

## Prayer Guide – Week 1

### PRACTICE THE PRESENCE

#### **“Be still, and know that I am God...” Psalm 46:10**

Practicing the presence is an invitation to see and experience every moment as a gift of God. It is about keeping company with Jesus.

We all live our lives in the presence of God. In fact, we cannot live our lives in the presence of God. *In Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer*, C.S. Lewis wrote, “We may ignore, but we can nowhere evade, the presence of God. The world is crowded with Him. He walks everywhere incognito.” Yet, we become so preoccupied with the to-do list and are so overwhelmed by the pace of life that we forget to look for God sighting in our day.

Practicing the presence is a way of living into a deeper awareness of God’s activity in our lives. Through many small pauses we begin a habit of turning our heart toward God. Through these acts of attention we express our intention to live in union with Jesus.

#### **Prayer Invitations**

These exercises are suggestions to help you pray in the presence of Jesus this week. Remember to write your prayers and then place them in your prayer box.

- Bring yourself before God like a child before a loving parent. Open your heart and make your requests. Tell Jesus about your frustrations, your joys, your desires. Dear Jesus...
- Dedicate a task you are doing to the Lord. Tell Jesus about the task before you begin and again when you are done. Did you become any more aware of Jesus in the process? Tell Jesus about it. Dear Jesus...
- Offer all of yourself to God for the day ahead. Through the day ask yourself if you are still living your intention to be in God’s presence. Do not be discouraged when you stray; simply begin again. God loves for you to turn your heart back to him. Dear Jesus...
- When a song comes to mind during the day, pay attention to it. Could this song be a word of God to you? If it is, tell God what it means to you to have him come near you in this way. Write your thoughts on a card and place it in the prayer box. Dear Jesus...

- Practice the presence in interruptions. The intention to live in the presence of Jesus is a way to say, "I am here."
  - o Throughout your day – perhaps every time you are interrupted- tell God "I am here." Remind yourself that you are in the presence of Jesus, who had time for people who questioned and interrupted.
  - o Remember that some of Jesus' most gracious miracles occurred when He was interrupted. What is it like for you to offer yourself to be present to God during interruptions? Dear Jesus...
- Decide to stop several times throughout your day to pay attention to God and practice His presence. Set a clock to remind you. Spend five minutes praying or just being with Jesus. What is this like for you? Tell Jesus about it. Dear Jesus...

## **Prayer Advice**

Prayer is nothing more than an ongoing and growing love relationship with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is about keeping company with Jesus.

As we begin, do not be discouraged by your lack of prayer. Even in our prayerlessness, we can hunger for and desire God. When we cannot pray, we let Jesus be our prayer. We can give even our lack of prayer to Jesus.

The truth of the matter is, we all come to prayer with a tangled mass of motives – altruistic and selfish, merciful and hateful, loving and bitter. Frankly, this side of eternity we will never unravel the good from the bad, the pure from the impure. Remember, God is big enough to receive us with all our mixture of complexities. We do not have to be bright, or pure, or filled with faith, or anything. That is what grace means, and not only are we saved by grace, we live by it as well. And we pray by it.

The most important thing is to keep praying, even if it feels artificial at first. Expect to learn in the process. Jesus will bless whatever offering of prayer you make from the heart with commitment and sincerity. The more you give yourself to prayer, the more life you will find in it. (Psalm 131:1-2)

### Resources:

Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home by Richard Foster

Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life by Marjorie J. Thompson

Spirit Windows: A Handbook of Spiritual Growth Resources for Leaders by Ann Z. Kulp

Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform Us by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun

The Spirit of the Disciplines: Understanding How God Changes Lives by Dallas Willard