mark

- 3:1-12 John the Baptist tells the world of my presence.
- 3:13-4:23 I am baptised and tempted.
- 4:23-5:2 I call my first disciples and begin preaching and healing.

The words Jesus speaks are the subjective words of the author. The genuine words of Jesus are only found in the scriptures.

### **5:3-11. My 1st Sermon: My Sermon on the Mount.**

What follows is my famous Sermon on the Mount. These verses illustrate Matthew's genius both as a theologian and as a writer. His eight beatitudes summarize my thoughts on how a Christian must live. The blessed ones are those who will have a special place in the eternal world of God. <sup>115</sup>

Three beatitudes are beyond your control. They require acceptance (The poor, those who mourn, the persecuted).

Three beatitudes describe how you should deal with others. They require love (the meek, the merciful and peacemakers).

Two beatitudes ask you to become better Christians (to seek what is right and be pure in heart). They require action.

The beatitudes turn the wisdom of the world upside down. Power, status and money end up at the bottom of the pile and the eternal winners are those who live by the ways of God.

They are not prayers or commands. They are ways of living which bring the eternal gifts of God. They remind you that every act of kindness, every effort to be more Christian, every pain and every hurt that you have ever experienced will be remembered forever by your God. I am telling you that it is not your successes but the way you live the beatitudes that will be your passport to Heaven. You must continually ask yourself: Am I worthy to be called 'blessed' by my God?

---

<sup>115</sup> Mary and Jesus were called blessed: "Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb" (Lk 1:43).

## *The blessings*    Mt 5:3-11

<i>"Blessed are the poor in spirit"</i> ACCEPTANCE	Those lacking money, friends, happiness or peace.
<i>"Those who mourn"</i> ACCEPTANCE	To live with pain, sickness loneliness or loss.
<i>"The meek"</i> LOVE	Those who are tolerant, kind, gentle and humble.
<i>"Who hunger for what is right"</i> ACTION	Those who seek to make our world a better place.
<i>"The merciful"</i> LOVE	Those who are kindhearted. forgiving and compassionate.
<i>"The pure in heart"</i> and ACTION	Being honest in thoughts in dealings with others.
<i>"The peacemakers"</i> LOVE	Those who accept criticism and listen to others.
<i>"The persecuted"</i> ACCEPTANCE	Caused by hatred, race, color or religion.

5: 3-11	..... <b>The sermon on the mount</b>
5:13-16	.....Becoming the salt of the earth and light of the world
5:17-20	.....Keep my commandments
5:21-26	..... Treating people with respect
5:27-32	..... Respecting marriage
5:38-42	..... Forgive your enemies
6:1-4	..... Give to the poor
6:5-8	.....Praying in private with few words
6:9-15	..... <b>PRAY THE OUR FATHER (SEE NEXT PAGE)</b>
6:16-23	..... Fasting, treasures, a sound eye
6:24-7:5	..... Two masters, trust and faith, judging
7:6-11	.....Centre your life on God
7:12-13	..... The Golden Rule
7:14-23	..... By their fruits not by saying 'Lord, Lord'
7:24-27	..... Parable of a house built upon rock
7:28-29	..... Conclusion to the Sermon of the Mount

*Matthew's Our Father* Mt 6:9-13

In the introduction to my Our Father I instruct you not to use as many words as the Gentiles did (Mt 6:7).

My prayer focused on the two great beliefs which were the center of my life.

I began by praising my loving Father, my Abba, upon whom I was totally dependent (See page 56) My Abba was the source of my inspiration and strength.

I then prayed that the coming kingdom of God, God's presence, would bring peace not war, happiness not poverty, awareness not neglect of the divine and eternal life not death, to the entire human race.

My prayer concludes by asking for my Father's help, forgiveness and protection.

HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU SAID THE OUR FATHER AND FAILED TO BE AWARE OF THE DEEP SPIRITUAL MESSAGE IT CONTAINS.

Praise  
To the  
Father in  
heaven  
↓  
Thy  
Kingdom  
come  
↓  
give us  
↓  
forgive  
us  
↓  
Protect  
us

**Listening to what I am saying to you.**

My Sermon on the Mount contains some of my most striking and powerful expressions about living a Christian life. Choose one that is meaningful to you and listen to me.

***“You are the salt of the earth”*** ..... (Matt 5:13)

***“You are the light of the world”*** ..... (Matt 5:14)

***“I say this to you, ‘love your enemies’”***..... (Matt 5:44)

***“When you pray, go to your room and shut the door”***..... (Matt 6:6)

***“When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do”***..... (Matt 6:7)

***“Why do you see the speck in your neighbor’s eye and do not notice the log in your own?”***..... (Matt 7:3)

***“Do to others as you would have them do to you”*** ..... Matt 7:12)

## DAY 24 BEING A DISCIPLE IN THE KINGDOM.

### 8:1 - 9:34. Discipleship explained through nine miracles.

After the Sermon on the Mount Matthew introduces you to nine miracles. They remind you of how I possess the power and compassion of God. They also remind you of your personal miracle – The presence of the divine which is dwelling within you.

The words Jesus speaks are the subjective words of the author. The genuine words of Jesus are only found in the scriptures.

8:1-4	1st miracle	.....A leper is cured.
8:5-13	2nd miracle	..... The Centurion.
8:14-17	3rd miracle	.....Peter's mother-in-law.
8:18-22		.....Following your Savior.
8:23-27	4th miracle	..... Calming of the storm.
8:28-34	5th miracle	.....Satan is expelled.
9:1-8	6th miracle	..... A paralytic.
9:9-17		.....Eating with sinners.
9:18-26	7th miracle	.....A women & a girl are cured.
9:27-31	8th miracle	.....Sight is restored.
9:32-34	9th miracle	.....A dumb man hears his Lord.

***“Lord, I am not worthy to have you come under my roof; but only speak the word, and my servant will be healed” (Matt 8:8).***

***“Even the winds and the sea obey him?” (Matt 8:27).***

### 9:35 -11:1. My 2nd Sermon: Discipleship.

My second sermon is about the difficulties and rewards of discipleship. I name my twelve disciples and tell them to go out and spread the kingdom of God. Using colourful language I send them out to bring kindness and peace to all they meet. They were to accept food but not money and to always rely on the presence of God within them.

You too are called to bring the love of God to others? Think of one person whom you could help? What action is appropriate? Will it just remain on your ‘to do list’?



9:35-37	Introduction.
10:1-16	I instruct my 12 apostles. ....Do you listen to me?
10:17-25	I am with you.....I am very fond of you.
10:26-33	I will protect you. ....I will always be with you.
10:34-39	Conflict will follow you. .. Accept setbacks. Mend quarrels.
10:40-42	Rewards of discipleship..... eternity.

***“Do not be afraid”*** (Matt 10: 31)

The greatest power in the universe is with you.

***“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few”*** (Matt 9:37)

A Christian is a person who believes but also  
brings the God’s love and wisdom to others.

### **11:1 - 12:50. God’s kingdom is opposed.**

Matthew now records stories and parables which contrast the divine power within me with the forces which would destroy my Abba’s kingdom. These forces are alive and active in your hearts and in your world.

11:1-15	My power..... It is present in John the Baptist
11:16-24	Evil / Sin..... I condemn evil and sin
11:25-27	My power.....The only source is my Abba
11:28-30	My power.....I offer comfort to all
12:1-14	My power.....My ways are greater than the Sabbath
12:15-21	My power. .... I am praised with the words of Isaiah
12:22-37	Evil / Sin..... Pharisees oppose me
12:38- 42	My power.....One day my power will be revealed to all
12:43-45	Evil / Sin.....Unclean spirits possess the world
12:46-50	My Power..... You are my family. I will protect you

***“You have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants”*** (Matt 11:25).

The noise and demands of your 21<sup>st</sup> century world will always make it very difficult for you to be still and silent and listening to me. Your intentions are good but it is very easy to delay your prayer in favor of other activities. You are a bit like the mouse who said to the cat: “I am not scared of you but I am really pleased that I can run faster than you?” There are times when you will find it easier to run away than to spend time with me.



**13:1 - 13:52. 3rd Sermon: Seven kingdom parables.**

In my third sermon Matthew uses seven farming parables to explain the kingdom of God.

By now you will have a good idea on how to summarize and apply the verses to your personal life. These parables might speak to you in other ways. That is all the better. The spiritual approach to the scriptures encourages you to hear my message with your own ears.

11:1-9	1st parable	..... Parable of the sower
13:10-17		..... Purpose of the parables
13:18-23		..... The sower parable is explained
13:24 -33	2nd parable	..... Parable of the weeds
13:31-3	3rd parable	..... Parable of the mustard seed
13:33- 26	4th parable	..... Parable of yeast
13:34-43		..... Parable of the weeds is explained
13:44	5th parable	..... Parable of the hidden treasure
13:45-46	6th parable	..... Parable of the precious pearl
13:47-53	7th parable	..... Parable of the fishermen

***“The kingdom of God is like a treasure hidden in a field which someone found and hid ... then in great joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field”*** (Matt 13:44)

**Two minutes being with me..**

Breathe deeply a few times. You are with a friend. Think of your image of me and repeat my name until you are aware that I am with you.

***“Come to me, all you that are weary ....  
and I will give you rest”*** (Matt 11:28).

I am knocking on your door. I bring gifts of peace and love.  
Will you open the door of your heart and listen to me?

WILL YOU SPEAK TO ME ABOUT YOUR DREAMS?

WILL YOU ASK ME TO HELP YOU?

OR WILL YOU CONTINUE TO WATCH TV?

**DAY 25      The beginnings of the Church.**

**13:53 - 17:27.      I prepare my friends for my Church. <sup>116</sup>**

In these chapters Matthew uses miracles to remind his readers how I will always take care of them (Feeding of the 4000 and 5000), how I possess the power of God (walking on the water) and how my Abba will always be with them (the Transfiguration). I explained to my disciples that my life, even in death, was lived in the service of others (Predictions of my passion) and that this was their future lives as disciples. They still failed to understand. This was the uncertain setting in which I spoke about my future church (Matt 16:13-20) and told Peter that he would be its first leader (Matt 16:16).

The words Jesus speaks are the subjective words of the author. The genuine words of Jesus are only found in the scriptures.

My Christian community was far from perfect but after my resurrection and with the power of the Spirit it became the vehicle I used to spread my redemption. In these chapters Matthew tells my story through the themes of rejection, service, miracle and church.

- 13:54-58      (Rejected) ..... I am rejected in my home town of Nazareth
- 14:1-12      (Rejection) ..... John the Baptist is killed
- 14:13-21      (Church) ..... Feeding of 5,000 <sup>117</sup>
- 14:22-33      (Miracles) ..... Jesus walks on the water
- 14:34-15:9      (Miracles) ..... More healings
- 15:10-20      (Service) ..... Be pure in your heart
- 15:21-31      (Miracles) ..... More healings
- 15:32-39      (Church) ..... Feeding of the 4,000
- 16:1-12      (Rejected) ..... I condemn The Pharisees

116 Underlining Matthew's understanding of Church was his appreciation of the living presence of Jesus in each and every Christian. His thoughts echoed the way Paul spoke about living 'in Christ Jesus' (Gal 2:20, Eph 3:17) and being part of the community of Christ (Gal 3:28. Rom 12:15).

117 The Gospel accounts of the feeding of the 5,000 (Matt 14:13-21, Mark 6:31-44, Luke 9:10-17) and the 4000 (Matt 15:32-39, Mark 8:1-10) use similar words to those found in the accounts of the last supper (Mark 14: 22-25, Matthew 26:26-29, Luke 22:14-23 and Paul 1 Cor11:23-26). These early Christian communities identified these miracles of food very closely with the Eucharist.

16:13-20	(Church).....	<b>Peter's confession -beginnings of church</b>
16:21-23	(Service).....	1st prediction of passion
16:24-28	(Service).....	Conditions of discipleship
17:1-9	(Miracle) .....	Transfiguration
17:10-13	(Miracle) .....	Coming of Elijah
17:14-21	(Miracle) .....	I heal the epileptic boy
17:22-23	(Service).....	2nd prediction of the passion
17:24-27	(Rejected).....	Temple tax

***“Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid”*** (Matt 14:27).

***“You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God”*** (Matt 16:16).

***“His face shone like the sun and his clothes became dazzling as light”*** (Matt 17:2).

### **18:1- 18:35. My 4th Sermon on the Church.**

The beginning of my church in 16:13-20 leads to my ideas on community. In this fourth sermon Matthew explains my thoughts on seven areas of church life. These are the important issues facing community life in the time of Matthew. How would you list these virtues in your own Christian community? How would you list them in your own personal life?

My thinking is easy to accept but difficult to achieve.

18:1-5	(1)	Humility .....	True greatness
18:6-10	(2)	Sin .....	Tempting others
18:10-14	(3)	Concern.....	Parable of the lost sheep
18:15-18	(4)	Authority. ....	Correcting others
18:19-20	(5)	Prayer.....	Where 2 or 3 are gathered
18:21-22	(6)	Forgiveness.....	How often must you forgive?
18:23-35	(7)	Kindness .....	A parable about helping others

***“What you bind on earth will be bound in Heaven”***  
(Matt 18:18).

***“Not seven times, but, I tell you, seventy-seven times”***  
(Matt 18:22).

***If “two or three are gathered in my name, I am there”***  
(Matt 8:20).

### **What kind of Church did Matthew speak of?**

Matthew is very concerned with life and order of the church. He makes it clear that being a Christian is not just a personal experience. It involves belonging to and being guided by 'my' church (Matt 16:18). He emphasized both law and authority (Matt 16:17-19; 18:15-18). Both come 'from Christ' but they needed to be accompanied by service of others (Matt 20:24-28) and humility. This involves directives about being like a child (Matt 18:1-4), clothing (Matt 23:5), 1st seats (Matt 23:6) and special titles (Matt 23:7-10).

All the gospels stress my unconditional love. In Matthew, love is an essential element for all leaders and members of the Christian community. It demands compassion (Matt 8:17) and forgiveness (Matt 6:2, 18:21-35). It has no boundaries. It extends to the young, to the poor and to the neglected (Matt 18:10-14; 25:31-46).

***"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart ...  
You shall love your neighbor as yourself"*** (Matt 22:37-38).

In the 50's Matthew's community had experienced Peter's leadership and influence. Now, in the 80's, Matthew highlights the role of Peter. He uses Mark's commissioning of the twelve (Mark 3:16) but adds 'first' to Peter's name (Matt 10:21). His special additions about Peter are found in Matt 14:27-33, Matt 16:17-19 and Matt 17:24-17. Peter becomes the supreme Rabbi with authority to interpret my teachings. He has authority over the whole of 'My' church (Matt 16:18).

***"You are Peter and on this rock I will build MY church"*** (Matt 16:18).

### **Time to be with your God.**

Choose a verse which touches you and listen.

Let yourself experience my close presence.

Read your verse a couple of times and say my name.

Listen and wounder.

Listen and Wonder.

**LISTEN**

**LISTEN**

## DAY 26      *The end approaches.*

### 19:1 - 23:39. Preparing my friends for my coming death.

I enter Jerusalem, the city of glory where I continue to condemn Israel's leaders and illustrate in different ways how Christians should live.

In Chapter 23 I am particularly severe on the Pharisees. This material reflects the bitterness of Matthew's community towards their synagogues. The same condemnation extends to the things in your world which hinder our friendship.

The words Jesus speaks are the subjective words of the author. The genuine words of Jesus are only found in the scriptures.

19:1-12	Pharisees and marriage
19:13-15	Children are blessed
19:16-22	The rich young man
19:23-30	The reward of discipleship
20:1-16	A vineyard parable
20:17-19	3rd passion prediction
20:20-23	A mother's request
20:29-34	Healing two blind men
21:1-9	I enter Jerusalem in glory
21:10-17	Cleansing in the temple
21:18-22	The fig tree which withered
21:23-27	Question of authority
21:28-32	A parable about honesty
21:33-46	A parable of the wicked tenants
22:1-14	A parable of the Great Supper
22:15-22	Tribute to Caesar
22:23-33	Some Jews deny the resurrection
22:34-40	<b>The greatest commandments</b>
22:41-46	I am the Son of David
23:1-36	Woes to Scribes & Pharisees
23:37-3	Lament over Jerusalem

***"Love ... God with all your heart ... love your neighbor"***

(Mt 22:37-39.)

It was the wisdom of my Jewish religion which provided me with these two great pillars of Christian living. Both require faith, but just as important, action. They are discussed more fully on page 133.

***“Are you envious because I am generous?”*** (Matt 20:15).

It seems so unfair how some people have money and good health and happiness while many good people receive little. Experiencing these things can generate deep feelings of envy and injustice. My words remind you that this world does not always reward the good. It is but a dot on the circle of eternity. It is only in the world beyond that the books will be balanced.

***“Invite everyone you find to the wedding banquet”*** (Matt 20:9). When you go to a party it’s great to catch sight of a friend. When you arrive at the heavenly banquet, it will be even better still to catch sight of someone you really helped.

***“Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s”*** (Matt 22:21). You started life with nothing but through your life you always seek to acquire more. What about spending some time pondering over this question: Are your thoughts dominated by this need for more of the things of this world or is it with the God that lives within you?

## **24:1 - 25:46. My 5th and final sermon.**

The first part of my sermon is based on a first century belief in a cosmic battle. You are told how the stars would fall to earth (Matt 24:29) and the Son of Man would come like lightning (Matt 24:27). See pages 68 and 78.

The later part of the sermon contains five parables which remind you that one day you will leave this world. The sermon concludes with a powerful story about judgment.

24:1-14	A prediction that Jerusalem will be destroyed
24:15-28	It is a time of sorrows
24:29-31	The coming of the Son of Man
24:32-36	Interpretation of the fig tree parable
24:37-44	The parable of the flood and the need to stay awake
24:45-51	The parable about the honest and dishonest servants
25:1-13	The parable of the ten maidens
25:14-30	The parable of the talents
25:31-46	Separation of the sheep from the goats

***“Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.”*** (Matt 25:40)

The parable of the talents is the story of your life. I am the Master and you are one of my servants. One day soon I will return. I will ask you: Did you listen to me as you did to your other friends? Were you aware that every person you met has the God of love within them and that kindness to them is kindness to me? Did you respect people who are different from you? This parable is telling you that one day I will ask you, ‘Did you realize that your greatest gift to others was kindness? Did you use this gift wisely or was it buried?’

## **26:1 - 28:20. Dramatic Conclusion.** 118

### **The Last Supper, Death & Resurrection.**

Matthew’s conclusion follows that of Mark. He proclaims my death and resurrection is the story of destiny, sacrifice and mystery which becomes the turning point of the ages.

Only faith and prayer can unlock its treasures. Matthew contrasts my actions of love and suffering with the weakness of my friends. At times you are Peter and Pilate and the women at the tomb and even Judas. Matthew concludes his story as he started it, proclaiming how I will be with you always, until the end of time (Matt 28:20). I am again speaking directly to you. I want my story to come alive in your heart.

26:1-5 .....	The chief priests and elders plot against Jesus
26:6-13 .....	A women anoints me as I prepare for my death
26:14-25 .....	At the Passover I predict who will betray me
56:26-30 .....	I offer myself through bread and wine to the whole world
56:31-35 .....	I predict Peter’s denial
56: 36-46 .....	My sufferings at Gethsemane
26:47-56 .....	I am arrested
26:57-68 .....	I am brought before the Sanhedrin
26:69-27:2 .....	Peter denies me
27:3-10 .....	Death of Judas

---

118 Matthew follows Mark’s account of my last supper, death and resurrection and adds a few things from his own traditions like the death of Judas, the role of the soldiers after my death and the great final commission.

27:11-26	.....I come before Pilate. Barabbas is released
27:27-31	.....I am mocked and given a crown of thorns
27:33-38	.....I suffer the pain of crucifixion
27:39-42	..... I am mocked by the soldiers and my fellow Jews
27:43-56	.....Your redeemer suffers and dies on the cross
27:57-61	..... My burial
27:62-66	.....The soldiers guard my body
28:1-10	..... Women at the tomb. I appear
28:11-15	..... The soldiers are bribed to keep quiet
28:16-20	..... My final appearance and great commission

***“Take, eat; this is my body”*** (Matt 26:26).

I am with you. I am your unseen companion. I am the silent listener to your every thought.

***“All the disciples deserted him and fled”*** (Matt 26:56).

*I cannot guide your footsteps if you continue to run away.*

***“I do not know the man”*** (Matt 26:74).

Failure is not about going down. Real failure is staying down.

***“After twisting some thorns into a crown they put it on his head”*** (Matt 27:29). *When you are mocked, practice forgiveness. An eye for an eye only leads to blindness.*

***“My God, My God, “why have you forsaken me?”*** (Matt 27:46).  
*Even I found there were times when I could not reach my God.*

***“Jesus again crying out in a loud voice, and breathed his last”*** (Matt 27:50). It’s human to suffer. I experienced physical pain and the deep sorrow of being rejected by my friends. You too know about pain. Share it with me.

***“They left the tomb quickly with fear and great joy, and ran to tell”*** (Matt 28:8). Turn to your God in uncertainty and turmoil.

***“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations .... And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age”*** (Matt 28:18-20). How do these words apply to you?



**How did Matthew's gospel influence the wider church?**

By AD 110 leadership in Antioch consisted of one bishop together with presbyters and deacons. Letters from St. Ignatius of Antioch who was bishop at that time, indicate how Ignatius continued to advocate a middle position adopted by both Peter in the 50s and Matthew in the 80s. Matthew's scholarship provided the wider church with a balanced and integrated understanding of my role as your Redeemer. In Matthew, leadership was based on Peter and the Christian mission extended to 'all nations'. His Our Father and his beatitudes become two of the great treasures of Christendom. These factors lead to Matthew's Gospel being accepted by the church as one of its great sources of revelation. <sup>119</sup>

**Be a peace with a friend who lives with you.**

A wife put a for sale notice in her front window: "TV for sale, husband and remote free". Next week the husband put up his own for sale notice: "Encyclopedia Britannia for sale. Wife knows everything". Ogden Nash offers a far better approach to marriage: "When you are wrong, admit it. When you are right, shut up". Marriage is a place of deep love but there can be times of real difficulty. It is also difficult to stop reading and begin your two minute reflection. Don't think of your reflection as a sacrifice. Think of it as a challenge. There is much more to success than signing autographs.

Follow Ogden Nash: Shut up and listen

BE STILL. BE SILENT. BREATHE DEEPLY.  
THINK OF YOUR IMAGE OF ME AND REPEAT MY NAME.  
CHOOSE A VERSE WHICH IS MEANINGFUL TO YOU.  
CLOSE YOUR EYES. **LISTEN.**

---

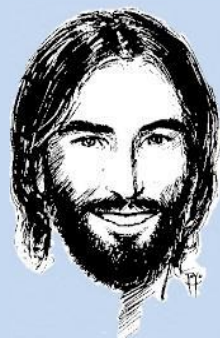
<sup>119</sup> The Our Father (Mt 6:9-11), the two great commandments of love (Mk 22:37-38, Matt 22:30-31, Luke 10:26-29) and the beatitudes (Mt 5:3-11) provide a deep insight into the mind and heart of Jesus and the way he is asking you to live your Christian life.



**Chapter Eight**

***Listening to Jesus  
in Luke***

*Their lives had taken them on many journeys.  
Sometimes their paths had been  
straight and smooth.  
At other times they had become  
confused and lost their way.  
They knew the despair of droughts  
and the pain of sickness and death.  
It was often difficult to remain  
positive like their Prince.  
It was his spirit that gave them strength  
and helped them to live as he had done.  
The people still live with  
the wonder of his presence.  
They long for the day when  
they will be together.  
For the whole world knows  
that their friendship  
is eternal.*



## Day 27 The mind of Luke.

My friend Luke belonged to a second or third generation Pauline community located near Ephesus on the West Coast of Turkey. His divinely inspired stories were probably completed in the early AD 90s.<sup>120</sup>

His community was predominantly Gentile and perhaps, like some of you, lukewarm in their commitment towards me. Luke's

The words Jesus speaks are the subjective words of the author. The genuine words of Jesus are only found in the scriptures.

community had celebrated the Eucharist for over 30 years. His is the only gospel which uses the Greek word *katalyma*. He uses it to describe both the place where I was born (Luke 2:7) and the upper room used at the Last Supper (Luke 22:11). Luke is telling you that both events, and indeed his whole gospel, celebrate the joyful coming of my salvation into human life.

He also hoped that his explanation of my story would make Christianity, like Judaism, an acceptable religion within the Roman Empire. Woven into his gospel are themes of the spirit, compassion, forgiveness, gentleness, concern for the poor, the importance of women and journey.<sup>121</sup>

Unlike Matthew, this Gospel lacks Hebrew words, local Palestine color and direct Old Testament citations. Luke was a gentile and most likely a Godfearer i.e. a person who was not a Jew but followed the religious laws

***“A wonderful ability to create vivid and colorful characters.”***

of the Jewish faith. His Greek is the best of the four gospels.<sup>122</sup> Luke has the wonderful ability to bring vivid and lively characters to my stories. Only in Luke do we find the tales of the 10 lepers, the tax collector, the prodigal son, Lazarus, the

120 Some place Luke's community in the city of Antioch, just north of Jerusalem.

121 Forgiveness and compassion are central themes of Chapter 15. Concern for the poor is found in 4:18, 6:20, 8:43-48, 16:19-31, 18:18-30 and 21:1-3. The importance of women is discussed on page 176 and the power of the spirit on pages 167 and 180.

122 Many believe that Luke was a doctor and the companion of Paul referred to in Colossians 4:14.

Good Samaritan, Mary & Martha, the Bethlehem shepherds, two disciples walking to Emmaus and the lost coin. He is simply a gifted storyteller. These stories, only found in Luke, are particularly meaningful for a person like you who is trying to become more aware of my presence.

As in Matthew, his Gospel begins with the story of my birth.<sup>123</sup> He usually follows Mark's order and words but removes many of his verses and adds his own major additions Luke used various sources in the creation of his Gospel. There are approximately:

480 verses from Mark..... (42% of his Gospel)

260 verses from a source he shared  
with Matthew<sup>124</sup>..... (23% of his Gospel)

400 verses from his personal sources,  
and his own additions<sup>125</sup>..... (35% of his Gospel)

Luke wanted to tell you about my kindness and compassion. He improved Mark's style and language and removed much of the violence found in Mark's account of my passion and death. Here are some of the verses which Luke edited.

Mark 3:5      "He looked around at them with anger"  
becomes in Luke 6:10 "Then he looked round at them".

Mark 2:4      The Jewish 'thatched roof'  
becomes in Luke 5:19 the Greco-Roman 'tiles'.

Mark 3:21      "He is gone out of his mind" does not appear in Luke,  
or in fact any other Gospel.

Luke made these adjustments to provide a more orderly account of what I did (Luke 1:3). This gospel contains little hostility towards the Jewish people.

---

123 While Matthew's infancy narratives are told through the person of Joseph, Luke tells his stories through the eyes of Mary. It is Luke who brings forth the mercy, charm and joy of Christmas. His writings inspired St Francis to introduce the Christmas crib. His birth narratives are all filled with beautiful prayers which praise and glorify God.

124 This is the Q source discussed on page 233.

125 Luke 6:20 -8:3 and Luke 9:51 -18:14 come from his own sources. He excludes material found in Mark 6:45 -8:26 and Mark 9:51 -10:12.

### Luke's journey theme.

Every human life is a journey. Luke uses this journey theme to tell you the story of my life. He hopes that your heart will burn within as you travel with me from my Jewish origins to the glory of Easter Sunday. He wants you to share in the gift of my Holy Spirit, to renounce evil and to become, like Mary, a true believing disciple. My journey from Galilee to Jerusalem takes ten chapters (9:51 - 19:27) and forms just under 50% of the gospel. Luke's journey theme can be divided into six parts.

Part 1	My journey begins in a stable.....	1:1 - 4:13
Part 2	My journey continues in Galilee. ....	4:14 - 9:50
Part 3	My journey moves towards Jerusalem. ....	9:51 - 14:35
Part 4	My journey reaches Jerusalem.....	15:1 - 21:38
Part 5	My journey ends in the glory of God.....	22:1 - 24:53
Part 6	My journey continues (through my disciples) to the Roman capital, Rome .....	Acts 1:1 - 28:30

### 1:1 - 4:13. PART ONE: MY JOURNEY BEGINS IN A STABLE.

Luke begins his gospel by telling you how I broke into human history. The first two chapters speak about the wonder and joy of Christmas. His story of my birth is a miracle of love far beyond the human mind. I have come as a child to be part of your life. I have come to be your friend. Luke celebrates my arrival with three prayers of joy: Mary's Magnificat (1: 46-55), Zechariah's prophecy (1:68-79) and Simeon's prayer of thanks (2:29-32). He then tells you about my baptism (3:21-22), my origins (3:23-38) and my temptations (4:1-13).

***"I am born  
while  
taking part  
in a  
journey."***

Woven into these verses is the presence of John the Baptist. He is introduced three times: at my conception (1:11-25), my birth /circumcision (Luke 1:57-80) and at the beginning of my adult life (Luke 3:1-20). Each time Luke tells you how John represents all which is good and pious in the land of Israel. He then goes on to proclaim me as someone far greater than John.

1:1-4	.....	Prologue	126
1:5-25	.....	<u>John the Baptist's</u> conception	
1:26-38	.....	My conception	
1:39-56	.....		
	Prayer of Joy: .....	MARY'S MAGNIFICAT	
	Prayer of Joy: .....	ZECHARIAH'S PROPHECY	
1:57-80	.....	<u>John the Baptist's</u> birth and circumcision	
2:1-20	.....	My birth	
2:21-24	.....	My Circumcision and presentation	
	Prayer of Joy: .....	SIMEON'S PRAYER OF THANKS	
2:25-38	.....	The joy of Simeon and Anna	
2:39-52	.....	My presence in the temple	
3:1-20	.....	<u>John the Baptist</u> proclaims my coming	
3:21-22	.....	My baptism	
3:23 - 4:13	.....	My genealogy and temptations	127

The 'Hail Mary' has its origins in Luke 1:28 and 1:42. The Rosary is based on this prayer. <sup>128</sup>

The Hail Mary contains many of the ideas proposed in this book. It repeats words, uses concrete images and most importantly, makes you aware of how Jesus is very close to you. There are major differences. In your reflection you are asked to relax, be silent, use few words and listen to Jesus speak to you through the words of the scriptures.

The Angel speaks:

***"The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and ...the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God"*** (Luke 1:35).

Imagine the comments of Mary's village school friends and their parents when they saw that she was pregnant. Imagine the way they would have reacted when Mary told them that the child had come from

---

126 This is a standard Greek introduction used in the Greco-Roman world. It is found only in Luke.

127 Luke 3:1-4:13 prepares for my public life in a similar way to Matthew. Luke's genealogy of Jesus commences with Adam while Matthew's more Jewish account begins with Abraham. The stories of my baptism and temptations remind you how I am both human and filled with the divine power of God.

128 The Rosary prayer can be traced back to the 12th or 13th centuries. It was originally spread by the Carthusian Monks and later by the Dominicans. The three traditional decades date to the 15th century. This prayer was once called the psalms of Mary. The 150 Hail Mary's correspond to the 150 psalms found in the scriptures. Its popularity grew in the time when people could not read or write.

God. If you ever experience deep ridicule or loneliness, know that Mary is watching and knows how you feel.

Mary speaks:

***“Then Mary said, ‘Here I am, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word’”*** (Luke 1: 37-38).

Nothing great is achieved without belief and commitment.

Elizabeth speaks:

***“Blessed are you among women”*** (Luke 1:42).

Mary knew Jesus well. She is also your friend. Talk to her.

Mary speaks:

***“My spirit rejoices in God my Savior”*** (Luke 1:46-47).

This is the opening verse to Mary’s great pray, the Magnificat.

It is Mary’s joyous proclamation of the child that is within her.

Joseph does not speak. <sup>129</sup>

Joseph is silent in all the four gospels. Some believe he should be the patron saint of all ministers and priests!

Time to listen to a friend

BE STILL. BE SILENT.

THINK OF YOUR IMAGE OF ME

READ THIS VERSE SEVERAL TIMES.

BREATHE DEEPLY.

AND REPEAT MY NAME.

Smile and relax.

***“My spirit rejoices in God my Savior”***

(Luke 1:46-47).

**LISTEN AND WONDER**

---

129 Some scholars believe that Joseph had children from a previous marriage and that he was a lot older than Mary and died early in the life of Jesus. This would have left Mary a widow. See Raymond Brown (*Responses to....* 94). Joseph Fitzmyer (*A Christological....*66) argues that the words ‘Brothers and Sisters’ could refer to cousins.



## Day 28 Events in Galilee

### 4:14- 9:50. PART TWO: MY JOURNEY CONTINUES IN GALILEE.

***“He stood up to read ... ‘The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor’” (Luke 4:16 & 18).<sup>130</sup>***

Many Scholars consider these verses are the key words in Luke’s Gospel. The Spirit of God present at my birth and baptism again anoints me as I begin of my public ministry. Filled with the Spirit, I preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the towns and villages of Galilee. Many come to accept me, but the leaders of Israel are not impressed.

The words Jesus speaks are the subjective words of the author. The genuine words of Jesus are only found in the scriptures.

**“A person  
who loved  
with no  
limits!”**

Luke uses these verses to introduce another major theme. My healings extend to everybody. My love has no limits. This love is present in the kindness shown to the prostitute who anoints me (7:36-50), to poor people like Lazarus (16:19-31), to outcasts like the Samaritans (17:16) and to people who feel unworthy like the Tax Collector (18:9-14). Luke wanted to make it very clear that I was a man who ate and drank with sinners (5:27-32) and welcomed everyone without exception. I want you to know that regardless of who you are or what you have done, you are important to me.

4:14-21 My ministry begins in my hometown of Nazareth.

4:22-30 I am rejected in my own village.

4:31-44 Teaching & healings in Capernaum.

---

<sup>130</sup> In Mark, Jesus’ preaching in the synagogue occurs half way through his public ministry (Mark 6:1-6). Luke moves Mark’s verses to the beginning of Jesus’ ministry (Luke 4:18). In his gospel these spirit filled words become the first words spoken by Jesus. Luke expands Mark’s verses by including the words of Isaiah 60:1-2.

### 5:1-11 Words to ponder over.

I called my first disciples. I am also calling you. Which of the stages below speaks about your present relationship with me?

5(1) Once while Jesus was STANDING BESIDE THE LAKE of Gennesaret, the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God. (2) He saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. (3) He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and ASKED HIM TO PUT OUT A LITTLE WAY from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. (4) When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, 'PUT OUT INTO THE DEEP WATER and let down your nets for a catch. (5) Simon answered, 'Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I WILL LET DOWN THE NETS'. (6) When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. (7) So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. (8) But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees saying, 'GO AWAY FROM ME, LORD, FOR I AM A SINFUL MAN!' (9) For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken. (10) And so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, 'DO NOT BE AFRAID. FROM NOW ON YOU WILL BE CATCHING PEOPLE.'

(11) When they had brought their boats to shore, they LEFT EVERYTHING AND FOLLOWED HIM



I am in your world.  
I want to be your friend.



You are like Simon.  
I ask a little from you.



I ask more of you.  
Will you accept me?



You follow but you.  
Are still uncertain.



You do you wish to  
become involved.



I encourage you to  
become my disciple.



Will you follow me?  
Only you can answer

### Chapters five to nine.

These chapters follow Matthew and Mark both in their order and their content. They reveal the power of God present in my miracles and explain the way kingdom people should behave. The chapters also speak about my frustration with the opposition of the Pharisees and the lack of faith of my friends. This is the same problem I have with you. I find it a real puzzle how you can believe I am your God, yet you seldom talk to me. I find this difficult to understand.

- 5:12-26 I cure a leper and a paralytic.
- 5:27-32 I call Levi (Matthew) the tax collector.
- 5:33-6:5 Two disputes with the Pharisees.
- 6:6-11 A man with a withered hand.
- 6:12-16 I choose the 12.
- 6:17-19 I prepare for my first great sermon. <sup>131</sup>
- 6:20-23 The beatitudes –the way to live.
- 6:24-26 The things (woes) which destroy.
- 6:27-36 Love your enemies.
- 6:37-42 Do not judge others.
- 6:43-49 Be honest.
- 7:1-17 Two cures.
- 7:18-35 I praise John the Baptist.
- 7:36-50 I forgive a sinful woman.
- 8:1-3 Women accompany me.
- 8:4-15 My parable about the sower.
- 8:16-21 My teachings on discipleship.
- 8:22-56 I perform 3 more miracles.
- 9:1-6 My mission for the 12.
- 9:7-9 Herod is worried.
- 9:10-17 I feed the 5000.
- 9:18-20 Peter declares I am the Messiah.
- 9:21-27 I foretell my death and resurrection.
- 9:28-36 My transfiguration.
- 9:37-43 I cure a young boy.
- 9:44-50 I foretell my death and speak on true greatness.

*In chapters  
five to nine  
Luke uses  
similar  
material to  
Matthew.  
He does  
add a Cure  
(7:11-17)  
and an  
anointing  
(7:36-50).*

---

<sup>131</sup> This is Luke's Sermon on the Plain (6:17-49) which has similar verses to Matthew's Sermon on the Mount (5:3 to 7:29). Most of these verses come from the 'Q' source discussed on page 233.

***“He spent the night in prayer to God”*** (Luke 6:12).

All I require is two minutes!

***“Blessed are you who are poor; for yours is the kingdom of God”*** (Luke 6:20).

You can possess many things and still be poor. It is the presence of God which makes you fully human and alive.

***“Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you”*** (Luke 6:27).

Be kind to everyone you meet for many are fighting a battle you know nothing about.

***“Do not judge, and you will not be judged... Forgive, and you will be forgiven; Give and it will be given to you”*** (Luke 10:37-38).

Vote now to get rid of your biggest fault. Your friends know it. I know it and you know it. Do it and you will be a real Christian.

***“Why do you call me “Lord, Lord”, and not do what I tell you?”*** (Luke 6:46).

To enjoy the flowers we love we must first get rid of the weeds.

***“And taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke them, and gave them to the disciples to set before the crowd”*** (Luke 9:16).

You are one of the 5000. I enter your heart at communion time. I come as a friend. I will heal you of your pain. I will feed and nourish you. I will bring kindness and joy to your heart. You can feast with me forever.

### **Just two minutes.**

It takes a long time to throw a good curve ball. You need to get the basics right and then you need to practice, practice, practice. It is the same with your reflection.

***“Be Merciful, just as your Father is merciful”***

*(Luke 6:36).*

**LISTEN, LISTEN AGAIN and then ACT**

**Day 29    My journey reaches Jerusalem**

**9:51 - 14:35. PART THREE: A JOURNEY OF TEN CHAPTERS.**

In Luke's gospel my Journey to Jerusalem begins here in chapter 9 and only reaches Jerusalem in chapter 19. Mark's journey to Jerusalem is limited to one chapter (Mark 10) while Matthew completes my journey to Jerusalem in two chapters (Matt 19 & 20). In these verses Luke invites you to travel with me,

The words Jesus speaks are the subjective words of the author. The genuine words of Jesus are only found in the scriptures.

*Most of Luke 11:5 to 14:34 is found in Matthew.*

to learn how to open your heart to others and become a true disciple. The first five and a half chapters focus on discipleship while the remaining four and a half contain Luke's famous 'Gospel of the Outcast'.

9:51-56 .....	I begin my journey to Jerusalem
9:57-10:20 .....	Discipleship and mission
10:21-28 .....	Knowing God and <b>the commandments of love</b>
10:29-37 .....	My parable about the Good Samaritan
10:38-42 .....	Mary and Martha
11:1-4 .....	Luke's Our Father
11:5-13 .....	More about how to pray
11:14-12:12 .....	Discipleship and my identity
12:13-12:34 .....	Discipleship and poverty
12:35-13:30 .....	Discipleship and faithfulness
13:31-14:34 .....	...Discipleship: cost and destiny

***"Mary has chosen the better part"*** (Luke 10:42).

This story is about the importance of leaving what you are doing and listening to the person who is talking to you. Is this you?

***"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself"*** (Luke 10:27).

For many, it remains just a dream. For those who make it a reality the rewards are out of this world

### 10:30-37. The Parable about the Good Samaritan.

The story of the Good Samaritan follows the great commands to love proclaimed in Luke 10:27. It is a powerful story of how Christian disciples should show kindness and love to others.

Even though Luke's parables are well known to you, experiencing me speaking to you directly and placing yourself inside the emotions and actions of the characters opens up a whole new religious experience.

**THE STORY:** I AM TELLING YOU A  
INSPIRED STORY ABOUT KINDNESS  
AND LOVE.



**THE PRAYER:** THESE  
ARE THE QUESTIONS I ASK YOU  
YOU TO PONDER OVER.

10:30 A man was going down from  
Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the ,  
hands of robbers who stripped him, beat  
him, and went away leaving him half dead.



Who do you know  
that has been hurt  
or used by others?

31 Now by chance a priest was going  
down that road: and when he saw him,  
he passed by on the other side.



Do you ignore their  
pain as the priest did?

32 So likewise a Levite, when he came to the  
place and saw him, passed by on the other side



Do you leave difficult  
things to others?

33 But a Samaritan while travelling came  
near him; and when he saw him  
he was moved with pity.



Are you like the lowly  
Samaritan who acted  
with kindness?

34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds,  
having poured oil and wine on them  
then he put him on his own animal,  
brought him to an inn and took care of him.



Do you listen to  
those in need and  
offer them a smile  
or a kind word?

35 The next day he took out two denarii,  
gave them to the innkeeper, and said,  
"Take care of him; and when I come back, I  
will repay you whatever more you spend".



Do you help others  
who think differently  
than you, or lack your  
balanced insights?

36 Which of these three, do you think,  
was a neighbor to the man who fell  
into the hands of the robbers?



Your world is filled  
with wounded.  
strangers,

37 He said, "The one who showed him mercy."  
Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise".



How can you be a  
giver of my love?

A friend of mine, a High School pupil asked her teacher. ‘Do you really pray?’ The teacher thought the girl was attacking her but she was thinking of something much wider. She went on to argue that if Christians really prayed, personal views would give way to humility, tolerance and compassion. What do you think?

### THE STORY AND THE REFLECTION.

Listening to a friend involves using both your mind and your heart. Listening involves both words and feelings.

#### **The story** (the words):

The literal meaning.

What the writers intended.



#### **The reflection** (the feelings):

A spiritual approach.

What am I saying to you?

*“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior” (Luke 1:46-47).*

Does your soul proclaim my greatness?  
Rejoice and be glad for you will live for as long as I do.

*“And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth and laid him in a manger” (Luke 2:7).*

I come as a child.  
I come to your world.  
I come to you.  
Are you aware of my presence?

A bride came to her mother in tears. “Mum, I am marrying George tomorrow, but I am really worried as I don’t think he believes in Hell.” Her mother replied, “Don’t worry dear. You go ahead and marry him and we will make sure he knows it exists.

### Just minutes listening to me.

You know how to begin: SILENT. PEACE. MY NAME. MY IMAGE.

**“This is my son, my Chosen; listen to him!”**

Luke 9:35

**LISTEN AND WONDER**

## DAY 30 “The Gospel of the Outcast.”

### 15:1 – 19:27. PART FOUR:

#### MY JOURNEY CONTINUES TO JERUSALEM.

These five chapters are known as ‘The Gospel of the Outcast’. They offer stories which will help you to appreciate how my love and mercy apply to all without exception.

The genuine words of Jesus are only found in the scriptures.

Many regard Chapter 15 as the heart of Luke’s gospel. The three parables possess stories of compassion, pardon, peace and reconciliation. They all reveal how happy I am when you decide to accept me into your life. These stories are for those who struggle to find me. Chapters 16 to 19 provide 6 more parables. Each one speaks to you in a different way about your relationship with your God.

15:1-7	Parable .....	The lost sheep (Your God longs for you)
15:8-10	Parable .....	The Lost coin (Your God will always seek you)
15:11-32	Parable .....	The Prodigal Son (You must decide to return)
16:1-8	Parable .....	The Dishonest Manager (about wealth)
16:9-13	.....	Two masters (your decision)
16:14-18	.....	Be faithful and honest (how to live)
16:19-31	Parable .....	The rich man & Lazarus (Judgment)
17:1- 10	.....	More of my sayings (be inspired)
17:11-19	Parable .....	The ten Lepers (thanking)
18:1-8	Parable .....	The widow & the judge (persistence)
18:9-14	Parable .....	The Pharisee & the Tax Collector (humility)
18:15-34	.....	More stories and sayings (God’s wisdom)
18:35-19:10	.....	Cures of a blind man and Zacchaeus
19:11-27	Parable .....	Using money (use your talents wisely)

The Prodigal Son:

***“This son of mine was dead and is alive ... was lost and is found! And they began to celebrate”*** (Luke 15:24).

Have you ever walked away from your friends? Have you ever become isolated from your family or your church? This story is a challenge to you: Open your heart. Bury your pride. Come back. Fill others with joy not sorrow. You can become a Prodigal Son.



The Pharisee & the Tax Collector: <sup>132</sup>

***“Two men went up to the temple to pray ...”*** (Luke 18:10).

Are you are like the theologically trained Pharisee who prayed every day and knew exactly what to say or are you like the lowly tax collector who felt prayer was beyond him?

Do you pray with your heart or is your prayer limited to words? Do you attend church services but seldom think of God? Is looking good an important part of your prayer. Do you say and do things to impress? On a scale of 1 to 10 how would you rate yourself? The answer (like your passwords) is a secret known to only you and me.

**19:28-21:38: I enter Jerusalem, the city of salvation.**

I enter Jerusalem in triumph as the people’s hero but the authorities reject me. I weep over Jerusalem, cleanse the temple, argue with the Jewish authorities and am touched by the beautiful gift of the widow.

19:28-40 ..... My triumphal entry into Jerusalem  
19: 41-44 .....Luke adds how I wept over Jerusalem  
19:45-48 .....I cleanse the temple  
20:1-47 ..... Five disputes with the Jewish authorities  
21:1-4 ..... The widows offering  
21:5-38 .....The final days

The poor Widow:

***“A poor widow put in two small copper coins”*** (Luke 21:2).

As I watched rich people giving money to the treasury, I saw a poor widow putting in two small coins. This was my response:

***“All of them have contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in all she had to live on”*** (Luke 21:4).

This poor widow touched my heart. The depth of her Christian commitment and love had few boundaries. She will occupy a special place in my heavenly kingdom.

---

132 The Tax Collector in the time of Jesus did not sit in an office and check forms. They were paid a commission on the amount of tax they collected. The more they collected, the more they received. They were often considered unjust and deceitful.

### **What does the gospel say about women and discipleship?**

Mary, my mother had a central role in my birth, upbringing, public life and death. After my resurrection she remained active in the early church (Acts 1:14). She emerges as my first believer and a model of discipleship.

The prominence of Mary Magdalene (mentioned 13 times), Elizabeth (1:42), Martha and Mary (10:38-42), the poor widow (21:1-4), the Samaritan women at the well (John 4:7-26) and the many women whom I cured, are in stark contrast to the deeds of the Jewish Rabbis. During my public ministry it was my women disciples who supported me from their own resources (8:1-3). Unlike the 12 apostles they remained with me during my passion and death (23:27-28, 49). They also occupy a prominent role in the resurrection stories (24:1ff). There is no record of women being present at my Last Supper, but you must wonder where the food came from.

Discipleship is also an essential part of Luke's story. It is the dominant theme of Luke 9-14. Luke uses my parables, miracles and sayings to explain how victory will not be achieved by power, status or riches. It will often involve suffering, ridicule and division and will only be successful when it is part of the plan of God. Luke speaks often about my compassion and kindness. But when it comes to discipleship it is Luke who tells you how I demand nothing less than total commitment. His "Blessed are the poor" (6:20) is far more demanding than Matthew's "blessed are the poor in spirit" (Matt 5:3). Luke's gospel is more than a story. It is my personal challenge to you to change the way you think and live.

### **CHOOSE ONE OF MY THREE STORIES DISCUSSED ABOVE.**

*(The prodigal son, the poor widow, or the Pharisee & tax collector.)*

*Become one of the characters  
Listen to me speaking directly to you.*

***Wonder and act.***

## Day 31 Jerusalem, the city of destiny

### 22:1 - 24:53. PART FIVE: MY JOURNEY ENDS IN MY GLORY.

#### 22:1-38 My last supper. <sup>133</sup>

The night before I died, I offered a new covenant of friendship to my friends. I told them that when they relived this meal of bread and wine, they will share in my presence, my love, my salvation, my body and my blood. I reminded them that, I will always be with them till the end of time.

The words Jesus speaks are the subjective words of the author. The genuine words of Jesus are only found in the

***“This is my body, which is given for you.***

***Do this in memory of me”*** (Luke 22:19).

Why should the creator of the universe share eternity with humans who fight and argue and can be very cruel? This is a mystery of love far beyond your imagination. But it is real!

#### 22:39-53 My agony in the garden

***“Then an angel from heaven appeared to him and gave him strength”*** (Luke 22:43).

The presence of the divine can touch you in many different ways.

#### 22:54 - 23:56 Good Friday. <sup>134</sup>

Luke's account of Good Friday is filled with compassion. He removes the spitting & blows by the Jewish authorities present in Mark 14:65 and the Romans' crown of thorns and mocking found in Mark 15:16-19.

---

133 In Luke's Last Supper the Eucharist words of Jesus are similar to those found in Paul (1 Cor 11:23-27). This could reflect the Pauline origins of his community. Matthew and Mark's words are slightly different.

134 Only Luke has the verses about the strengthening angel (Luke 22:43) and the interrogation by Herod (Luke 23:6-12).

22:54-62	Peter denies that he knows me
22:63-71	I stand before the Jewish Leaders
23:1-5	I stand before Pilate
23:6-16	I stand before Herod
23:17-25	I am sentenced to death
23:26-32	Road to Golgotha
23:33-34	I am crucified between two criminals
23:35-38	I am mocked on the cross
23:39-43	Two thieves were crucified with me
23:44-56	My Death & burial

In Luke I utter three verses which speak to you about my humanity, my total faith in my Abba and the great love and mercy which I have for all human beings. These three verses provide powerful insights into what is inside my heart. All three deserve a place in your two minute reflection.

***“Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing”*** (Luke 23:34).

***“Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise”*** (Luke 23:43).

***“Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.”***  
***Having said this, he breathed his last”*** (Luke 23:46).

## **24:1 -53 Easter Sunday.**

On Easter Sunday I fulfill my destiny and enter into glory. I still remain with you as your friend and your God.

24:1-12 The Women at the tomb  
***“Why do you look for the living among the dead?  
He is not here, but has risen”*** (Luke 24:5).

The stunning discovery of my resurrection is revealed to my women disciples. They believed but my other disciples struggled to understand what had happened. What would have been your reaction on that Easter morning?



24:13-35 The road to Emmaus.

***“He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened, and they recognized him.”*** (Luke 24:30-31).

***“They worshipped him and returned to Jerusalem with great Joy”*** (Luke 24:52).

Two of my disciples were leaving Jerusalem. They were uncertain and confused. It had all turned to custard. Then I walked with them and they recognized me in the Eucharist (Luke 24:30). Excited and filled with joy they journeyed back to Jerusalem, the city of destiny and returned to their Christian community. Luke knew how important the Eucharist is in finding and remaining close to God. This is a story about every disciple who seeks to follow me.

24:36-43 I appear to my disciples.

***“Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones...”*** (Luke 24:39).

My disciples were people who doubted. It was only my presence and friendship that convinced them that I was with them. You are no different. Your faith comes from God but it still demands your efforts.

24:44-49 My final promise

***“I am sending upon you what my Father has promised”*** (Luke 24:29).

In Luke’s gospel, my final words bring a promise that the power of the Spirit would come to them. Luke’s “Acts of the Apostles” is the story of how this promise is fulfilled.

24:50-53 My ascension to my Father.

***“While he was blessing them, he withdrew from them and was carried up into heaven”*** (Luke 24:51).

My ascension honors my return to my home in Heaven. But I still live in your heart and will remain your friend until you join me in the world beyond.

**THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES.** <sup>135</sup>

The other gospels end with my resurrection appearances, but not Luke. He had greater plans. He knew that my human journey had ended but the journey of my disciples had just begun.

In Luke's story of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-13) my Spirit comes to possess the early church. Throughout Acts you are continually reminded that the same Spirit of God which came to rest on me at my birth (Luke 2:1-7), my baptism (Luke 3:21) and the beginning of my public ministry (Luke 4:16-18) now guides and directs my believers. There are 17 references to the Spirit in Luke's gospel and 58 references in Acts. Luke was assuring his community and you, that you will never walk alone and that the God of history is always with you. <sup>136</sup>

***"All of them were filled with the holy spirit"*** (Acts 2:4).

***"There is salvation in no one else"*** (Acts 4:12).

***"The apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus"*** (Acts 4:33).

***"And every day in the temple and at home they did not cease ... proclaim Jesus as the Messiah"*** (Acts 5:42).

***"In Him we live and move and have our being"*** (Acts 17:28).

The journey theme still occupies a prominent place. In Acts we are told how this gift of salvation travels from Jerusalem (Acts 1)

---

135 While many scholars question some of the historical details recorded in Acts, many believe that chapters 2 and 10 contain some of the oldest formulas of our Christian faith. Raymond Brown (*Biblical Exegesis....* 140).

136 There is general agreement that Luke wrote the Acts of the Apostles (James Dunn *Beginning from....* 65). For a fuller understanding of acts see Justin Taylor (*Where did Christianity come from....*).

Luke probably intended that his Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles would be read together. Literary works in biblical times were usually published in the form of a scroll which seldom exceeded 35 feet in length. Luke's two volume work makes up over 25% of the New Testament. Each book would have filled a scroll 31 or 32 feet long. This is one reason why the works of Luke appear as two books instead of one. Bruce Metzger (*The Text....* 5). Acts emphasis on the gift of the Spirit is another aspect of Gods loving revelation to the human race (Rom 5:5).

to Rome - the center of the known world (Acts 23).

Luke tells his story through his two spirit filled heroes, Peter and Paul. The first twelve chapters of Acts describe the work of Peter in the early church. Then from chapter thirteen to the end Luke centers his story on Paul and his mission to the Gentiles. Luke deliberately fuses his two religious giants together. Paul comes to believe in me in Acts 9 and in Acts 15 Peter leads the church through its first major crisis. He wants to show how I entrusted my church first to Peter and then through Peter to Paul and to the communities he served. This is one of the great adventure stories of Christianity.

The Gospel of Luke: .....From Bethlehem to Jerusalem.

The Acts of the Apostles: Jerusalem to Rome - the center of the world.

### **WE ALL ENJOY BEING WITH FRIENDS**

You only need to walk through a park filled with families to see how much parents love and care for their children. The children are in continual motion. Mums and dads are talking to each other or playing with their children. Some of them are running after their little ones protecting them from danger. It's party time. No one is excluded. The air is filled with noise and laughter. I want us to also relax and enjoy and be friends.

BE STILL. BE SILENT. BREATHE DEEPLY.

THINK OF YOUR IMAGE OF ME AND REPEAT MY NAME

UNTIL YOU KNOW THAT I AM PRESENT.

***“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit  
has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses  
....to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8).***

**LISTEN AND WONDER**

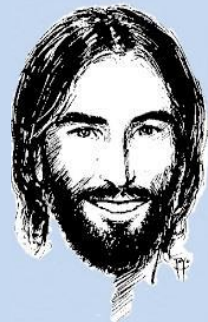




## *Chapter Nine*

# *Listening to Jesus in John*

*Their most important treasure was  
the miracle of his presence.  
They could no longer see him  
walking around their village.  
They could no longer hear his voice  
or feel the warmth of his smile,  
but in their hearts they knew  
he was with them speaking to them  
and guiding them through the words  
he had left them.  
The people still live with the  
wonder of his presence.  
They long for the day  
when they will be together,  
For the whole world knows  
that their friendship  
is eternal.*



## Day 32      *The Prayer book of the New Testament.* <sup>137</sup>

John's Gospel has been described as a pool in which an elephant can swim or a child can paddle. It can be read to a young child yet it possesses spiritual insights which no human can grasp. This gospel uses simple sentences, limited words and strong characters. It has been rightly called the prayer book of the New Testament. John's rich theology contains some of the most meaningful and prayerful words found in the scriptures.

These words have been placed on the lips of Jesus by the author of this book. They are not the words of Jesus. The words of God are only found in the scriptures.

This gospel is the product of a group of Christian pilgrims seeking their own Christian identity.<sup>138</sup> Sometime after the resurrection, persecution forced this small group of mostly Jewish Christians to move from Palestine to the Ephesus area on the West Coast of Turkey. Greek Christians joined their ranks and through years of prayerful reflection they shaped their stories about my life into their own understanding of my presence. About AD 95 their gospel started to emerge as a beautiful story of love and salvation.<sup>139</sup>

### **What does this gospel hope to achieve?**

John's dream is that you will be overwhelmed by the story of my redemption and come to believe that I now dwell in your heart. John speaks about me in many different ways. There is great value pondering over some of John's images and expressions.

---

<sup>137</sup> A great deal of this chapter is inspired by the writings of Francis Moloney.

<sup>138</sup> Perhaps some were converts from the Samaritans, Essenes or the followers of John the Baptist.

<sup>139</sup> Scholars now realize that John's gospel contains more history than was first thought. For many years some scholars believed that the Pool of Bethesda in John 5:1-9 never existed. A few decades ago archaeologists discovered the Pool in Jerusalem.

<b>GOD</b>	<sup>140</sup> ..... <i>"The Word was God"</i> (1:1)
	..... <i>"My Lord and my God"</i> (20:28)
Bread of life	..... <i>"I am the bread of Life"</i> (6:48)
Son of God	..... <i>"You are the Son of God!"</i> (1:49)
Lamb of God	..... <i>"Here is the Lamb of God"</i> (1:29)
Light of the world	..... <i>"I am the light of the world"</i> (9:5)
The Good Shepherd	..... <i>"I am the Good Shepherd"</i> (10:11)
King of Israel	..... <i>"You are the King of Israel!"</i> (1:49)
Messiah, Christ	..... <i>"I know that the Messiah is coming"</i> (4:25)
Savior	..... <i>This is truly the Savior of the world"</i> (4:42)
Son of Man	..... <i>"Now the Son of Man has been glorified"</i> (13:31)
LORD	..... <i>"The disciple....said to Peter. 'It is the Lord'"</i> (21:7)
Father	..... <i>"I am in the Father and the Father is in me"</i> (14:10)
Human	..... <i>"The Word became flesh and lived among us"</i> (1:14)
Way, truth and life	..... <i>"I am the way, and the truth and the life"</i> (14:6)

The Gospel speaks often about belief and unbelief, light and darkness, life and death. This was John's way of contrasting a life lived with me to one lived without me. He wanted to explain my kindness and love and to tell you how those who believe in me will possess my friendship forever. He wanted to offer a challenge to his people. The same challenge comes to you today. It asks: Do you have faith? Do you believe that I am the bread of eternal life which brings light to the world? Do you believe I died that you might live? Do you believe in me and in my saving power? Will you accept me as Son of God and as the center of your own life?

***"These are written so that you may come to believe that***

---

140 Most scholars accept that at the beginning (1:1) and end (20:28) of John's Gospel, Jesus is proclaimed as God. John also speaks of Jesus' union with the Father (10:30, 38, 14:9) and his equality with God (5:8, 10:33, 19:7). Jesus' divinity was always understood in terms of Jewish monotheism. There were never two Gods. Jesus' prayer to the Father (chapter 17) and statements like "The Father is greater than I" (14:28) are examples of Jesus' humanity. Many other verses like the three "I AMs" in chapter 8, and the great prayer of chapter 17 also unites Jesus with the glory and name of God.

***Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name***” (John 20:31). <sup>141</sup>

### **John’s community and the Jewish faith.**

After the destruction of the Jewish Temple in AD 70 the synagogues became the new life blood of Israel. They were controlled by the Pharisees who took over the role of reforming the Jewish faith. When John’s community proclaimed me as divine, their belief clashed head on with these Jewish leaders and their centuries-old belief which honored the God of Israel as the one true God. John’s Christians were expelled from the synagogue. <sup>142</sup> Their experiences were similar to those of Mark and Matthew. Families would have been split apart and there would have been bitter arguments over who was right. Perhaps some members of John’s community were drifting back into the security and peacefulness of their old Jewish ways. It was natural, that John’s gospel would attack the world of Judaism and their teachings. As you listen to me attacking the Jewish faith know that I am speaking to you about the negative and soul destroying forces of your world which often keep us apart.

***“His own people (The Jewish people) did not accept him. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God”*** (John 1:11-12).

### **Does this Gospel differ from the other Gospels?** <sup>143</sup>

This gospel differs both in style and content from the other Gospels. While the other gospels use my parables, John’s gospel develops its traditions about my earthly life into long theological commentaries on the meaning and message of redemption. The gospel highlights how I am the source of salvation and that my Baptism (7:37-39) and Eucharist (6:30-58) is far more powerful than anything offered by the Jewish nation.

The term ‘Kingdom of Heaven’ is not used. The Gospel has only

---

141 In John, Salvation is a free gift from God. We are also given faith to accept his gift. The final decision is ours.

142 John mentions this in 9:22, 10:22 and 12:42. The Pharisees are discussed more fully in pages 58, 79, 134, 155, n112.

143 In John’s gospel, Jesus is the eternal word of God who has become flesh. This differs from the synoptics whose central theme is the Kingdom of God.

a few directions on how to live. John 15:12 on love is an isolated example. This is the only gospel which indicates that my Public ministry lasted close to three years. In John 2:13, 5:1, 12:1 you are told how I attended three different Passovers.<sup>144</sup>

The gospel contains numerous personal encounters with people who are trying to understand me. Nicodemus (3:1-15, 7:50-52, 10:39-42), the Samaritan woman (4:2-42), Judas (12:1-8, 13-17), Lazarus (11:38-44) and Thomas (20:24-30) are but a few. The beloved disciple, described as the 'one Jesus loved' (13:23, 19:26-27, 20:2, 21:7 & 20) is a central character who is used as a model for all believers. John wants you to see yourself in their struggles.<sup>145</sup>

### **Time to listen to your God.**

You cannot genuinely listen to a person without being aware of their presence. Listening to me is a practical way of leaving behind the hectic mind filling thoughts which fill your daily lives and focusing on me, our friend and savior.

Relax. A couple of deep breaths will do. Repeat your sacred word. Be still. Imagine I am close to you.

**"I am the way, and the truth and the life"**

(Jn 14:6).

**Just listen.**

---

<sup>144</sup> For a fuller discussion see John Meier (*A Marginal Jew*.... 1:405ff).

<sup>145</sup> A person called *the Beloved Disciple* (see page187) is credited by many as the original author of the gospel. He could be John the Apostle or a respected member of the community. We do not really know. See Raymond Brown, *edit* Francis Moloney (*An Introduction to the Gospel of John*.... 78ff).

## Day 33 God becomes human.

### How does John construct his Gospel?

Following his prologue, John divides his gospel into two books. The first is called the 'Book of Miracles or Signs'. It reveals how the power and love of God has come to earth. The second is called the 'Book of Redemption or Glory' which proclaims how I have brought eternal redemption to the human race. <sup>146</sup>

The words Jesus speaks are the subjective words of the author.

Prologue 1:1-18

The book of Signs or Miracles ..... 1:19 - 12:50

The book of Redemption or Glory..... 13:1-21:25

### 1:1-18 John's Prologue.

John's prologue summarizes the story of my redemption. Originally this was an early Christian hymn. Today its powerful language and theology has a special place within Christendom. John's opening verse (1:1) is one of the greatest statements of the early church. Here John proclaims my divinity. He does this at the beginning and end of his gospel. Take time to ponder these words:

***"In the beginning was the Word .... the Word was God"*** (John 1:1).

***"Thomas answered him, 'My Lord and my God!'"*** (John 20: 28).

The first word in John's gospel, as it is in Mark's, is the first word in the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament). This is the Hebrew word 'genesis' meaning 'the beginning'. John wants you to know that my presence on earth heralds a new beginning in human existence.

---

<sup>146</sup> The Book of signs or miracles contains 7 signs or miracles. The book of redemption or glory, unlike the book of signs, has no specific miracle. It centers your attention on the great miracle of your redemption achieved through Jesus' death and resurrection and celebrated in the Eucharist. An 8<sup>th</sup> sign or miracle is found in Chapter 21. This chapter was probably a late addition to the gospel. See Raymond Brown (*An Introduction to the NT....* 369ff).

*"In the **beginning** ... God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1).*

*"The **beginning** of the gospel about Jesus Christ" (Mark 1:1).*

*"In the **beginning** was the Word" (John 1:1).*

## **2:1-12:50 The Book of Signs or Miracles.**

My earthly life begins with John the Baptist. He reminds you how I am the human face of God who brings the Father's love to earth. This is followed by my call to the first disciples.

These verses continue the theme of creation. My ministry opens with seven days of activity. These days echo the seven days of creation found in Genesis. <sup>147</sup>

1:19-34 ..... John the Baptist honours me.

1:35-51 ..... I call my first disciples.

## **From Cana to Cana.**

Chapter's two to four take you on a journey of Faith. These chapters begin and conclude with a miracle at Cana. Between the two Cana miracles John has six stories each with a different kind of faith. The first three are Jewish stories and the last three are gentile. As you read these verses know that I am speaking directly to you and asking you which of these stories reflect best your attitude towards me?

2:1-11 Cana: The wedding feast. .... (My 1st miracle)

2:12-25 The Temple has no faith. .... (Jewish story)

3:1-21 Nicodemus has part faith ..... (Jewish story)

3:22-36 John the Baptist has full faith..... (Jewish story)

4:1-15 A Samaritan woman has no faith ..... (Gentile story)

4:16-26 The Samaritan woman wonders (part faith) ... (Gentile story)

4:27-42 Samaritan villages gain full faith ..... (Gentile story)

4:43-54 Cana: The nobleman's son. .... (My 2nd Miracle)

**"Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life"** (John 3:36).

**"..... this is truly the Savior of the world"** (John 4:41).

---

<sup>147</sup> 1<sup>st</sup> day (John 1:19), 2<sup>nd</sup> day (John 1:29), 3<sup>th</sup> day (John 1:35), 4<sup>th</sup> day (John 1:39), 5<sup>th</sup> day (John 1:43), 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> day (John 2:1). Francis Moloney (*Living Voice*.... 173).

**Chapters five to ten.**

Around AD 70 the Romans destroyed the temple but the Jewish people still lived for the day when they could celebrate their great festivals and worship their God in a new Temple. In these chapters John tells you how I have replaced the Temple and all the major religious events of the Jewish faith. John inserts three more miracles. They reinforce my power and are signs that God is on my side.

**5:1-47 My message is greater than the Sabbath.** <sup>148</sup>

My cure on the Sabbath enrages the Jewish leaders who condemn my actions for breaking this holy day of rest. They will not accept that love and kindness is more important than a rigid enforcement of the law. I knew that I must follow my Father's will even if it meant receiving the wrath of my own people.

5:1-9	.....Cure on the Sabbath (my 3rd miracle)
5:10-18	.....Rejected by the Jews
5:19-47	.....A long sermon in which I explain how I must always do my Fathers will.

**6:1-71 My Eucharist is greater than the Passover.** <sup>149</sup>

My feeding of the 5000 provides the background for revealing how 'I am the bread of life' which brings 'life to the world' (6:33). This will be discussed more fully when I speak about the Last Supper in Chapters 14 to 17. My promise of eternal salvation was a direct attack on the salvation offered in the Jewish Passover. Many Jews struggled to accept my words.

6:1-15	.....Feeding of the 5,000 (My 4th miracle)
6:16-21	.....Walking on the water (My 5th miracle)
6:22-58	.....My sermon on the Eucharist
6:59-66	.....Some believed in me and some did not
6:67-71	.....Peter professes his faith in me

---

148 During the period when the four gospels were written the Sabbath, the synagogues and the Jewish festivals were the center of Jewish worship..

149 The Jewish Passover was a spring festival in which the Jewish people celebrated their deliverance from bondage. In the time of Jesus it was celebrated as a festival of freedom and redemption.



There is much to ponder in these verses. They ask you to consider: Do you believe in the presence of your God? Do you partake in the bread of life? Do you realize that you are offered an eternity gift?

**“Whoever eats of this bread will live forever”** (John 6:51).<sup>150</sup>

**“The water I shall give will (lead) to eternal life”** (John 4:14)

### **Sharing two minutes with me.**

Sometimes so many things flood into your mind that it is very difficult to relax and feel the need to spend time with your God. This is why we have asked you never to forget your time of reflection. Experience has shown that it offers the easiest path to the divine.

Relax. Breathe deeply a few times. You are with a friend.  
Repeat my name as you imagine being present at my birth.  
Think about how I have come to lead you to eternity.

**“I am the bread of life. Whoever comes  
to me will never be hungry”**

(John 6:35).

**LISTEN** BE AWARE PONDER **LISTEN**



---

150 John's Gospel could refer to the Eucharist at Cana (2:1-11), in the theology of Chapter 6, in the vine & branches (Ch. 15) and the blood on the cross (19:34). Raymond Brown (*New Testament Essays*.... 76).

## **DAY 34 Jesus, the centre of our lives.**

### **7:1-53 My gift of living water.** <sup>151</sup>

I now declare how the water the Jewish people prayed for in the Feast of Shelters is nothing compared to the eternal water which comes from me. I am of course referring to the Sacrament of Baptism. <sup>152</sup>

The Jews were mystified over where I came from and how I could possess this power of God. The authorities wanted to arrest me (7:30). Some wanted to kill me (7:19). Many were confused (7:13). Others came to believe in me (7:31). These verses invite you to decide my place in your life.

7:1-13 .....I travel from Galilee to the Feast of Shelters in Jerusalem  
 7:14-36 ..... Disputes over the authority and teachings of Jesus  
 7:37-39 .....I preach about my gift of living water  
 7:40-53 .....Disputes about where I came from. I am rejected

***“Let anyone who is thirsty come to me and let the one who believes in me drink”*** (John 7:37-38).

Most days you drink tea, coffee or water. Drink of my presence and I will give to you something much stronger.

***“Some in the crowd said, ‘This is really the prophet.’ Others said, ‘This is the Messiah’”***

(John 7:40-41).

Who do you think I am? Do you believe that I am close to you? Do you ever think about us being together forever? Believe it or not, that is your future.

---

151 John’s Gospel could also refer to baptism in the conversion of Nicodemus (3:1-31), the Samaritan woman (4:1-15), the source of living waters (7:38), the healing of the man born blind (9:1-12) and water and blood on the cross (19:34). Brown (*New Testament Essays*.... 76).

152 The Jewish feast of Shelters (It is also called the feast of Tabernacles, Tents or Booths) took place in autumn. In this Festival the Jewish people celebrated the protection of God during the exodus and prayed for rain during winter. They took water from the spring of Gihon and processed with lights to the temple to pour it on the temple altar.

**8:1-10:42 I am the light of the world.**

These chapters begin with a beautiful story about kindness (8:1-11). I then tell you how I am the light of the world (8:12) far greater than the Jewish light in the Feast of Shelters. The theme of light continues as you hear how I cured a blind man (9:1-12) and offer you my thoughts on spiritual blindness (9:35-41). This is followed by the parable of the Good Shepherd (10:1-21). Here I promise you that even if you are blinded by an addictive exciting world I will be there to show you the way.

Close your eyes for 10 seconds. Now open them and enjoy looking at all the things you can see. This experience is similar to the way that I light up your world and open your heart to the real meaning of life.

Blended into this theme of light is the opposition of the Pharisees who reject my origins (8:13-59), my ability to cure (9:13-34) and my claim to be one with the Father (10:22-42). You must ask yourself: Do you accept me as your Good Shepherd and as the light in your life?

8:1-11 .....	Woman caught in adultery
8:12 .....	I declare I am the light of the world
8:13-59 .....	A long discussion with the Pharisees
.....	We argued over my origins and my authority
9:1-12 .....	A blind man receives his sight (My 6th Miracle)
9:13-34 .....	The Pharisees argue over my ability to cure
9:35-41 .....	Spiritual blindness
10:1-21 .....	The parable of The Good Shepherd
10:22-42 .....	I am rejected by the Jews

***“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life”***(John 8:12).

***“Neither do I condemn you. Go your way”*** (John 8:11).

***“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep”*** (John 10:11).

This is a very powerful way of thinking of me.

***“Though I was blind, now I see”*** (John 9:25).

# **11:1 - 12:50    Turning towards the cross.** <sup>153</sup>

In these last two chapters of the book of signs my story turns towards the cross. The themes of light, life, kindness and eternity are still present. The Jewish hostility intensifies (11:45-55) and the lack of faith persists (12:37-43). The story of Lazarus and the love of Martha and Mary dominate chapter 11. Chapter 12 contrasts the anointing by Mary and my triumphal entry into Jerusalem with my anxiety over the lack of belief of my Jewish people and my impending death.

11:1-44. ....	The Raising of Lazarus (My 7th miracle)
11:45-57 .....	The Jewish leaders decide to kill me
12:1:11.....	Anointing by Mary at Bethany
12:12-19 .....	Entry into Jerusalem
12:20-36 .....	I speak of my death & glory
12:37-43 .....	Unbelieving Jews
12:44-50 .....	A summary of the book of signs

***“Jesus began to weep”*** (John 11:35).

No matter how you feel, what you have  
done or what you think, I am beside you.

## **Time to wonder about my presence in your life.**

Relax. Breathe deeply. Think of your image of me and repeat my  
name until you are aware that I am with you.

***“No one has ever seen God. It is God the only  
Son, who is close to the Father’s heart,  
who has made him known”***

(John 1:18).

Gently and slowly ponder over my words.

---

<sup>153</sup> John continues to describe how the presence of Jesus replaces the Jewish Feast of Dedication of the Temple (John 10:22) and the Feast of Passover (John 12:1).

## **DAY 35 Reflections at the Last supper**

### **The Book of Glory or Redemption.**

John now uses the three divine events of Easter to tell you about the wonders of my redemption. He wants to emphasize how I am now eternally present in the hearts of all who believe. Prayer is still directed towards the Father but it is prayer in which I am one with the Father. <sup>154</sup>

The words Jesus speaks are the subjective words of the author. The genuine words of Jesus are only found in the scriptures.

### **13:1-17:25 My Last Supper.**

John's Last Supper consists of five chapters. John does not record the words of consecration. He assumes that his community already knows them. He uses his verses to proclaim the heart of his community's spirituality. It is the love of the Father and the Son given to all those who believe.

After washing my disciple's feet I remind you how your lives are founded on love (13:31-35) and you have been called to serve not to rule (13:6-8). I also confirm that the power of the Spirit has possessed you (14:25-26; 15:26-27; 16:7) and that God will always be with you (15:1-10). These verses offer encouragement and comfort and tell how my departure in death will lead many to eternity. I reveal to you that the hour (13:1; 17:1) has come for me to bring love (13:1; 17:24) and glory (13:31; 17:1; 24) to my Father.

Chapter 15 is John's central masterpiece. It illustrates the genius of this writer. Here I use the image of a living vine to explain how I share my life with my friends. Chapter 17 contains my thoughts and prayers for those I love. Every verse is a source of wonder and inspiration. These words offer you a straight road towards your God. Think of me as a friend, and listen to me.

The following diagram illustrates the structure and central

---

<sup>154</sup> This gospel speaks of a glorified and human Jesus who, down through the centuries, has always been actively present within his Christian communities. See Sandra Schneiders "The Resurrection (of the Body) in the Fourth Gospel" in "Life in Abundance" edited John Donahue.... 190).

ideas of John's supper. Notice the similarity between Chapters 13 and 17 and chapters 14 and 16 and how these chapters surround chapter 15. They are the product of years of prayerful reflections on the miracle of my presence. <sup>155</sup>

CH 13	v 1: love & hour: washing of feet	v 18: scripture fulfilled: Judas	v 31: glory & love: farewell
CH 14	v 1: departure: no burdens	v 15: discipleship: Spirit power	v 30: departure: encouragement
CH 15	Here John uses the symbol of the vine and the branches.		
	v 1: abide in Jesus	v 12: mutual love	v18: persecution
	v 6: without Jesus	v 15: <u>I CHOSE YOU</u>	v 26: with Jesus
	v 8: abide in Jesus	v 17: mutual love	v16:1 persecution
CH 16	v 4: departure: Spirit	v 21: discipleship: sorrow into joy	v 31: departure: be Happy
CH 17	v 1: glory & hour: prayer	v 12: scripture fulfilled: the faithful	v24: glory & love: prayer

***“Those who love me ... my Father will love them  
... we will ... make our home with them.”*** ..... (John 14:3)

***“Do not let your hearts be troubled ...  
“I go to prepare a place for you.”*** ..... (John 14:1-2)

***“Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch  
cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the  
vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.”*** ..... (John 15:4)

***“Those who abide in me ... bear much fruit.  
... apart from me you can do nothing”*** ..... (John 15:5).

***“You did not choose me but I chose you.”*** ..... (John 15:6)

---

<sup>155</sup> This outline and many of the thoughts of this chapter come from Francis Moloney (*Living Voice*.... 193).

***“And this is eternal life, that they may know you,  
the true God, and Jesus Christ whom you sent.” ... (John 16:3)***

***“As you, father, are in me and I am in you,  
may they also be one in us.” .....(John 17:21)***

**A few of the pearls hidden in John’s gospel.**

- \* *Write these words in our heart: Christianity is all about being aware of the living God.*
- \* *God has prepared a special path for us. It is up to us to have the courage to accept it.*
- \* *The trouble with thinking about Heaven is that no one has come back with any samples.*
- \* *To love and be loved is to see the sun on both sides.*
- \* *Jesus Christ gives the true meaning to Human history. What do you think?*

**Listening to a friend.**

Leave your thoughts behind, think of your image of me and repeat  
my name until you are aware that I am present.  
Listen to me speaking these words to you.

***“I am the vine, you are  
the branches.” (John 15:5)***

TELL ME THE MOST IMPORTANT THING  
THAT IS UPSETTING YOU?

I KNOW YOUR FUTURE. ALLOW ME TO GUIDE YOU

**LISTEN AND WONDER**

## Day 36 A death which leads to Glory

### 18:1-19:42 My Passion and Death.

John's passion story follows the same order and content as the other gospels but, like John's previous chapters, they have their own distinctive pattern. John's account is set in five scenes almost in the form of a play. The drama begins and ends in a garden with my friends.

The words Jesus speaks are the subjective words of the author. The genuine words of Jesus are only found in the scriptures.

#### SCENE ONE: <sup>156</sup>

18:1-14 My arrest..... In a garden with my enemies

#### SCENE TWO:

18:15-18 Peter denies me ..... Do you turn from me?

18:19-24 Jewish leaders reject me.....Do you turn from me?

18:25-27 Peter denies me. ....Do you turn from me?

#### SCENE THREE:

18:28-33 The Jews take me to Pilate..... Are you like these Jews?

18:33-37 I am alone with Pilate..... I am the king of truth

18:38-40 Pilate speaks to the crowd..... The crowd wants me crucified

19:1-3 I am scourged by Pilate .....I am mocked as a king

19:4-7 Pilate speaks to the crowd ..... The crowd wants me crucified

19:8-12 I am alone with Pilate..... I have authority from above

19:13-15 Pilate speaks to the crowd..... The crowd wants me crucified

19:16 I am handed over by Pilate ..... I am mocked as the Jewish king

#### SCENE FOUR <sup>157</sup>

19:17-24 I am crucified as a king.....I am the real leader of Israel

19:25-27 Mary my mother is present..... 'Mother' is quoted 5 times

19:28-30 In death I give up my spirit..... Jesus' spirit is unleashed

156 This outline is based on Francis Moloney (*Living Voice* .... 197

157 The Romans did not want to kill Jesus. His death was the actions of certain Jewish leaders, not the majority of the Jewish people.



19:31-37 Blood & water flow .....Perhaps a reference to  
Baptism and the Eucharist

SCENE FIVE

19:38-42 Jesus is buried .....In a garden with his friends

***“Crucify him! Crucify him!”*** (John 19:6).

***“You would have no power over me unless it  
had been given you from above”*** (John 19:11).

***“He said ‘It is finished.’ Then he bowed his head  
and gave up his spirit”*** (John 19:30). <sup>158</sup>

**20:1-31 The resurrection.** <sup>159</sup>

John concludes his gospel with my resurrection, ascension and the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Easter story begins and ends with myself and my disciples together in a room. The coming of my Spirit is an inseparable consequence of my death and resurrection. Thomas comes to believe in me by realizing I am actually present. He speaks for all who doubt. The theme of faith again dominates.

In the first verse of his gospel John declares that I am God. Now with the words of Thomas, “My Lord and My God” (20:28), John concludes his story with the same declaration. John wants you to be aware of how the breath taking presence of God, the Risen Christ, is alive in every human being.

You are told that there are many things the gospel did not include (20:30). My life and deeds cannot be limited. Finally John tells you why he wrote his gospel. He wants you to believe that I am the Christ, the Messiah and the Son of God and that I share my life with you. As you read these verses you might ask yourself if my resurrection has changed your life.

---

158 In my last words I poured out my spirit on the human race. In this gospel I am God who is always in control.

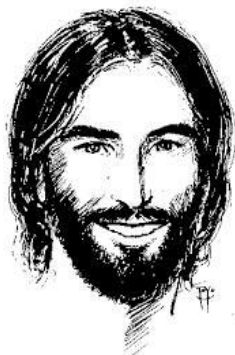
159 In John’s tradition the Holy Spirit comes a week after the resurrection. In Luke’s tradition Jesus ascends to heaven 40 days after the resurrection and Pentecost is 10 days later. The eternal reality of my redemption was more important than the historical detail.

20:1-10	.....The empty tomb
20:11-16	.....I appear to Mary Magdalene
20:17-18	.....I ascend to the Heavens
20:19-23	.....The disciples see me. I share with them the gift of the Spirit
20:24-29	.....Doubting Thomas believes
20:30-31	.....Reason for writing - that you might believe!

**MARY  
MAGDALENE ... “I have seen the Lord”**  
(John 20:18).

**THOMAS ..... “My Lord and my God!”**  
(John 20:28).

**JESUS..... ..breathed on them and  
said to them, ‘Receive  
the Holy Spirit’”**  
(John 20:22).



## **21:1- 23      The Gospel’s epilogue.** <sup>160</sup>

Chapter 21 was probably added later either by John or one of his disciples. The chapter adds a missionary dimension to the gospel and confirms Peter as the leader of the church. Here John’s community acknowledges it is part of the wider church. Both the fish and the sheep represent Christians. <sup>161</sup>

21:1-14	The disciples are directed by Jesus to catch many fish
21:9-14	They share the Eucharist together
21:15-17	Peter’s leadership is confirmed
21:18-23	Peter and John will die and return to their God

**“Jesus said to him (Peter), ‘feed my sheep’”** (John 21:17).

---

<sup>160</sup> The letters of John indicate that the community was divided (1 John 2:19). A close reading of John’s letters reveals three or four separate and sometimes divided communities. John 21 indicates how these communities eventually strengthened their ties with the apostolic church.. Raymond Brown (*An Introduction to the New Testament*.... 360ff).

<sup>161</sup> Ibid., 373ff.

### **DO IT YOUR WAY.**

Two elderly ladies were at church listening to a young minister give a sermon on marriage. One turned to the other and said, "I wish I knew as little about marriage as he does". Well by now you know a lot about becoming aware of your Lord and savior. Those who play the piano or love golf tell you how easy it is to forget the basics and the small personal things which really help your performance. There is a real advantage in summarizing the ideas which help to make your reflection meaningful. It is difficult to call yourself a golfer if you have not hit a ball. It is also difficult to call yourself a Christian if you do not listen to me.

### **Why is listening so important?**

In your 21<sup>st</sup> century world every second person you meet is using an iPhone and every house is filled with the sound of the television or radio. Your minds become filled with so many exciting things to do and see. The easiest way to find God in this hectic way of living is to be still and for a couple of minutes, listen to Jesus speaking to you.

WHEN YOU ARE AWARE THAT I AM PRESENT LISTEN TO ME  
SPEAKING TO YOU THROUGH THE WORDS OF JOHN'S GOSPEL.

***"Blessed are those who have not  
seen and yet have come to believe"***

(John 20:29).

I am telling you to always believe in me.

I am telling you that you will always be blessed with my presence

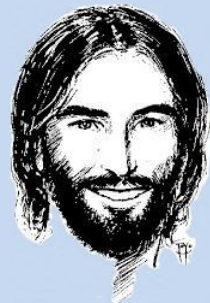
**LISTEN AND PONDER**



## Chapter Ten

# ***JUST THE BEGINNING***

*It was the small things they remembered.  
How they ate corn together in the fields  
and watched the sun go down.  
How he played and laughed with the  
children in the square.  
Everyone had their own personal stories.  
Stories which will be repeated  
for generations to come.  
The people still live with  
the wonder of his presence.  
They long for the day when  
they will be together.  
For the whole world knows that  
their friendship is eternal.*



## **DAY 37 Are congratulations in order?**

If you have completed this book in a couple of days you now have a good idea of what it is about and you will be in a position to speak to others about the merits and shortfalls. As for your personal awareness of your God, perhaps nothing has really changed.

**These remanding chapters are not spoken by Jesus.**

If you have spent a month or two faithfully completing the reflections and still find that other ways of prayer are more meaningful to you all is not lost. At the very least your efforts have enriched your Christian faith. If you have used our reflections to become aware of your God and this has led you to discover the beauty of traditional prayers, then it has all been worthwhile. You have lit a fire inside you. You have developed the ability to listen to your God in the scriptures. The words of a wise woman now apply to you. "God is always at home. You now know how to knock on the door".

***"Those who do the will of God live forever"*** (1 John 2:17).

### **Our reflection is a stepping stone to all prayer.**

Our aim has been to provide a method of prayer which would help Christians to discover their God in their busy 20<sup>th</sup> century world. The two minute reflection is not original. It is a simplified version of the monastic *Lectio Divina* and the spirituality of St Ignatius. Their spirituality will be discussed more fully in pages 244 - 248.

The first part of our reflection offers different ways of turning away from everyday thoughts and becoming truly aware of the present of God. If you have used this approach to prayer for a number of weeks you are usually able to become aware of your God very quickly. The second part of

**"Our two minute reflection is a stepping stone to all methods of prayer."**

our reflection involves using a few words from the scriptures to listen to what Jesus is saying to you. When you are fully conscience of your God, it is a small step to using traditional prayers, being inspired by the words of others or honoring God with your own words and thoughts.

**What our reflection brings to types of prayer.**

Our reflection is a powerful way of being aware of Jesus in our life. Perhaps just as important it is a stepping stone which makes all types of prayer a meaningful and natural experience. Prayer is a time in which stillness and silence lead to the mystery of God. Every time you reflect on the presence of God you encounter the divine in a different way. It can be a time when you ponder and wonder over who Jesus is and what he is saying to you and what he would like you to do. Remaining aware of your God is the only requirement.

Our approach has been especially useful to the young people of today. It is a valuable stepping stone which helps them leave behind the exciting action packed world in which they live and to discover to powerful mystery of God's presence.

**Being aware  
of God is  
central to all  
methods of  
prayer."**

**It is a lifetime adventure.**

Our two minute reflection is so important that we have repeatedly declared that the pages of this book have little meaning without it. In quite annoying ways you have been begged, shamed and almost blackmailed into completing this daily activity. Some of the pain has been removed by restricting the length of your reflection to two minutes. Of course this new experience is only the beginning as it will only continue to grow and mature when it is combined with traditional ways of praying.

Going forward into next year and beyond, the greatest problem you face will be remaining faithful to daily prayer. Deciding on a set time to speak and listen to your God makes your prayer a

natural part of your day. If you start losing your awareness of Jesus, you can always return to this book.

Sports people, weight watchers, musicians and all high achievers must also fit their activities into their daily routine. Spending time with Jesus can be even harder as there is no visible interaction. Prayer can be a little bit like golf. If you start neglecting one part of the swing, the ball can go anywhere. It is important that you find your own path to the top of the mountain.

### **Your prayer can take many forms.**

- \* Read prayers which inspire you. Pray the prayers you love.
- \* Think of your parents and the love they have brought to your life. Think of the people you admire. How can you be more like them?
- \* Sit in a Church. Enjoy the silence. Know God is near. Say the Our Father very slowly knowing that you are not alone.
- \* Look at your left hand. Think of the many things you would like to change in your life. Is it the way you fail to help people? Is it the way you hurt people? Is it your neglect of the God who wants to be your friend? Is it being selfish, pretending to pray or is it laziness? Now look at your right hand and think of the power and grace of the eternal God who is offering you a life of happiness. Now cover the right hand with your left and as you squeeze them together ask that the presence and love of God will destroy those things which prevent you from being the person you want to be.
- \* Look up at the sky. Watch the breaking of waves on the seashore. Admire the splendor of the mountains and trees

**“God is always at home.**

**You now know how to knock on the door”.**



and valleys. Watch people as they pass. Contemplate the beauty of a flower. Smile and thank the Lord

- \* Realize that while you need to know Jesus, you must also be Jesus in your world. Decide to help someone today.
- \* Ask Jesus why he came to be friends with a crazy person like you? As you breathe in imagine the life, light, love and peace of Jesus coming into every part of you. As you breathe out think of the rubbish in your heart that you would like to remove.
- \* Attend church.
- \* Small deeds done are better than great deeds planned.
- \* We humans are but temporal residents forever being replaced by our young. All the creatures of our earth have a limited life span. Civilizations come and go. New discoveries are continually changing the world in which we live. It is our Creator God who, with power and energy, holds together all things material.

The local priest spent his afternoon helping a parishioner tidy his front garden. Just before he left the parishioner gave him an envelope telling him to “have a drink on me”. When he returned home he opened the envelope and found two tea bags inside. Sometimes kindness means you are the pet dog. Sometimes it means you are only the tree.

BREATHE DEEPLY A FEW TIMES. THINK OF YOUR IMAGE OF JESUS. REPEAT HIS NAME UNTIL YOU ARE AWARE THAT HE IS CLOSE

Listen to Jesus speaking to you with these words

***“I am with you always”*** (Matt 28:20).

Do nothing except be still and **listen.**

## **Day 38**      ***Your Christian community***

### **The American Dollar bill.**

One side of an American dollar is green. This is why it is often called the green back. It contains the words ‘in God we trust’, various symbols and three Latin phrases all of which celebrate the American dream. This book has highlighted the Christian dream – the personal awareness of the living God who dwells within you.

On the other side of the American dollar bill there is a picture of George Washington. It symbolizes the structures needed to preserve and organize the nation. America would collapse without schools, transportation or hospitals. Christianity also needs the wisdom of scholars, church doctrines, liturgical worship, and church leaders. Imagine a football match without referees. There would be a fleet of ambulances waiting to take the players away and another fleet of police cars waiting for their supporters.

The two sides of the dollar bill cannot be divided. One side has little meaning without the other. It is the same with your Christian faith. Your personal awareness of Jesus will only mature when it is united with wisdom and guidance of your Christian Community.<sup>162</sup>

The dollar bill also reminds you that the personal awareness of God seldom grows in isolation. It requires the motivation and wisdom of others. The earthly journey of Jesus always involved a community of disciples. Belonging to a believing community brings support and balance to your prayer and allows you to share in the combined knowledge of others. It provides you with confidence in times of doubt and the strength to persevere when you start running out of steam. Without your Christian community you can easily become a boat without a rudder.

---

162 The Spirit of God inspired writers from the early Christian communities to provide us with the sacred scriptures. For almost 2000 years it has been the Christian communities that have preserved these sacred texts and used them to teach us what it means to be a Christian.

### **The first disciples.**

The first disciples were remarkably like you. They believed that Jesus was God's messenger, the Messiah and the Savior of the world, but they always struggled to understand the full meaning of his presence and love. Remember how they gave up after Jesus was arrested and crucified. It took perseverance, courage and belief for Peter to recover from his denial and for Thomas to admit he was wrong. Their religious journey followed a twisting uneven road. They were only able to succeed with the faith and support of each other.

**"Without your  
Christian  
community  
you easily  
become a boat  
without a  
rudder."**

### **Christian communities.**

The majority of Protestant Communities believe that the Holy Spirit guides their community in understanding the scriptures. Guided by the spirit, their scholars provide a clear understanding of my redemption and offer positive guidance on how Christians should live in today's world. Catholics believe that Jesus entrusted to Peter the leadership and authority to continue my work of salvation and that under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the present Pope exercises the same leadership and authority as Peter.

***"We are God's servants, God's field, God's building"*** (1 Cor 3:9).

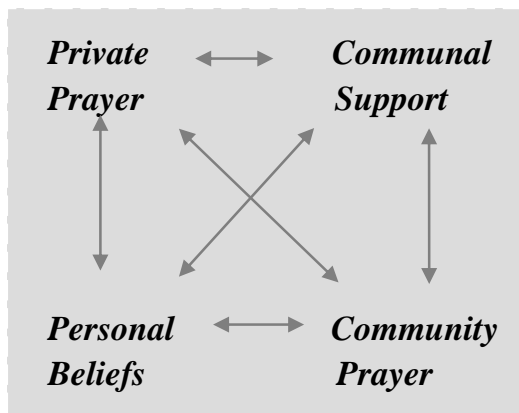
A solid chair needs four strong legs. If one is missing, the chair becomes quite unstable. With only two legs it will collapse. A life lived in my presence also needs four strong supports. These four supports are allies. Private and communal prayer makes you aware of your God and brings meaning to

**"It is the rich  
faith of others  
which helps you  
to live a full  
Christian life."**

your beliefs. Without this awareness of God, your Christian faith can be reduced to performing a set of rituals or to belonging to a club which lives by a set of rules.<sup>163</sup>

The beliefs of your community and the support of your fellow believers offer balance and understanding to your faith. Without healthy guidance your personal prayer can easily become self-centered and misdirected.<sup>164</sup>

If you are blessed with an awareness of Jesus then you are able to approach the doctrines of the Christian faith in a far more personal and meaningful way. Take for example the doctrine of the virgin birth.



Some Christians struggle to understand how Jesus could be conceived and born by a woman who is a virgin. When you know that Jesus dwells deep within your heart and offers you the gift of eternity, you don't seek answers about him through your human understanding of nature. You are able to appreciate how God is not limited to human laws and that "for God all things are possible" (Matt 19:26).

There is one problem that needs to be addressed. In the past those who belonged to Christian communities knew each other and friendship and support came very naturally. Today Christian communities can be filled with unknown strangers who no longer experience the gifts of friendship and support. This will be discussed more fully in the appendix at the end of this chapter.

163 Some believe that people stop going to church about 6 months after they stop being aware of the presence of God. What do you think?

164 The essential truths of faith, given to you by God, flow from the great mystery of God's presence. Jesus is "both the mediator and the sum total of revelation" Vatican II (Divine Revelation 2).

**The cost.**

Few achievements come without cost. There will be times when you will fail and need to start again or try another approach.

The words of Nelson Mandela, 'I am the captain of my soul' apply to all who are imprisoned. Your challenge is not to change a nation; it is to break the chains of addiction which imprison you to your material world.

Praying is like playing sport. Whether you win, lose or retire hurt it is the taking part that is important. Jesus is aware of your successes but he is far more interested in how hard you try. Enjoy your world with all the fun and excitement it contains, but remember how false Gods, material distractions and lack of belief can destroy your awareness of the divine.

A husband bought home a map of the world and attached it to his dart board. "My dear wife" he said, "throw a dart at the map and wherever it lands we will go there for a holiday". They spent the next two weeks looking for the dart behind the fridge.

**"I am the  
captain of  
my soul."**

Nelson Mandela

**Listening to Jesus must be natural and enjoyable.**

Listening to Jesus is different from listening to a person who you can see and hear. It is more like listening to someone speaking to you in a novel or a text message. If you are friends with that person this can be just as natural and enjoyable as if they were present in front of you. Your two minute reflection time provides an atmosphere which helps you to achieve this.

***JUST BE STILL AND LISTEN TO YOUR FRIEND.***

***"May the Lord make you increase and  
abound in love for one another"***

*(1Thess 3:12).*

**Be aware Listen Wonder**

## **Day 39**                      ***Celebrating the divine.***

For Catholics the great prayer of Christianity is the Mass. This is the way Catholics celebrate their redemption and receive Jesus into their hearts.<sup>165</sup> The Protestant communities are equally devout in proclaiming the glory of God within their congregations and celebrating together the gift of their redemption. You can be sure that Jesus will be really pleased if you would begin your week by joining with others in publicly honoring the God who has given you so much.

If you have developed a personal awareness of the divine, Sunday worship takes on a totally different dimension. You know how you can become aware of the Almighty by listening to the scriptures or singing hymns. You can now hear Jesus speaking to you directly in the sacredness of the prayers and in the sermon. Look around the church. Become aware of the divine presence in the windows, pictures and the altar. It is the home of God and you are part of his family. Even if the preacher is like an airplane that cannot land or if the singing resembles something out of the ark, you know that the divine is present. Listen to your God. Ponder over how Jesus lives with you and with all those who are present. Think of your family and friends and what will happen to them in the next few days. Let yourself experience the wisdom of others and the sacredness of the occasion. There is one important suggestion which has been repeated earlier: “Never say or read a prayer without first becoming aware of my presence”.

***“For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them”*** (Matt 18:20).

Once you know that Jesus is God and that he lives within you, you might be interested in learning more about your Christian faith. Perhaps it is theology that captures your attention or you might be interested in learning more about the scriptures. A powerful way of deepening what you have experienced in this

---

<sup>165</sup> Catholics believe that the Mass is the “the source and summit of the Christian life” Vatican II (Constitution on the Church 11).

book is to take part in a day or weekend retreat based on the spirituality of St Ignatius (see page 245ff). This is a natural stepping stone to deepening your awareness of the divine.

Most communities have prayer groups, welfare groups, social groups and study groups. You might consider one that appeals to you. If one does not work try another. Try and find a couple of other Christians who are seeking as you are. Sharing your religious feelings with other people can provide real support and encouragement. Another powerful aid is to seek out a spiritual person whom you feel will help you on your journey.

### **Celebrating Jesus in your life!**

Jesus is your friend and like all friends he would love to become part of the exciting things in your life. Christmas is his birthday, the greatest birthday you will ever attend. It is celebrated by over two billion Christians. That is one third of the world and 700 million children. If you are truly aware that Jesus is your friend you will automatically place Him at the center of your celebrations.

Jesus is the reason why you share Christmas presents. The Christmas cake is his birthday cake. The candles are for him. Sing happy birthday to him and remember how

he is with you as you enjoy your food. Love, laughter and doing things together are far richer gifts than toys. No need to destroy Father Christmas but you can place him in the 'B' team as the delivery man who brings the presents.

What began as an introduction to prayer has turned into a lifetime adventure. Such are the ways of your God. Your destiny is to meet Jesus face to face.

It will always be difficult for you to know how close you are to the divine. 'Feeling good' or 'feeling nothing' is something personal to you and is often quite separate from the closeness of Jesus. One measure of your faith is your increased ability to care for and tolerate others. We have said this before: The way

**“The way you  
listen to others  
is a good  
indication of  
how well you  
listen to your  
God.”**

you listen to the needs of others is a good indication of how well you are listening to your God.

Anyone can talk holy. Anyone can look holy. But true holiness is an inside job, a friendship of the heart known only to you and your God, unseen by others, existing deep within your soul.

A robber broke into a suburban home and started filling his bag with all the small valuable objects he could find. Suddenly a voice started to speak to him from the next room. 'Jesus is watching you. Jesus is watching you.' The robber slowly moved towards the next room and looked inside. What he saw made him laugh. There in front of him was a parrot in a cage. 'You are not Jesus', he said. 'You are just a parrot.' The parrot replied. 'You are right. I am not Jesus. Jesus is the Rottweiler standing behind you'.

Jesus is not a Rottweiler, but he is always watching you. He is always smiling at you. You are special.

Breathe deeply a few times.

Repeat Jesus' name until you feel he is close.

Read this verse a couple of times.

***“Grow in the grace and knowledge of  
our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ”***

(2 Pet 3:18).

Think of your image of Jesus and **listen**



## ***Addition Six***

### ***Building Community***

Our thoughts have centred on praying the scriptures. You know this is just one aspect of the Christian life. Others involve theology, Church, worship, the sacraments and mission. One area which is closely related to private prayer is building community. This needs to involve combining respect for what has gone before with a missionary outreach which engages all the practicing and non-practising Christians who belong to the community.

#### **1. Preparation.**

Many times individual communities have tried things that do not last. A regional or diocesan approach has real advantages. Those concerned about losing the dignity and sacredness of the Sunday service need reassurance. Others need to know that change will be limited and leisurely. It is less threatening to speak of “new ideas” rather than “major changers”.

#### **2. A missionary approach.**

Practising Christians today no longer live in a village environment. Many do not know their next door neighbour. The majority arrive just on time for Sunday service, greet those they know and sit in the same seats. Perhaps those who attend need more than being greeted and handed a newsletter. No one should leave the church feeling they are still strangers. An easy way to achieve this is to sit next to different people on Sunday and talk to them before or after the service. This would involve sharing names, addresses, occupations and information about children. People today want to belong and are looking for friendship.

**3. Reaching out.**

There needs to be a large well-organized group which seeks out and updates the parish roles with the names of new parishioners and information obtained from schools, baptisms, funerals etc. This would involve both the practicing and non-practicing. These people need to be personally contacted and where possible made to feel welcome in the community. Some could be asked to help in various ways.

This new group is just as important as organizing readers and collectors. A hand delivered newsletter and personal contacts with all parishioners are practical ways of helping people to feel part of the community.

**4. Alpha (See [Alpha.org](http://Alpha.org)) and similar initiatives.**

Alpha programs and other initiatives have been a very successful way of stimulating interest and action within Christian communities. The majority have limited their activities to discussions and faded away with little change. The ones which have succeeded in building communities are those that have involved action. Many successful groups have emphasized a missionary approach and spend time making friends and helping those in their street or area. Others have successfully added their support to already existing groups.

**10. Beyond the first year.**

The future is more complicated and will depend on many variables. These involve ethnic groups, resources outside your community, people who use multiple communities, different forms of spirituality, country areas, lay leaders, theological import, liturgy and schools. New initiatives and approaches will be required to make the Christian faith meaningful to young families with children and teenagers. None of this is impossible but it will involve considerable thought, planning and above all action.

**A POSSIBLE MEETING FOR PARENTS NEW TO A CHRISTIAN  
COMMUNITY OR WHO HAVE CHILDREN ENTERING  
A CHRISTIAN SCHOOL.**

**4 meetings with presentations and discussions**

A friendly atmosphere. Meetings not compulsory.  
Length 1 hour. Invite 20. Expect 15 to accept.

1. The place of Christianity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.  
Questions selected from Chapter 1 above.  
A talk followed by discussion.  
(Wine and cheese evening).
2. Jesus and our children? our society.  
Questions selected from Chapter two above.  
A discussion lead by two or three people.  
(Supper provided by parishioners).
3. Being a Christian (Parent) in today's world.  
Questions selected from Chapter ten or eleven.  
Discussion with outside speaker.  
(Supper provided by parishioners).
4. The parish community.  
Discussion about parish and/or school.  
(Barbeque and BYO for all family members)

Notes: These meetings are not about filling the pot, but rather about lighting the fire. Their aim is to show the relevance of the Christian community and to inspire two or three to become future leaders.

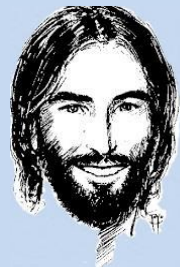
They illustrate how organisations today sell their product and/or involve people to their organisation.



## Chapter Eleven

# ***Sharing with young Christians.***

*The prince possessed a special love for  
the children of his kingdom.  
He enjoyed their fun and laughter.  
They would walk the hills together  
and share their thoughts about  
how Jesus was their friend.  
They would discuss how  
the world came to be  
and laugh at what was said.  
They would listen to each other's  
dreams and share together  
the way they felt when they prayed.  
They longed for the day  
when they will be together,  
For the whole world knows that  
their friendship is eternal.*



## **Day 40      *Sharing with the young.***

### **Todays tragedy.**

Very young children love going to church with their parents. Sadly as they grow older many begin to find church uninteresting. They will watch their parents at Sunday prayer but have no idea what they are thinking or feeling. They will sing hymns and join in the prayers but their minds are often miles away. They attend because their parents want them to and their parents sincerely believe that their good example will help their children to become good Christians.

Many grow into young adults without experiencing the close friendship of Jesus. As their experience of the christian faith does not touch their lives, God becomes unimportant and they stop attending church.

The tragedy deepens further when some parents also turn away from attending church as they come to the conclusion that religion is no longer revelant to their families. This is a common trend within 21<sup>st</sup> century Western society.

***“Young  
people’s  
experience of  
Christianity  
does not  
touch their  
lives.”***

### **A difficult solution.**

One answer involves parents and teachers sharing with their young their personal thoughts and feelings about the God who is their friend. This is no different from the way families share their opinions on sporting teams, TV, daily activities and all those things which bring intimacy and happiness to family life. The major difficulty is that parents and teachers often find it difficult to express how they pray and to share what Jesus means to them. For many years they have kept to themselves what they say and think when they pray.

### **What do parents and teachers need to do?**

Parents and teachers need to discuss with their children: Who is Jesus? Where is Jesus? Is he important in your life? What does he mean to you? How do you speak and listen to him? If everybody's opinion is respected this can be a time of excitement and laughter. Discussing and thinking about the friendship of Jesus can enrich and deepen traditional methods of prayer. Hearing how someone prays is often more powerful than being told how you should pray. Some of the most successful teachers are those who are struggling themselves to experience the divine. The young can identify very closely with these struggles. The best results are usually achieved by those young people who have shared their thoughts about Jesus over a long period of time. What you discuss with them will change over time, but it will usually involve your present thoughts about Jesus and your relationship with him.

### **The very young.**

Experts tell us that children learn at a very young age. A child should be introduced to the name of Jesus at the same time as they are introduced to the other members of their family.

- \* Ask them to choose a picture or toy that reminds them of Jesus. Make it important and let them hold it every night.
- \* They need to be told how Jesus is their special friend who will always love them.
- \* Bedtime is a magical time not just to read stories but to talk about Jesus. So is time together on the sofa.

### **From about three onwards**

From about three onwards children begin to create their own imaginary stories and friends. They like children's books and their illustrations. They enjoy watching TV cartoons and playing with Lego, cuddly toys or miniature cars. Sometimes we do not appreciate the imagination of our young. They relate very easily to people like Mickey Mouse, Alice in Wonderland and Snoopy the dog. They have no difficulty believing in Father Christmas and his ability to climb down chimneys. This is a time when their minds are open to new ideas. It is a perfect time to discover the mystery of God's love.

- \* Tell them about Jesus before you kiss them goodnight. Speak about how Jesus is a very special friend and how we are all going to live with him forever.
- \* Let them know how important Jesus is to you, how he is close and wants to be your friend? Ask them what they think.
- \* Give them time to express their own ideas, listening to their stories, and enjoying their dreams.
- \* Let them tell you where Jesus is, what he looks like and why he likes them. Tell them how you think about Jesus.
- \* Discuss what you say when you pray. Tell them how you prayed today. Get them to tell you how they prayed.
- \* Every month of the year create your own prayer that you can say together. It can center on what is happening in your life.
- \* Some are shy. Some take a long time to say what they think. Others are impossible to silence. Listen and laugh with them.
- \* Learning set prayers are important but the words need to be explained and the prayers said with an awareness of God.
- \* There is a real place for silence and stillness. Both inspire imagination and awareness.
- \* Listening to Jesus in the scriptures is a primary way of becoming conscious of the close friendship of Jesus.
- \* Read a verse of scripture and have fun. Find yourselves in the characters and discuss together how Jesus is feeling.
- \* Discuss how you listen to your human friends. Try taking a few words from the scriptures and listen together to what Jesus is saying to each of you. Talk about the experience. Enjoy the time together.
- \* Repeat those activities they find most enjoyable.
- \* Hold hands together. Close your eyes and then just think about how close Jesus is. How do you feel at this moment?
- \* Parents could dance together with their children. Classes could clap or move their hands as they repeat the word Jesus. Then everyone can suddenly be completely still and experience together his peaceful presence.

***“This can be  
a time of  
enjoyment  
and  
laughter.”***



- \* Share together your thoughts about God, about heaven and those religious things that interest them. Listen rather than talk.
- \* As your young friends grow older it is your daily two minute reflection which will provide you with new ideas and questions to place before them.

Coloring in pictures from the scriptures or just reading stories is no substitute for this deeper kind of experience.

A man was snoring during the sermon. The minister got quite upset and asked his wife to wake him up. The lady replied: "You put him to sleep. You wake him up".

### **10 and 12 year olds.**

It is very common for children of this age, often from very good Christian homes, to lose interest in Sunday prayer. Their minds can become filled with TV heroes, computer games, sport, hobbies or the excitement of going out with their friends. They can easily identify with the adventures of

Harry Potter and Superman. They are beginning to acquire their own views on many things. This does not mean they are less spiritual, or they do not want to talk about God. With the right approach they can still become fascinated with the world of Jesus.

- \* Many of the ideas discussed earlier are still appropriate for this age group.
- \* Parents need to choose the right time to talk about Jesus. Your sharing should be just like the other things that you talk about. Make it natural and interesting.
- \* Tell them your thoughts and feelings about Jesus. It is important that you talk about the things you find difficult in prayer. A major danger is not respecting their views and trying to 'teach' rather than 'share'.
- \* Ask them how they feel about Jesus. Listen to them and

***Select a word  
from the  
scriptures and  
listen to what  
Jesus is saying  
to you.***

## 224 Chapter Eleven.

enjoy what they think and say. Everybody has their own way of connecting with their friends.

- \* There always needs to be a time of stillness when everyone ponders over the mysterious world of God and then shares their experiences.
- \* Give them time to think and ponder. Encourage them to use their imagination.
- \* Teachers could slowly introduce their class to the two minute reflection. Talk to them about what this involves when you listen to Jesus. Only do it if they agree.
- \* Talk about their interests (animals, friends, activities) and how they all come from God. Make it fun.
- \* In teaching different subjects there will be many opportunities to discuss the closeness of God.
- \* As teachers you will always need textbooks but you also need to share your own experiences of the divine.

### **Time to connect with a friend**

Slowly breathe deeply in and out. You are with a friend.  
Think of your image and Repeat the word 'Jesus'.

**“Let the little children come to me ...  
to such as these that the  
kingdom of heaven belongs.”**

(Matthew 19.14, Mark 10:14)

**Listen Wonder**

## **Day 41      As they enter adulthood.**

Young adults are trying to find their place in today's world. Their interests range from the pleasures that come from mobile phones, computers and music to sport, girl friends and boy friends, hobbies and family. Their close friends have a major influence on their lives and their families are very important to them. Some are quiet and others are real extroverts. They can experience feelings of loneliness, embarrassment, anxiety or uncertainty but they are usually excited about life especially about the things which interest them. Life for them is to be lived. They have high ambitions, want to succeed and are willing to work to fulfill their dreams. Most of them are open to the world of God and are willing to share their thoughts about Jesus especially if this involves their friends and being free to say what they think.

***“They long  
to hear  
what you  
believe.”***

- \* Many of the ideas discussed earlier are still appropriate
- \* Silence creates the atmosphere and the creative thought which allows the divine to emerge.
- \* Parents and teachers could start the conversation by sharing their personal experiences of Jesus.
- \* Discuss with them what makes prayer meaningful to you. They want to hear what you ponder over in your heart.
- \* The two minute reflection could provide a platform for discussion. It allows each person to share what Jesus means to them. Center your discussion on the friendship of Jesus.
- \* Share together the different ways that humans listen. Then discuss why and how you can listen to Jesus. Talk together about Jesus being a friend. ***Learning to listen to Jesus and each other is the main road.***
- \* There is always the tendency to rationalize feelings and to analyze the words and experiences of others. This can be avoided by introducing questions like: What do you say when you pray? Does Jesus speak to you? How is Jesus a friend? This directs the conversation back to a more personal level.

- \* Sharing your feelings and asking their opinions are powerful tools. Asking “what do you think” is better than asking “why”.
- \* One thing young adult’s demand is sincerity and honesty. They want to hear exactly what you believe. It does not really matter if you are a quiet serious person or one filled with many words; it is your natural sincerity which is important.
- \* Try not to provide answers off the top of your head, be holy, preach or have all the answers. Speak with your heart as well as your mind. Seek answers with their help. This involves them in the discussion.
- \* They don’t mind if you don’t have all the answers. Explain to them how you are still learning. Tell them about your failures and the ups and downs in your prayer life.
- \* Give them time to express how they pray.
- \* Just talk to them about God in the same way as you discuss interesting things with your other friends. Be yourself. It can be a bit like discussing your feelings about your local sporting team.
- \* Enjoy the diversity of opinion. There is no set way of knowing Jesus or of seeking his friendship. Every person will have their own way of achieving this. Sometimes their opinions can be strange and unique. Many young people are just beginning to grasp God’s love. Go with the flow.
- \* Some will challenge traditional beliefs and doctrines. Teachers and parents need to proclaim the Christian beliefs clearly and honestly but allow them to differ. Make the discussion natural and happy.
- \* They will often ask difficult questions like: “How is God everywhere?” “How do you know that God is real?” “Why does God allow humans to fight and destroy each other?” “Why did God allow my sister to die?” Many of these experiences belong to the world of mystery and faith. You could discuss together how Jesus never promised perfect happiness in this world and how his love will only be fully

***“Just talk about  
God in the same  
way that you  
talk about your  
other friends.”***

- experienced in Heaven.
- \* Discuss the mysteries of the heavens and the beauty and complexity of nature. This can open minds to the glory and power of God.
  - \* They will respond in a positive way to beliefs and institutions provided they bring meaning to their lives.
  - \* Many parents and teachers find that the two minute reflection is the most practical way of discussing the presence and friendship of Jesus. The early chapters of this book offer a useful introduction to this method of prayer. Young adults need to be introduced slowly to the reflection as many are not used sharing their private thoughts. They must also know that they only need to reveal what they are comfortable with.

**“The two minute reflection provides a useful platform for discussion.”**

### **Controlling the discussion.**

If this is the first time that young adults have been able to freely express their religious views, it is very easy for the conversation to be side tracked by topics like: Why is Sunday service so traditional and lacking in interest? My mother is divorced. Why do some churches not let her receive communion? What is important is that everyone knows that this time is centered on the personal awareness of Jesus and how we think of him and listen to him. <sup>166</sup>

### **Teaching the Christian faith.**

The Christian formation of the young is a slow process involving accurate doctrine, stimulating material, teachers with a deep faith and the positive interaction of peers. Text books will always remain an essential element in this process. Our ideas simply offer an environment in which doctrines can become meaningful and acceptable.

---

<sup>166</sup> Problem associated with evil and suffering are discussed on pages 26 to 29.

## 228 Chapter Eleven.

This requires teachers and parents who have reflected on the deep mysteries of the Christian faith and can share their personal awareness and understanding of Jesus. It is about fulfilling the inner desires of young people for meaning, identity, and for a God who they need as a friend. Many questions have no clear answers but our Christian faith can provide real meaning to the young people of today. <sup>167</sup>

### **The future.**

As parents you really love your children and would do anything for them. As Christian teachers you have a real desire to spread the eternal message of God.

Of course, this is not an instant answer to our 21<sup>st</sup> century religious decline. The gift of faith is given by God and this gift is far more powerful than any human method of prayer.

### **Time to listen.**

Relax. Breathe deeply in and out. You are with a friend.  
Think of your image and repeat the word 'Jesus'.  
Say these words loud several times.

***"I am with you always"***

(Matt 28:20).

Listen Ponder Wonder

---

<sup>167</sup> A Friend Within has been written for the Christians of America. Its contents should be modified to suit the needs of different cultures and individuals.

Parents and teachers should not be discouraged if their efforts fall on deaf ears. There are many individual and cultural reasons which no parent or teacher can ever control. There is a story about a couple who drove past a church at Christmas. There was a large sign outside: "Visit Jesus this Christmas". The lady turned to her husband and smiled, "Look at those silly Christians. They even want to interfere with our holiday time." Stories like this illustrate the attitudes which many young people are exposed to.

## Useful scriptural resources for teachers

- 1 This book uses the **New Revised Standard Version** (NRSV). You may wish to use the Good News Bible. This translation is copyright friendly, sound and easy to read. The Revised New Jerusalem Bible (study edition) published in 2019 provides an excellent background to the biblical books.
- 2 **Raymond Brown S.S.** “An Introduction to the New Testament”, (NY:Doubleday, 1997) contains most of the additional information which you need. Amazon has second hand copies available for a few dollars. <sup>168</sup>
- 3 **Francis Moloney SDB** “The living voice of the Gospel”, (Collins Dove, 1986) offers a brilliant insight into the treasures of the gospels. He Lives in Victoria, Australia. <sup>169</sup>
- 4 **Warner Larry** “Journey with Jesus: Discovering the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius”. (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2010) provides a practical summary of the spirituality of Ignatius. <sup>170</sup>
- 5 Two other books are helpful. “A Christological Catechism”, (NY:Paulist, 1991) by Joseph Fitzmyer <sup>171</sup> and “101 Questions on the Bible”, (NY:Paulist Press, 2019) by Raymond Brown.

---

168 Fr. Raymond Brown S.S. (1928-1998) was a member of the Pontifical Biblical Commission from 1972 to 1978). Joseph Ratzinger who is Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, personally complimented Brown and his scholarship and has stated how the Catholic Church needs exegetes like Father Brown. (Origins, 17/35, Feb 11 1988, 559).

169 Fr. Francis Moloney SDB was appointed by John Paul II to the International Theological Commission. He served on the commission for 18 years. He is (a) former Dean of Theology and Religion at the Catholic University of America. He has written many books on both theology and scripture.

170 Larry Warner is a Presbyterian minister who teaches the Spirituality of Ignatius at the University of San Diego, California

171 Fr. Joseph Fitzmyer S.J. is Professor emeritus at the Catholic University of America, Washington. He is an expert on Aramaic, the language Jesus spoke. He served on the Pontifical Biblical Commission from 1984 to 1995.

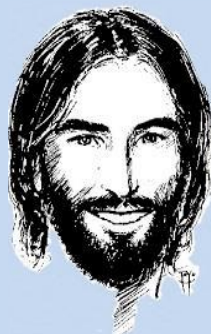




## Chapter Twelve

# ***A deeper understanding***

*They could no longer see their Prince.  
His earthly form had gone,  
yet he still spoke to them in many ways.  
They retold his stories and  
what he had done for them.  
They often listened to his wisdom  
in the writings he left behind.  
They always knew that he was close.  
His words still touched their hearts  
and brought joy and peace to their homes.  
The people still live with  
the wonder of his presence.  
They long for the day when  
they will be together.  
For the whole world knows  
that their friendship is eternal.*



## **DAY 42 The gospels revisited.**

The word '**Gospel**' comes from the Greek word 'euangelion'. In the scriptures it can be translated as 'proclaiming and spreading the Good News of Salvation'.

**Revelation** is the story of God's love. This love story began at creation long before the scriptures were written. It continued through the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) and finds its fulfilment in Jesus. The written record of Jesus' redemption – the New Testament – was created by the early Christian Churches. These Spirit filled communities have continued to preserve its message through the centuries. The Revelation of God in the wider sense can be applied to the beauty and wisdom of the whole of creation.

**Inspiration** is the presence, wisdom and message of God penetrating the human words found in the scriptures. While the authors speak in their own words with the vision of their own cultures, it is God who fills their thoughts with the religious truths of redemption. <sup>172</sup>

**The Canon** is the term scholars use to describe the official list of books which are inspired and are part of the revelation of God. Catholic scriptures contain 72 books. Turn the numbers around and you get 27 – the number of books in the New Testament. That leaves 45 books in the Hebrew Bible (Old Testament). The Protestant bible contains the same 27 New Testament books but regards seven of the 45 books in the Catholic Old Testament (Hebrew bible) as 'Apocryphal'. This means they question whether these books are inspired and belong to the canon. They are Tobit, Judith, I-II Maccabees, Wisdom, Sirach, Baruch, plus parts of Esther and Daniel. <sup>173</sup>

---

172 For a fuller discussion on inspiration see Raymond Brown Intro 29f.  
Also Deo Verbum 3:11

173 For a fuller discussion on the canon see Raymond Brown, *Responses to 101 Questions on the bible* (New York: Paulist Press, 1990.), 15.  
The apocrypha books are totally different from the apocalyptic style of writing

By AD 150 the four gospels were accepted as inspired, but it was not until the late 4th century that all the 27 books of the New Testament were included in the canon. Their selection was a complicated process. The books chosen were ones which were written close to the time of Jesus, linked to the lives of the apostles, important for the whole church, orthodox in content and able to clarify and answer disputes. <sup>174</sup>

### **DO ALL THE NEW TESTAMENT BOOKS HAVE THE SAME MESSAGE?**

The New Testament books possess their own unique styles and themes and reflect the way their Christian communities understood the presence and message of their God. They are filled with history, moral instructions, teachings, liturgy, beliefs and arguments supporting my message. These 27 books are similar to the different books contained in a modern library. The Letter of James is set in the synagogue (2:2). It stresses the Jewishness of Jesus. The Letter to the Hebrews highlights the divinity of Jesus. Daniel Harrington provides an excellent introduction to all the books of the New Testament. <sup>175</sup>

The gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke are known as the synoptics. They speak about Jesus in the same way or through the same eyes. Most scholars believe both Matthew and Luke had a copy of Mark. They both used his order and most of his verses. They also probably possessed another group of sayings about Jesus as both gospels have over 200 verses which are very similar and are not found in Mark. Scholars call these verses 'Q' meaning 'Source'.

John's community developed their stories about Jesus in their own distinctive way. Their gospel is the product of years of spiritual reflection on the meaning of the person of Jesus. <sup>176</sup>

In Matthew, Mark and Luke Jesus is very much a human being. In John he walks the earth as the divine and risen Lord.

---

which existed during Jesus lifetime.

174 Some of the books not included are the seven letters of Ignatius, Didache, Gospel of Thomas and Gospel of Peter. The last two books can be dated to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. They contain no new material concerning the revelation of God.

175 Daniel Harrington<sup>174</sup> (*Who is Jesus...* 102)

176 See Raymond Brown (*An Introduction to the NT...* 110 - 122).

### THE GOSPELS AND the New Testament.

Most scholars believe the New Testament was written on the approximate dates indicated below.

1 Thessalonians	50's	Behave, Jesus is coming.
Galatians	50's	Jesus rules over the law.
1 Corinthians	50's	How Christians should live.
2 Corinthians	50's	Jesus requires good behavior.
Romans	50's	The theology of Paul.
Philippians	56-63	Paul's vision of community.
Philemon	56-63	A story of forgiveness.

.....Death of Peter and Paul - about 64.....

Those who believe Paul wrote the 13 epistles which bear his name believe that the following books were written on these approx. dates.

Colossians	56-63
Ephesians	56-63
2 Thessalonians	56-63
1, 2 Timothy/Titus	56-63

Mark	late 60's	Jesus, a suffering Messiah.
1 Peter	80's	The People of God.
Matthew	late 80's	Jesus fulfills Israel's dreams.
Colossians	80's	The Church is the body of Christ.
Hebrews	80's	Christ the Supreme High Priest.
Luke, Acts	80s/90's	Jesus filled with the Spirit.
Revelation	90's	Christian dreams and visions.
Ephesians	90's	The Church is the Body of Christ.
2 Thessalonians	90's	Behave, Jesus is coming.
James	90's	Faith and deeds work together.
Jude	90's	Beware of false teaching.
1, 2 Timothy/Titus	90's	Emphasis on church order.
Gospel of John	late 90's	Jesus dwells within us.
1, 2 & 3 John	100	Guided by the Spirit.
2 Peter	100+	Beware of false teaching

### **A brief history of the Divine Text.**

We no longer have the original hand writings of the biblical authors. The scriptures which we possess today are copies of the original texts. The early church writers wrote on papyrus, a paper like material created from the Papyrus plant. Papyrus was an excellent media for distributing the early books of the bible, but it had a limited life span and was not tough enough to survive the centuries. Only fragments and leaves of these earlier copies have survived. The oldest fragment which is closest to the original writings is called P<sup>52</sup>. It measures about 2<sup>1/2</sup> inches by 3<sup>1/2</sup> inches and contains some the words of John 18:33, 37-38. It has been carbon dated to the first half of the second century which is very soon after John wrote his Gospel. It is part of the John Rylands library in Manchester, England.

177

It was only after AD 313, when Christianity became recognized in the Roman Empire, that the scriptures were written on parchment or Vellum which is leather derived from the skins of animals. These volumes or Codices are the major source of the scriptures which we possess today. <sup>178</sup>

The oldest almost complete New Testament translations come from manuscripts like the 4<sup>th</sup> century Codex Sinaiticus in the British Museum in London and 4<sup>th</sup> century Codex Vaticanus in the Vatican library. These manuscripts were written in Greek capitals. The trouble is that these translations follow the custom of the times and do not have gaps between the words. The only help is that Greek words from this time ended with a vowel or the consonants v, p or s. If in English you wrote 'Godisnowhere' do you mean 'God is nowhere' or 'God is now here'? <sup>179</sup>

Through the centuries, Christians have treasured and preserved the sacred texts. Today the scriptures exist in many different translations and in many different languages.

A Google search reveals the details of many important English versions. Some of the most popular are The King James Version

---

177 Bruce Metzger (*The Text....* 3-7).

178 Ibid., 4ff.

179 Ibid 13.

(KJV) and the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). The New American Bible, (NAB-1970) is used in the Catholic Mass in America. The New American Bible revised NT (NAB-1987) has a new translation of the Psalms and the New Testament. The New Jerusalem Bible (NJB) and the Revised New Jerusalem Bible (RNJB) is also popular translations.

The verses of the scriptures are continually being updated. This allows them to reflect the accuracy of modern Biblical Scholarship and to be “presented in a language that is direct and plain and meaningful to people today.”<sup>180</sup> The verses used in this book come from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV), British text (British spelling), Roman Catholic edition which contains the Apocrypha books.

It is a revision of the Revised Standard Version (RSV) published in 1952 which was a revision of the American Standard Version of 1901. This version embodied earlier editions of the King James Version (KJV) published in 1611.

The chapters used in today’s bibles were used for the first time in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. They were created by the Frenchman, Stephen Langton, who later became Archbishop of Canterbury. The verses found in today’s bible could have been created in the 1550’s by another Frenchman, Robert Stephanus. There is a story about how he did this while riding on a horse from Paris to Lyons. This could explain the irregularities!

Paul is having a personal conversation with Jesus.  
You are also present listening to what they are  
saying. Let Paul’s words become yours.

**“I can will what is right, but I cannot do it”.**

Do these words apply to you? Use your imagination.  
What is he saying to you? What should you do?

---

180 Bruce Metzger (speaking for the 30 member New Revised Standard Version committee), Page XV, “New Revised Standard Version (Catholic edition)”, HarperCollins, 2007.

## Day 43      **Ways of using the scriptures.**

Genuine biblical scholars study the scriptures in three separate ways. The first and most important way of research the scriptures is to determine the literal or exact meaning of the sacred words intended by the authors. They know that the biblical text has been guided by the hand of God and is more important than anything else that has ever been written. From earliest times to the present day the majority of biblical scholars have researched the scriptures in this way.

A second related area of study involves understanding the background and history of the text. This provides scholars with a richer understanding of how the sacred books were created and what the authors intended to say. They research many areas:

### **THREE DIFFERENT WAYS OF STUDYING THE SCRIPTURES.**

- 1. The meaning of the texts.**
- 2. The background of the text.**
- 3. The fuller sense of the text.**

Languages, archeology, the Hebrew and Aramaic meaning of words and many other ancient sources.

Our interest has been in the third way of studying the scriptures. We call this way the 'fuller sense' of scripture as it looks at the fuller meaning of the sacred word. This book uses the 'fuller sense' in three ways. These three ways will be discussed in the next few pages. Things now start to get a bit confusing so put your lights on. <sup>181</sup>

---

181 These three methods of study (the meaning of the text, the background and history of the text and the fuller meaning of the text) provide a simple way of understanding the way the scriptures are studied.

Scholars refer to these three ways as 'the word of the text' (The meaning of the text), 'the world behind the text' (The background and history of the text) and 'the world before the text' (The fuller sense of the text). Their approaches involve many different methods and insights. See Raymond Brown (*An Introduction to the NT....* 20-47). Sandra Schneiders (*The revelatory....* 97ff).

**THE FIRST METHOD OF EXPLORING THE FULLER SENSE:** <sup>182</sup>

-God's message is enriched by  
combining all the sacred books. (SEE BOX ON PAGE 240)

A fuller understanding of scripture emerges when you join together all the books found in the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Testament) and in the New Testament. The Vatican council speaks of the need to "carefully search out the meaning which the sacred writers really had in mind" but then adds, "No less attention must be devoted to the content and unity of the whole of scripture" <sup>183</sup>

When using the fuller sense, all the writings of the scriptures are treated as one unit. This means that the beliefs present in one biblical book bring a deeper meaning to all the other biblical books. This is like the way the information found in a particular chapter of a novel applies to all the chapters of that novel or how information found in one part of an article applies to all the other parts of the article.

Some biblical books clearly state Jesus is divine (see page 241). Because the bible is one inspired unit and every word of the scriptures is inspired by God, we can say that Jesus speaks as God in all the stories and characters of all the biblical authors. This also means that the prayers and stories of the scriptures which are directed to God are also prayers and stories about Jesus.

This allows you to read the earthly sayings of Jesus knowing that Jesus has risen or pray the Old Testament psalms while thinking about the human Jesus who walked our earth.

**"The beliefs  
found in one  
biblical book  
bring a deeper  
meaning to all  
the biblical  
books."**

---

182 For a discussion on the fuller sense of the scriptures see Raymond Brown (*An Introduction to the NT...* 41ff)

183 Vac 11, Divine Revelation, 12



**THE SECOND METHOD OF EXPLORING THE FULLER SENSE: -**

God speaks beyond the scriptures. (SEE BOX ON PAGE 240)

Earlier in this chapter (Page 232) we discussed how God's revelation came to us long before the scriptures were created and how the Christian churches of today continue to clarify its message. All Christian preachers expand the fuller meaning of the sacred text. Today God speaks to us through spiritual books and the traditions and teachings of our Christian communities. This provides us with a clearer understanding of the way God wants us to live our Christian faith in today's world.

Many Protestants base their teachings on the inspired words of the sacred text. They know that the spirit of God will help them understand how God wants them to live their lives <sup>184</sup>.

A Catholic understanding sees Jesus living on in his church and through the power of the Spirit, revealing more clearly the meaning of the scriptures. Catholics speak of seven sacraments and the infallibility of the Pope. They believe that these are implied in Scripture.

The majority of Christian saints are not mentioned in the scriptures, yet all Christians honor them as an important part of Christendom. Many churches carry their name. St. Francis of Assisi used the fuller sense when he introduced the Christmas crib to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Christian funeral services are only implied in the sacred scriptures, but all churches offer services for the deceased members of their congregation and for those who have fallen in war. The scriptures touch your lives in many diverse and different ways.

**“All Christian  
preachers  
expand the  
fuller  
meaning of  
the text.”**

---

184 51% of Americans are Protestant. Many of these communities use and interpret the scriptures in accordance with their own traditions.

**THE THIRD WAY THAT WE USE THE FULLER SENSE:**

-a prayerful or spiritual approach in which  
God speaks to you as a friend.

(SEE BOX BELOW)

Our major interest is in using this third approach to the sacred text. We are not directly concerned with studying the exact meaning or historical background of the sacred text (the first and second ways discussed on page 232). Our main focus is to use the scriptures as a prayer book to listen to the personal things Jesus is saying to us.

This approach is what the Vatican Council speaks about when it says, “Prayer should accompany the readings of Sacred Scripture” and “in the sacred books the Father in Heaven comes lovingly to meet his children and talks with them”.<sup>185</sup>

**The fuller sense**

We use the fuller approach to the  
scriptures in three different ways.

**1. God’s message is enriched by  
combining all the sacred books.**

Jesus speaks to you in every verse of the scriptures

**2. God speaks beyond the scriptures**

The scriptures speak to us about 21<sup>st</sup> century living,  
global warning, urban living and in many other ways.

**3. The prayerful approach in which God  
speaks to you as a friend**

This involves using the scriptures as a personal prayer  
book to listen to your God.

This is the way the scriptures are used in this book.

---

185 Divine Revelation 25 and 21.

It is important to appreciate the limitations of our spiritual approach. This way of using the scriptures cannot be used to create your own doctrines. This work can only be achieved by your Christian Community under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. When the scriptures are used to clarify beliefs, a far more literal and objective approach is required.<sup>186</sup>

There are many other ways of using the fuller approach to the sacred writings that are not discussed in this book. This involves using the scriptures to discover what Jesus is telling us today about protecting our environment, the equality of women, world peace, the needs of the poor, the starving and the victims of war.

### **WHICH BIBLICAL BOOKS SPEAK ABOUT THE DIVINITY OF JESUS?**

The Jewish nation recognized and revered God as the one and only true Lord. Jewish Christians would have found it very difficult to honor Jesus in the same way as they had traditionally honored their Creator. It needed a great deal of prayer and reflection before they were able to speak about the divinity of Jesus. This could help explain why the New Testament contains only a few prayers which are directed solely to Jesus.

The great majority of Scholars agree that the divinity of Jesus is clearly stated in the three verses below.

*“The Word was with God, and the Word was God”* ..... (John 1:1).

*“Thomas answered him, ‘My Lord and My God!’”* ..... (John 20:28).

*“But of the Son he says, ‘Your throne,  
O God is for ever and ever’* ..... (Hebrews 1:8).

There are many other verses which could well declare Jesus to be divine. The exact meaning of many of these verses is often unclear. Only those with a deep knowledge of New Testament Greek can fully understand the complexities of these problems. New Revised Standard Version of the scriptures speaks of the

---

186 Brown Raymond (*An Introduction to the NT...* 41-42).

divinity of Jesus in the following verses.

*“It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father’s heart, who has made him known”* ..... (John 1:18).

*“The glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ”* ..... (Titus 2:13).

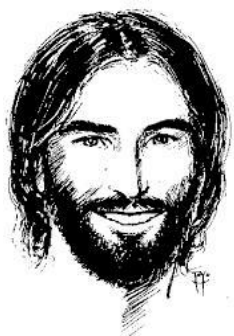
*“The Messiah, who is over all, God blessed forever”* ..... (Rom 9:5).

*“He is the true God and eternal life”* ..... (1 Jn 5:20).

*“Our God and Savior Jesus Christ”* ..... (2 Peter 1:1).

While many scholars believe Gal 2:20, Acts 2:20 and Col 2:2-3 speak of the divinity of Jesus, the NRSV translation does not agree. Brown comes to the same conclusion as the NRSV.<sup>187</sup>

There are also many passages in scripture which could infer the divinity of Jesus.<sup>188</sup> The authors of the Navarre Bible<sup>189</sup> believe that the divinity of Jesus is clearly professed in all the gospels. Other scholars are more conservative arguing that it was only towards the end of the first century that the New Testament openly declared Jesus to be divine. This illustrates how difficult it sometimes is for scholars to be certain about the exact ‘literal’ sense or the intention of the biblical authors. These academic disputes are complicated but have little bearing on the way you pray the scriptures.



A man arrived at the Pearly gates and was stopped by St. Peter.

---

187 This is the view of Raymond Brown (*An Introduction to NT Christology.... Appendix III, 171-195*).

188 For a discussion on how Jesus’ divinity is expressed in Messiah, Redeemer, exalted Lord, Son of God and Son of man see Joseph Fitzmyer (*A Christological....* 102- 112). For a discussion on how wisdom and logos point to the divinity of Jesus, see James Dunn (*Did the First....* 76-80 and 123-133). The names and titles which refer to Jesus are discussed on pages 97-99.

189 See Navarre Bible (*The Gospels...*). Also Raymond Brown (*101 Questions....*) and Joseph Fitzmyer (*A Christological Catechism....* 108-110).

His report showed that he was a robber. “That was a long time ago” said the man. “I have now reformed.” Peter went away to check and when he returned the gates had gone!

**Listening to your God.**

Why is solving Sudoku, winning games on your iPad or watching your favorite team on TV so enjoyable? It’s because we love a challenge. It is in our blood. Spending two minutes with me is the greatest and most rewarding challenge that you will ever encounter. Test yourself. See if you can chalk up another win. Just spend 2 minutes listening.

***“Thomas answered, ‘my Lord and my God!’”***

*(John 20:28).*

Imagine yourself in the room with Thomas. Imagine how it is you, not Thomas who is standing before the Lord. Repeat the words ‘My Lord and my God’ four or five times. It is you who is apologizing to Jesus.

Jesus is really close. He is looking at you. What is he saying to you? What is his attitude towards you? Do you think he is your friend? Allow yourself to experience amazement and wonder.

**Listen      Be aware      Ponder      Act**

## **Day 44 The theological and pastoral background to our approach.**

Our method of prayer involves two major traditions: The Lectio Divina and the spirituality of St. Ignatius.

### **THE LECTIO DIVINA OR READING WITH GOD.**<sup>190</sup>

This method of prayer has its origins in the teachings of Jesus. Jesus instructed his followers with the following words:

***“When you pray... Go to your room and shut the door....  
Do not heap up empty phrases” (Matt 5:6).***

The Lectio Divina was used by the Desert Fathers in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century and developed into its present form by St Benedict in the 6<sup>th</sup> century. The Lectio has continued to be the dominant prayer of the monastic movement and was important to people like Francis of Assisi (died 1226), Teresa of Avila (died 1582), St John of the Cross (died 1591) and St Ignatius of Loyola (died 1556).

The Lectio possesses five interrelated activities which can be prayed in any order and any combination. They are:

- 1 Reading: Reading and listening to the words of God until something catches your imagination.
- 2 Meditation: Allowing the thoughts of your God to enter your heart. Wondering and pondering over the presence of God.
- 3 Prayer: Being truly aware of God with your mind and heart. Listening and responding to what God is saying.
- 4 Contemplation: Relaxing with a friend. Just being with God.
- 5 Action: Deciding to act as Jesus wishes you to.

---

<sup>190</sup> The reformation (16<sup>th</sup> century) saw parts of Christendom diminish the importance of listening to Jesus in the scriptures. Today we are witnessing a revival in this aspect of prayer.

Our method of prayer simply continues, in a new setting, this tradition which has been with Christianity for centuries.

LECTIO LANGUAGE	OUR LANGUAGE
<div><div>Reading</div><div>Meditating</div><div>Awareness of God</div><div>Praying</div><div>Resting in God</div><div>Practical Action</div></div>	<div><div>- Choose your verse</div><div>- Image of God</div><div>- Awareness</div><div>- Relaxing</div><div>- Listening</div><div>- following Jesus</div></div>

Praying the Lectio demands honesty and action. Pope Francis warns of the dangers of making “the text say what (you) think is convenient” or “suited to (your) own patterns of thought.” He wants the text to challenge the way you respond to your God. He invites you to ponder over the following questions: <sup>191</sup>

*“Lord, what does this text say to me?”*

*“Lord, what is it about my life that you want to change?”*

**THE SPIRITUAL EXERCISES OF IGNATIUS OF LOYOLA.**

Our second major source is the 16<sup>th</sup> century ‘Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola’. His writings reflect a deep understanding of the Lectio Divina. Ignatius’ traditional retreat lasted 30 days. This book uses the work of the Protestant minister, Larry Warner to highlight how Ignatius’ thoughts can be used in a simpler way. <sup>192</sup>

The spirituality of St. Ignatius places emphasis on knowing

191 Pope Francis when speaking about the Lectio Divina in *Evangelii Gaudium* 2013, Par 152 -153.

192 See Larry Warner “Journey with Jesus, Discovering the Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius” (IL:Westmont, Intervarsity Press, 2010). Larry teaches at Azusa Pacific University Graduation School and the University of San Diego.

Jesus as a friend and using the scriptures to discover the place of the Almighty in your lives. It is characterized by meditating on an aspect of God's love, discerning the will of God and deciding on a particular way of becoming more Christian.

### **BRINGING THE DIVINE TO OUR 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY WORLD.**

In this book we have tried to use the wisdom of these two traditional methods to create a way of prayer which is meaningful to 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians. Many of their ideas are central to what we have written.

- 1 Language: We wanted to speak about prayer in simple everyday language and to avoid words which confuse or are not part of ordinary conversation.
- 2 Meditation and contemplation: We seldom used these words but spoke freely about pondering within our hearts what Jesus is saying. We often spoke about being silent with Jesus and resting in his presence.<sup>193</sup>
- 3 Praying with the heart: Both the Lectio and Ignatius use set prayers but their main thrust was listening, wondering and becoming aware of God. This book reflects this approach.
- 4 Imaginary prayer: This was one of Ignatius' great gifts to us. Only slowly did we understand the power of placing ourselves inside the stories of the scriptures, listening to what Jesus is saying and letting your thoughts unfold in his presence. Ignatius also stressed the value of using your imagination to create a personal image of Jesus.
- 5 Exploring feelings: Without this insight of St. Ignatius we would have been slow to ask questions about feelings. In fact exploring the way we think and feel about Jesus and yourself has emerged as a very important part of our thinking. This especially applies to our young Christians.
- 6 Scripture: Our two sources are totally dependent on the word of God. Because today's Christians have different views on how to use the scriptures we have spent considerable time clarifying how we should use the sacred book in prayer.
- 7 Technique: Ignatius has inspired us with many practical

---

193 St Teresa of the Child Jesus describes contemporary prayer as 'a close sharing with friends'. It is being alone with God.



ideas. These involve being relaxed, being aware of Jesus, pondering over the great love that God has for us, being silent and listening, reviewing or recording the way we pray and act, dealing with distractions, knowing that you will experience an up and down ride, understanding your changing thoughts and attitudes, thinking about Jesus through the day, experimenting, encouraging personal choice and closing your prayer with silence or a few words of praise.

- 8 We wanted to recognize the busy lives of our readers and how they live in a culture which speaks more than it listens. We needed to understand how many 21<sup>st</sup> century Christians are still deciding if prayer was important to them. We felt we should catch their attention with thought-provoking wisdom and plenty of humor. We wanted to explain how being aware of Jesus and listening to him is very similar to the way we get to know, enjoy and listen to other humans. At the same time we did not want to dilute the divinity or mystery that is God.
- 9 Time: A Major decision was made on time. We decided that two minutes was all we could ask from Christians who were skeptical of prayer and who were captivated by the activities of their busy world. All we can say is in the beginning, two minutes are better than nothing.
- 10 We wanted to produce material that could be used by parents and teachers. We wanted to take advantage of the great love that parents have for their children.
- 11 We believed that we could capitalize on people's spirit of adventure, their desire for something new and their search for happiness and meaning which is part of their DNA.
- 12 Finally we felt we should follow St. Francis of Assisi and allow ourselves to be amazed the beauty and magnificence of creation.

Many Christians coming from Africa, Asia, Central America, South America and the Pacific have a natural awareness of the divine and perhaps find other methods of private prayer more useful. Other devout Western Christians would agree.

Our approach is influenced by our belief that 21<sup>st</sup> century Western Christians have lost their awareness of a personal God. They have been bombarded by thousands of conflicting ideas

and demands and no longer know the God who loves them. We believe our two minute reflection leads people to an awareness of the God who lives within them and that it is a powerful stepping stone which brings meaning to the traditional prayers of Christendom.

***Experiencing your God in a different way.***

Become aware of Jesus standing together with Martha and Mary. Imagine you are Martha. You have been rushing all day, but now Jesus is looking directly at you.

Listen to what he is saying of you.

***“You are ... distracted by many things ...  
Mary has chosen the better part.”***

Luke 10:41)

You are Martha. How do you react to what your God is saying to you? How should you respond?

Just be silent and allow the presence of the divine to dominate your thoughts..



## Subject and Author Index

1<sup>st</sup> century Christianity 82, 102  
 21<sup>st</sup> century western world 16  
 21st century Christianity 15, 208  
 Abba Isaac 23  
 A Friend within  
     Summaries 11, 47, 91, 204,  
     114, 246f  
     Pastoral Background 246, 228  
     Theological Background  
         Lectio Divina 244  
         St Ignatius of Loyola 245  
 Allison Dale n79  
 Angels, Guardian 138,  
 Brown Raymond n21, 36, 46, n50,  
     n118, n129, n146, n150, n151,  
     n160, n172, n176, n182, n186,  
     n187, n189, n191  
 Byrne Bernard n41  
 Cassian John 23  
 Community 208, 215, 159  
 Cowley Joy 42  
 Donahue John n154  
 Dunn James n21, n137  
 Education of the young 220, n40  
 Resources, notes 229  
 Eucharist 71, n117, 133, n159, 178f  
     190,  
 Faith n141  
 Fitzmyer Joseph n21, n32, n52, n83,  
     n129, n132, n188, n189,  
 Fuellenbach John n32, n68  
 God the Creator 21f, 26f, 112  
 Hartin Patrick n96  
 Harrington Daniel n175  
 Hengel Martin n64, n65, n96, n97  
 Horrell David n70, n75, n76

### **JESUS, LORD AND GOD**

(Subjects also in the reflections)  
     Abba experience 56f  
     Apocalyptic sayings 67, 78  
     Answering prayers 26  
     Christ 98  
     Cosmic redeemer 54, 112  
     Death 71  
     Divinity 241, 76  
     Eternity 78, 83, 87  
     Humanity 76  
     Jewishness 57, 79,  
     Kingdom of God 61, n33  
     Living in Christ Jesus (see  
         Paul and the gospel of John)  
     Love, 26, 58, 133  
     Messiah 98  
     Miracles and evil 66, 76  
     Names and titles 97  
     Resurrection 82f  
     Parables /Sayings 56, 62f, 77  
     Jesus at prayer 57, n33  
     Sufferings 27, (see gospels)  
     Who am I? 73, 97f  
 Jewish faith 56, 79. n141  
 Joseph n54, 57  
**JOHN - GOSPEL OF** 185  
     Background 184  
     Presence of Jesus  
     A distinctive gospel 184  
 Keating Thomas n5  
**LUKE - GOSPEL OF** 195?  
     Background 162  
     Journey theme 164  
     Acts of the Apostles 214  
 Mary Magdalene 107

Mary Mother of Jesus 164f, 176

**MARK** - GOSPEL OF 119

Background 119

Suffering Messiah 128

**MATTHEW** - GOSPEL OF 141

Background 141

Beatitudes 147

Our Father 148, n33

Meier John n55, n144

Metzger Bruce n177, n178 n179  
n180

Moloney Frank n42, n101, n137,  
n145, n155, 156, n158, 169,  
n199,

Navarre, Bible n191

Neusner Jacob n55

Paul 87

Letters 88

In Jesus Christ 87, 93

Pennington Basil n8, n9, n10, n75

Peter 72, 154, 159

Pew Research 31

Pope Francis n93

Pope John Paul II n11

Rahner n13, 75, n49

**REFLECTION** (the daily) 29, 204

Actions 105

Awareness 39

Commitment, effort 59

Day dreaming 43

Distractions, Difficulties 44, 48

Experiment 1116

Feelings & emotions 38

Friendship 36f

Living a Christian life 105

Image of Jesus 41

Imagination 47

Jesus speaks 45

Laugh, enjoy, relax 48, 65

Listening to Jesus 39, 45f, 107,  
201

Traditional ways of prayer 117,  
205, 248

Prayer of silence 43f

Two minutes 29,70

Repeat, repeat, repeat 23

Story and prayer 111, 172

Rosary 165, n128

Schneiders, Sandra n181, n154,

Schillebecckx Edward n21, n28,  
n47, 75,

**SCRIPTURES** 101, 237

(Subjects also in Jesus)

Canon 232, n174

Catholics approach 240

Community influence 83 120,  
142, 186, 208

Divinity of Jesus (see Jesus)

Four gospels 103, 233

Fuller sense 239

Fundamentalism 89f

Great commandment 133

History of the text 235

Inspiration 102, 232

Literal sense 88, n74, 237f, 242

History of the text 240

Parables / sayings (See Jesus)

Protestant approach 240

Revelation 232

Spiritual /prayerful sense 240

Synoptics /Q source 233

Word of God 107

Shubala n66

Sickness, sin, suffering 27, 67

Sin and evil 27, n40, 67

Spirit (Holy Spirit) 32, 57, n58  
167,180f, 239f

Teilhard de Chardin n15

Taylor Justin n37, 84, n56, 136

Vatican II n79

Divine Revelation n20, n164,  
n182, n185

Constitution on the Church  
n165

Warner Larry 229, 245, n192

Women 107, 176

# Scriptural Index

## Matthew

2:2 .....	145
5:3 .....	59
5:3-11 .....	147
5:13-14 .....	148
5:44 .....	148
6:6 .....	148
6:9-13 .....	148
7:3 .....	64
7:3 .....	148
7:9 .....	69
7:28-29 .....	158
8:8 .....	149
8:27 .....	149
9:37 .....	150
10: 31 .....	150
11:1 .....	158
11:25 .....	150
11: 28 .....	151
12: 6 .....	71
13:44 .....	151
13:52 .....	143
14:19 .....	167
14:27 .....	153
16:15 .....	74
16:16 .....	153
16:18 .....	154
17:2 .....	153
18:18 .....	153
18:20 .....	153
18:20 .....	212
19:14 .....	224
20:15 .....	156
22:9 .....	156
22:21 .....	156
22:37-39 .....	155
22:37-39 .....	106
25:40 .....	85
25:40 .....	106
25:40 .....	111
25:40 .....	157
26:40 .....	156
26:26 .....	158
26:56 .....	158
26:70 .....	72
26:74 .....	158
26:74 .....	158
27:46 .....	158
27:50 .....	158

28:20 .....	24
28:20 .....	113
28:20 .....	158
28:20 .....	207
28:20 .....	228

## Mark

1:1 .....	122
1:1 .....	123
1:3 .....	123
1:18 .....	127
1:35 .....	57
1:40 .....	127
3:13 .....	127
3:24 .....	127
4:9 .....	127
4:34 .....	72
4:41 .....	124
6:50 .....	127
7:14 .....	46
7:37 .....	127
8:2 .....	127
8:29 .....	74
8:25 .....	130
8:29 .....	74
8:31 .....	130
9:7 .....	129
9:27 .....	66
9:35 .....	130
10:14 .....	131
10:14 .....	224
10:25 .....	59
10:22 .....	130
11:9 .....	134
12:30-31 .....	133
12:43-4 .....	134
13:24-25 .....	67
13:26 .....	68
14:24 .....	136
14:36 .....	57
14:37 .....	136
14:38 .....	136
14:62 .....	137
14:71 .....	137
15:38 .....	137
15:39 .....	137
16:6 .....	138
16:11 .....	138

16:19.....	138
16:19.....	139

## Luke

1:35.....	166
1:37-38 .....	166
1:42.....	165
1:46-47 .....	166
1:46-47 .....	173
2:7 .....	173
4:16, 18.....	167
4:40-41 .....	68
5:1-11 .....	168
6:12.....	170
6:20.....	170
6:27.....	170
6:36.....	170
6:46.....	170
8:1-3 .....	108
9:16.....	170
9:35.....	46
9:35.....	173
9:20.....	74
10:18.....	68
10:27.....	171
10:30-37 .....	172
10:41.....	243
10:42.....	171
11:20.....	61
13:32.....	64
17:21.....	61
18:10.....	175
21:2.....	175
21:4.....	175
22:19.....	71
22:19.....	177
23:34.....	178
23:43.....	72
23:43.....	178
23:43.....	177
23:46.....	178
24:5.....	178
24:30-31 .....	178
24:32.....	179
24:39.....	178
24:45.....	113
24:49.....	179
24:51.....	179

## John

1:1-3.....	30
1:1.....	185
1:1.....	188
1:1.....	189
1:1.....	203
1:1.....	242
1:11-12.....	186
1:14.....	185
1:29.....	185
1:49.....	185
3:36.....	190
4:25.....	185
4:42.....	185
4:41.....	190
6:35.....	191
6:48.....	185
6:51.....	191
7:37-38.....	192
7:40-41.....	192
8:11.....	193
8:12.....	193
9:5.....	185
9:25.....	193
10:11.....	193
10:11.....	185
11:18.....	194
13:31.....	185
11:33.....	111
11:35.....	194
14:1-2.....	196
14:2.....	60
14:2.....	204
14:6.....	75
14:6.....	185
14:6.....	187
14:10.....	185
14:43.....	196
15:5.....	196
15:6.....	196
15:9.....	110
15:14.....	111
15:14.....	40
15:15.....	40
15:15.....	197
15:16.....	44
16:3.....	197
17:21.....	197
19:6.....	199
19:11.....	199
19:30.....	199
20:18.....	200
20:22.....	200
20:28.....	185
20:28.....	188
20:28.....	200
20:28.....	220

20:28.....	236
20:29.....	201
20:29.....	241
20:31.....	186
21:7.....	185
21:17.....	201

## Acts

1:8.....	181
2:4.....	180
4:12.....	180
5:42.....	180
17:28.....	102
17:28.....	111
17:28.....	180

## Romans

5:5.....	82
5:5.....	111
7:18.....	243
8:9.....	82
8:18.....	28
11:33.....	111
11:36.....	96
12:15.....	83
12:15.....	91
12:16.....	92

## 1 Corinthians

1:2.....	84
1:10.....	92
3:9.....	210
3:16.....	94
7:31.....	95
8:1.....	111
12:13.....	83
16:22.....	102

## 2 Corinthians

5:1.....	95
8:6.....	113

## Galatians

2:20.....	49
2:20.....	86
2:20.....	93
2:20.....	102
2:28.....	87
5:15.....	91

## Ephesians

1:10.....	51
2:5.....	94
3:17.....	87

3:17.....	94
3:17.....	96
3:18-19.....	30

## Philippians

4:13.....	29
4:13.....	87

## Colossians

1:15.....	41
2:8.....	94
3:2.....	95
3:12.....	86
3:16.....	113
3:15.....	17

## 1 Thessalonians

2:12.....	111
3:12.....	211
5:16-17.....	24

## 2 Thessalonians

3:16.....	38
-----------	----

## Titus

1:16.....	94
2:13.....	242

## Hebrews

1:8.....	242
----------	-----

## 2 Peter

3:18.....	84
3:18.....	214

## 1 John

2:17.....	204
3:20.....	27

## Jude

1:25.....	84
-----------	----

## Revelation

1:8.....	66
1:8.....	70
3:20.....	112

## Psalms

46:10.....	112
70:1.....	18
112.....	10

## Bibliography

- Allison Dale                      Constructing Jesus: Memory, imagination and history.  
MI: Grand Rapids, Baker Academic, 2010.
- Barton John                      A History of the Bible. Uk Penguin Random House, 2019.
- Benedict XVI, Pope.              Jesus of Nazareth. New York: Doubleday, 2007.
- Bicknell Edward.                A Theological Introduction to the 39 articles of the  
Church of England. London: Longmans Green, 1929.
- Borg Marcus.                      The God We Never Knew. New York: Harper  
San Francisco, 1997.
- Brown Raymond.                An Introduction to the New Testament. Edited by  
David N. Freeman. Anchor Reference Library  
Series. New York: Doubleday, 1997.
- An Introduction to New Testament Christology, New  
York: Paulist Press, 1994.
- An Introduction to the Gospel of John,  
Editor Francis Maloney. New York: Doubleday, 2003.
- Biblical Exegesis and Church Doctrine. New York:  
Paulist Press, 1985.
- Crucified Christ in Holy Week. Collegeville, MN:  
Liturgical Press, 1986.
- Crises Facing the Church. New York: Paulist Press,  
1975.
- New Testament Essays. New York: Paulist Press, 1965.
- Responses to 101 Questions on the Bible. New York:  
Paulist Press, 1990.
- The Death of the Messiah. New York: Doubleday, 1993.
- Brown Raymond                & Meier John. Antioch & Rome. New York: Paulist Press, 1982.
- Burton William.                "Significance of the Resurrection in the New Testament."  
Bible Today. Vol. 49, no. 5 (Sept/Oct 2011), 285 – 290  
.
- Byrne Bernard.                A Costly Freedom, a Theological Reading of Mark's  
Gospel. MN: Liturgical Press, 2008.
- The Hospitality of God. MN: Liturgical Press, 2008.
- Cowley Joy. New Zealand Marist Messenger. (June 2, 2009), 21.  
([www.maristmessenger.co.nz](http://www.maristmessenger.co.nz)).



- Culpepper, R. Alan.     The Gospel and Letters of John. Nashville TN:  
Abingdon Press, 1998.
- Curry Michael             Primate Bishop of Episcopal Church of the USA. Sermon at  
wedding of Meghan Markie and Prince Harry. See google.
- Davis W &  
Allen Allison.             The Gospel according to Saint Matthew. 3  
Vols. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988-1997.
- Dunne Tad                 Spiritual Mentoring, guiding people through Spiritual Exercises  
to Life decisions. San Francisco: HarperSan Francisco, 1991.
- Spiritual exercises for today: a Contemporary Presentation of  
the Classic Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius Loyola. HarperSan  
Francisco, 1991.
- Dunn James.             Jesus and the Spirit. London: SCM press, 1975.
- Christology in the making: A New Testament Inquiry into the  
Origins of the Doctrine of the Incarnation, MI, Grand Rapids:  
Eerdmans, 1996.
- Jesus Remembered: Christianity in the Making Vol 1, Grand  
Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003.
- Beginning from Jerusalem: Christianity in the Making Vol 2,  
Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008.
- Did the First Christians Worship Jesus. Louisville,  
KY: SPCK/Westminster John Knox, 2009.
- Jew nor Greek: Christianity in the Making Vol3,  
Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008.
- Donahue John             Life in Abundance. editor. Mn, Collegeville: Liturgical  
Press, 2005.
- Edwards Denis.             How God Acts, Creation, Redemption and Special  
Divine Actions. Theology and the Science Series.  
PA Philadelphia: Fortress, 2010.
- Francis Pope             Evangelii Gaudium: Apostolic Exhortation on the  
Proclamation of the Gospel in Today's World (24.10 2013)
- Fitzmyer Joseph.         A Christological Catechism, New Testament  
Answers, New Revised and Expanded Edition.  
New York: Paulist Press, 1991.
- Luke. General Editors William F. Albright and  
David N. Freedman. Anchor Bible Series.  
New York: Doubleday, 1979.
- Romans. General Editors William F. Albright and  
David N. Freedman. Anchor Bible Series.  
New York: Doubleday, 1993.
- Fuellenbach John.         The Kingdom of God. New York: Orbis books, 2003.

## 256 Bibliography

- Gallacher Patrick (Editor) "The Cloud of Unknown" MI: Medieval institute Publications 2018
- Grech Posper An outline of New Testament Spirituality, MI, Grand Rapids, Eermans, 2003
- Hengel Martin. Acts & the History of Earliest Christianity. London: SCM Press, 1979.
- Between Jesus and Paul. London: SCM Press, 1983.
- The Pre Christian Paul. London: SCM Press,1991.
- Harrington Daniel Who is Jesus? Why is he important? Franklin,WI: Sheed and Ward, 1999.
- Hartin Patrick Explaining the Spirituality of the Gospels. Mn: Collegeville, Liturgical Press, 2010.
- Horrell David. An Introduction to the Study of Paul. 2nd ed. London: T&T Clark, 2007.
- Hughes Gerard God in All Things. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 2003.
- Jeremias Joachim. New Testament Theology. New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1971.
- The Prayers of Jesus. PA:Philadelphia, Fortress, 1984.
- Johnson Timothy. The Gospel of Luke. Edited by Daniel J. Harrington. Sacra Pagina Sereies. MN, Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2006.
- Koenig Harold, McCullough Michael and Larson David, Handbook of Religion and Health. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.
- Keating Thomas. Open Mind, Open Heart. 20th Anniversary Edition, New York: Continuum, 2006.
- Leon-Dufour Xavier. Dictionary of Biblical Theology. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1984.
- Warner Larry Journey with Jesus: Discovering the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius". (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2010).
- Maloney Elliott. "Mark's Eschatological Perspective." The Bible Today Vol. 49, No. 6 (Nov/Dec 2011): 347 - 362.
- Moloney Francis. An Introduction to the Gospel of John by Raymond Brown, Edited by Francis Maloney. New York: Doubleday, 2003.
- Living Voice of the Gospels. Victoria, Australia: Collins Dove, 1986.
- The Gospel of John: Sacra Pagina Series, DE: Wilmington, 2005.
- Love in the Gospel of John. An Exegetical, Theological and Literary Study, (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2013.

- “A Hard Saying.” *The Gospel and Culture* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2001),
- Mark: *Storyteller, Interpreter, Evangelist* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2004)
- The Gospel of John: Text and Context* (Biblical Interpretation Series 32; Boston: Brill, 2005).
- Meier John. *A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus*. 3 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1991 - 2001.
- The Mission of Christ & His Church*. DE: Wilmington, Michael Glazier, 1990.
- Metzger Bruce. *The Text of the New Testament, Its Transmission, Corruption and Restoration*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968
- Murphy-O'Connor Jerome *Paul, a Critical Life*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- Navarre, Bible. The *The Gospels and Acts of the Apostles*. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1999.
- Neusner Jacob. *From Politics to Piety*. New York: KTAV, 1979.
- New Zealand Bishops. *Prayer in the Busyness of Life*, 2009. Download at [catholic.org.nz](http://catholic.org.nz).
- Lectio Divina*, 2011. Download at [catholic.org.nz](http://catholic.org.nz).
- NRSV *New Revised Standard Version* (Catholic edition). HarperCollins, 2007.
- O'Collins Gerald. *Jesus today, Christology in an Australian context*. NJ: Paulist Press 1986
- Paul II John, Pope. *The Catechism of the Catholic Church*. London: Geoffrey Chapman, 2000.
- Pennington M. Basil *Centering Prayer*. Image Books. New York: Doubleday, 2001.
- Pew statistics *Google: "Religion among the Millennials: The religious beliefs and practices of 18 to 29 year old Americans"* (Feb 17 2010).
- Google: [pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study](http://pewforum.org/religious-landscape-study) (2014).*
- Google: "The World's most Committed Christians live in Africa, Latin America and the US" ( August 2018)..*
- Google: Decline of Christianity in USA [pewforum.org/2019/10/17](http://pewforum.org/2019/10/17) (2019).*
- Posper Grech *An outline of New Testament spirituality* MI, Grand Rapids: Eermanas, 2011

## 258 Bibliography

- Rahner Karl. Dogmatic Reflections on the Knowledge and Self-consciousness of Christ. Theological Investigations 5. Trans. K. Kruger. Baltimore, PA: Helicon, 1966.
- Richardson Alan. A Theological Word Book of the Bible. London: SCM, 1985
- Rohr Richard Fr. Look up Richard Rohr on YouTube.  
Schillebecckx Jesus, An Experiment in Christology.  
Edward New York: Seabury Press, 1979.
- Schneiders Sandra. The Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament in Sacred Scripture. Michael Glazier Book. MN: Liturgical Press, 1999.  
"The Resurrection (of the Body) in the Fourth Gospel." Life in Abundance: Studies of John's Gospel in Tribute to Raymond Brown, ed. John R. Donahue Mn: Collegeville, Liturgical Press, 2005.  
  
Written that you may Believe: Encountering Jesus in the Fourth Gospel. New York: Crossroad, 2003.
- Senior Donald. Jesus: A Gospel Portrait, revised edition. New York: Paulist, 1992.
- Taylor Justin Where did Christianity come from? Michael Glazier Book. Mn: Collegeville, Liturgical Press, 2001.
- Teilhard de Chardin Toward the Future. Image books New York: Doubleday, 2004.
- US Catholic Bishops. The Compendium to the Catechism of the Catholic Church. US Catholic Bishops Conference, Washington: USCCB Publishing, 2006.
- Wansbrough Henry Translator of the Revised New Jerusalem Bible (study edition). London: Darton Longman Todd, 2019
- Vatican II Web Site: Google "Vatican II Documents".
- Warner Larry. Journey with Jesus: Discovering the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius. IL: InterVarsity Press, 2010.
- Wright N. T. (Tom). The New Testament and the People of God, Vol.1. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992.  
  
Jesus and the victory of God, Vol 2. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996.  
  
The Resurrection of the Son of God, Vol 3. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2003.  
  
Simply Jesus. New York: Harper Collins, 2011.  
  
Who was Jesus. MI: Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 199

