



Getting Started

Dwelling Series Motivation

What does your relationship with God look like now? What words would you use to describe it? Do you ever wonder if there is something beyond where you are with God now?

Do you ever feel guilty about not spending time with God? Maybe you do spend time with God, but it isn't what you would call quality time.

Maybe you have spent a lot of time in Bible study, but don't feel you have a deep heart connection with God.



Have any of the thoughts above ever gone through your head?

If you identify with these thoughts, you are not alone. Many people, regardless of how long they have been following Jesus, think this way at times. They are actually great things to think about ... and act upon!

Dwelling Purpose

The purpose of Dwelling is to help you to deepen your heart relationship with God in Christ. It starts with your personal devotional times. The idea is that rich and meaningful times alone with God will become a foundation for an ongoing close daily walk with God. Each session will focus on a different "tool" we can use in developing our relationship with God in our times alone with Him.

Anchoring Scripture

There is a key scripture from Paul's letter to the Ephesian church that forms the basis of Dwelling.

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that **Christ may dwell** in your hearts through faith.

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

- Ephesians 3:14-19

Christ Dwells

Paul's prayer is that through a work of God, the Ephesian church would be strengthened in their core so that Christ may dwell there in their hearts. How amazing that Christ, the holy, righteous Son of God, would dwell - that is live - in us.

Christ initially came into our hearts when we first believed. This verse is about Him remaining; not just appearing now and then to visit, but permanently and continuously dwelling or living there. Settling in, so to speak.



What does it really mean that Christ dwells in our hearts? What does that look like from the inside?

When we dwell or live with someone like a family member, we share life with them. In a healthy

relationship, we spend time together, talk with one another and demonstrate love to each other. The longer we dwell together and the more we put into sharing life, the closer we become to each other. On the other hand, if we don't acknowledge, talk with, or even given much thought to those we live with, the relationship can be distant.

Of course Christ is different to the family members we dwell with. He is God. But maybe how we relate to family we dwell with can be a starting point to understand relating to Christ as He dwells in us. How can we spend time with Him in different ways, talk with Him, listen to Him and demonstrate love to Him?

If God will strengthen us, as Paul says, so that Christ dwells in our hearts, what is our response to that? How can we practically relate to Christ in meaningful ways as he dwells in our hearts? We will see some examples of this in later sessions.

Through Faith

The words “through faith” are also in this anchoring scripture. Why? How do we exercise faith in the context of this passage?

When we have faith in something, our actions reflect our belief in the reliability of the “thing”.



Are there actions we can take that reflect our belief that Christ is dwelling in our hearts? If he is dwelling in our hearts, what can we do in faith to build relationship with him? Let's take some time to think about this and discuss it if you're with others.

These are some of the questions we will address in other sessions of this series.

Knowing Christ's Love

Paul goes on to pray that we would have power to **grasp** the entirety of Christ's love, and to **know** that love that surpasses understanding. How can you *know* something that surpasses knowledge itself? It sounds impossible. However, the Bible uses the word *know* in other places to represent intimate relational knowledge, that is, knowing someone very deeply. In particular, the Bible uses this for the intimate marriage relationship. So it seems knowing the love of Christ is less about **knowing of** his love and more about **experiencing** his love.

Didn't the Ephesian church already know/experience Christ's love? If they did, why would Paul pray for them to have power to know the love of Christ? They were followers of Jesus as we can see early on in the "To" part of this letter.

To God's holy people in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus
- Ephesians 1:1

But it seems that we can be followers of Jesus, saved, and not fully grasp, and as Paul says *know*, Christ's love. Paul is praying that the faithful in Christ Jesus, those that are saved and follow Him, would have power to experientially know the fullness of Christ's love.

Filled Up

Finally, Paul prays that we would be filled up to the top with God Himself. What would that look like? If everything that is in us is God himself, there's no room for anything else. That sounds pretty good, especially if there are things in our lives that we would like to change or get rid of. It puts a whole new twist on holy living. Instead of focusing on getting things out of our lives that aren't good for us and turn God off, we can focus on having God 100% filling us so that there's no room for anything else.



What do you think about all of this? Do you agree or disagree that we can have salvation through Jesus, yet not experience the full extent of Christ's love?

Dwelling, Love and Intimacy

From what we've seen so far from Ephesians 3:14-19, God can strengthen our hearts so Christ can live there. With Christ living in our hearts, we experience the full extent of his love and are filled up with God himself. That experiencing his love and being filled with him implies some sort of closeness or intimacy with God. Let's look at some other parts of the Bible that speak of this love and intimacy with God.

God commands our love

We should seek intimacy with God firstly because God commands us to love Him. The first commandment says:

You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might,
- Deuteronomy 6:5

Intimacy with Jesus is the abundant life in Christ that is promised to us for today and eternity

One of the amazing blessings of seeking intimacy with Christ is the sense of purpose, satisfaction and completeness that comes from knowing God our creator. God is so full of blessing that as we seek to be close with Him, he comes close to us. That closeness of God brings completeness to our lives.

Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.

- James 4:8

We see more evidence of the abundant life he brings in John.

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly

- John 10:10

In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind.

- John 1:4

Intimacy with the Father

While we can have intimacy with Christ, through him we also gain access to intimacy with God our Father. Jesus had intimacy with the Father, and is the way to intimacy with the Father.

"I and the Father are one."

- John 10:30

"...no one comes to the Father but through Me."

- John 14:6

Intimacy with Jesus is a necessary foundation for sustained kingdom work

While many people desire to serve God through kingdom work, we need to be careful that we're working out of the strength and power of Christ in us and hearing the Holy Spirit as we go.

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

- John 15:5

Jesus himself was always in communion with his Father.

Jesus gave them this answer: "Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does."

- John 5:19

In that same Ephesians 3 chapter, but earlier in verses 10 and 11, we can see a purpose for this strengthening, dwelling, grasping and filling.

His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

- Ephesians 3:10,11

While it is certainly an amazing blessing to have Christ dwelling in us, that blessing for ourselves is not the only purpose. If we start with the externals, the behaviours and actions, we will short circuit the power of his Spirit working in us. Jesus is the Alpha, the beginning, so we must start with him for effective kingdom work to flow from us.

The disciples had intimacy with Jesus: Road to Emmaus

"Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scripture to us?"

- Luke 24:32

Think of that - "our hearts burning". It's not a bad thing, but a good heating of our hearts that

happens when something impassions us. The risen Christ's words and his presence with the disciples impacted their hearts because they had developed an intimacy with Jesus. They loved him and knew his love for them.

Taking Stock

The goal of Dwelling is to develop habits and an environment where we can experience increased intimacy with Christ through his dwelling in us; to move from "I should spend time with God" to "I want to / get to spend time with God".



Let's ask ourselves the following questions:

Where am I now in my intimacy with God?

What actually happens when I spend time with God?

What is my sense of Christ dwelling in me?

To what extent am I grasping his love?

Take some time to jot down your thoughts about this so you can revisit it later in the series.

Where To From Here?

The remaining sessions will introduce practical ways in which we can "draw near to God" in our personal devotional times and wait for Him to draw near to us...

Spoken Praise and Worship

Review

In the last session we [introduced the series](#). We saw that the purpose of the series is to enable us all to have a more intimate relationship with God by providing some tools for connecting with him in our personal devotional times. As we connect with God, we are seeking the results of Paul's prayer for the church in Ephesians 3. His prayer is that God would strengthen us with power through his Spirit in our inner being, so that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith. Also that we would fully experience the love of Christ, and be filled to the top with God.

In this session we will look at our first tool for connecting more deeply with God. It is spoken praise and worship. But before we do, a little history lesson...

First Earthly Dwelling Place of God

God's desire from the beginning has been to dwell with the people that He created. Way back in the Old Testament, he instructed his people to build a physical place where he could dwell among the people he loved. This was the place where people worshiped, sacrificed and in general related to God.

And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.
- Exodus 25:8

Access to God

Of course they didn't have the direct access to God through Jesus that we have now. There were priests who were mediators between the people and God. In fact, God was so inaccessible that there was a special place in the sanctuary called the Holy of Holies where he dwelt. No one but the high priest could go there, and he could only go there just once a year to offer sacrifices on behalf of the people. There was a physical veil that separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the sanctuary. In a way, that symbolized that even though God was present, he was so holy and we were so not holy that we couldn't get near Him.

So yes, God dwelt among his people, but the average person couldn't get up close and personal.

Where Worship Happens

With that background of the sanctuary, let's look at what Psalm 150 says.

Praise God in his sanctuary; Praise him in his mighty heavens.
- Psalm 150

Psalm 150 tells us to praise God who dwells both on earth as well as outside of his created universe. As for his dwelling on earth, it says to praise him in his sanctuary. That's the place that we just talked about from Exodus.

It is at that place of worship where the Israelites were to praise God. They were to praise him there because that is where they had access to him, remote as it was.

New Dwelling Place of God

With Jesus' death on the cross that temple veil was torn. This symbolized our new access to God through Christ's death. This new access does not depend on physical location.

Also, recall Ephesians 3:16, 17 of the last session?

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

From this we know that we ourselves can be the dwelling place of God. The single physical dwelling place of the Lord has been replaced by the hearts of the group of people that believe and put their faith in Jesus, aka the church. His dwelling place is now in the core of us, in our hearts, and it is there where we can meet and praise him.

Praising Him Today

So putting this all together, today we are encouraged to praise God as he dwells within us.

Praise God = Hallelujah (הללוּיָהּ) = halal (הללוּ) + Yah (יהּ)

Did you know that the word hallelujah comes from two words? The first, *halal*, means 'praise' and the second, *Yah* or *Jah*, is God's name. So hallelujah means "praise God". The Hebrew word *halal* means to shine (as in a star), make a show, or to boast, or to celebrate. It implies excited emotion connected with the object of praise. One of the translations used in the Hebrew dictionary for *halal* is actually 'rave'.

There are many psalms that encourage us to praise God. Often they use the term *sing praises*. If you enjoy singing, including when you are alone with God, and find it worshipful, that is fantastic. Some people are not that comfortable singing, even by themselves. That doesn't mean they have to miss out on praising God. We can also speak out praises to God.

This sounds like prayer and well, yes it is. Spoken praise prayer is a way of building relationship with God. This is what we will be looking at in this session. We will learn to speak praise to God in our times alone with him.

Scripture and Sample Praise and Worship

Below is a collection of scriptures that we can use to start to develop this practice of spoken praise and worship. After each scripture is a sample praise. If you are in a group, each person can read a scripture and the corresponding sample praise. When you read the praise, try to read it slowly and deliberately and remember you are speaking to God. If in a group, meditate on what the other person is saying and echo the praise in your own heart.

Jesus is the Word

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.
- John 1:1-5

Sample Praise: Jesus, you are the Word. You have been with the Father since the beginning. You are God. You are worthy of all praise! Praise you, Jesus - you have made all things with the Father. You are life; you are the Light of the World. Thank you that your light reveals the Father to us. Thank you that darkness flees from your light. You are greater than the darkness of this world and I praise you that you have victory over the darkness.

Jesus is supreme

The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

- Col 1:15-20

Sample Praise: Lord Jesus, you perfectly reflect your Father. We know if we have seen you we have seen the Father as you have told us. You were seen when you were here on earth and I get to see you myself when you return in glory. You and the Father are one. You are together, united in the trinity which we can't understand, yet we marvel at.

Jesus, this physical universe was created by you and for you. It is all yours. It all belongs to you. Without you there would be nothing at all. You are above everything and nothing is more important than you yourself. People continuously try to understand the universe and yet you actually brought it into being out of nothing! Your power and authority is beyond our understanding.

Lord, you are the head of the church. You are the head of us who have been transferred from the kingdom of darkness into your kingdom. Thank you for your obedience to the Father's will for you by giving your life for us on the cross so we can be reconciled to the Father. We could not know the Father except through you.

Jesus is glorious

I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance.

When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

- Rev 1:12-18

Sample Praise: Lord, your majesty and glory are beyond our comprehension. Even this picture of you defies description. You are too pure, too righteous for us to understand. We worship you because although we see glimpses of you, your true nature and character are far more beautiful than we can see. Your words are powerful and pure. Thank you that you have shared some of your words with us, and that we can begin to know you through the scriptures.

Thank you that even though we should die in your presence, you have made it possible for us to fellowship with you. Praise the Alpha and the Omega, who was and is and is to come! There is no one like you; you live forever!

Jesus has many names

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

- Isaiah 9:6

Sample Praise: Jesus, You have many names, and those names reveal to us who you are. Thank

you that you are our Wonderful Counsellor, the one who guides and leads us. Thank you that you know all things, and because you do, you can counsel us. You are the Mighty God, the powerful one, the one who has won the victory over sin! There is no one who can defeat you. Your strength is eternal, and your power complete.

How can the Son be the Everlasting Father? Though it is a mystery to us, we know that you are the exact representation of the Father, and you are everlasting – from the beginning to the end. Praise the Prince of Peace – the one who gives us peace with the Father, our creator. Your kingdom knows no end, and it brings peace to all. You will put an end to all war and fighting, oppression and fear. You are our Prince of Peace.

Jesus is humble and exalted

Who (Christ Jesus), being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

- Philippians 2:6-11

Sample Praise: Jesus, you are the humble servant king. Thank you for setting aside the honour and glory that are due you, and taking on our human form so that you could live among us. Thank you that you loved us so much that you were willing to leave your Father's side and come to earth...to be the Saviour of humankind.

Your name is higher than any other name; all will bow down and worship you. Your praise will be heard in heaven and on earth and under the earth – no one will fail to praise you! Thank you that you have shown us that you have won the victory, and that every created being will call you Lord.

Jesus is heir of all things

In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven.

- Hebrews 1:1-3

Sample Praise: Father, you have spoken from the very beginning of creation when you said "Let there be light." God, after you created Man you spoke with him in the garden. After we sinned and were separated from you, you continued to speak through your chosen prophets. Father, thank you that you didn't just leave us alone, but you sought relationship with us through your communications. God, your own son Jesus, through whom you made all things, is the precious one you have chosen to speak to us through. Jesus, who was flesh and blood like us and could literally speak our language. His words are real life to us. All of your creation keeps continuing on by His sustaining word.

God, unlike the prophets, your son Jesus is full of your glory, your brilliant glory that might blind us if we saw it. Your glorious Son has saved us from our sins and now sits with you in heaven. Thank you that you loved us that much to send the one you loved for our sake. Thank you both that you endured the pain of separation from each other so that we may be reconciled to you and live with you for eternity.

Jesus is our perfect high priest

But because Jesus lives forever, he has a permanent priesthood. Therefore he is able to save completely those who come to God through him, because he always lives to intercede for them. Such a high priest truly meets our need—one who is holy, blameless, pure, set apart from sinners, exalted above the heavens. Unlike the other high priests, he does not need to offer sacrifices day after day, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people. He sacrificed for their sins once for all when he offered himself.

- Hebrews 7:24-27

Sample Praise: Jesus, you are the perfect high priest: you are holy, without sin, the pure spotless Lamb, and we exalt you above all others. You have saved me and you constantly speak for me in the presence of your Father. That is so wonderful! I don't have to bring sacrifices so that God will forgive my sin; you have already taken care of that once and for all. Your life was the perfect sacrifice, and you gave it freely for me, and for everyone. Thank you that I don't have to worry about whether I'm saved or not...your salvation is eternal.

God's love and grace are abundant

The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

- Psalm 103:8-12

Sample Praise: Lord, your love astounds me. It is incomprehensible. Yes, you hate sin, but your anger will not persist. You have removed our sins from us through the death of your Son on the cross, put them so far away from us that we can't see them anymore. You don't see them anymore. Your love has wiped them away, and we can enter into the joy of your love. I praise you that your love is greater than your disgust of sin; you have spared us the punishment we deserve even though we could never come close to earning that reprieve. Your love abounds for those who fear you, who recognize you as Lord. Thank you that you have chosen me to be one who

knows you, for without your saving love I would be lost.

Developing the Practice

Take this opportunity now to spend time alone with God doing spoken scripture-based praise and worship. You can use the verses we just went through. If you're in a group, separate and find your own quiet spot to be alone with God. Pick one of the scriptures and ignore the sample praise that goes with it. Read through the scripture and then speak out to God (silently if you wish) the truths of God that the scripture reveals. If you find you are struggling, feel free to read through the sample praise and see if God will use that to kick-start you into your own praises.

If you haven't done this before, try to take at least 15 minutes to continue in this space of praise. It may seem like a long time at first. If you feel you've exhausted one scripture, move on to another from the list above.

If you're in a group, when the time is up, you can meet back together and discuss how things went.

Tomorrow, when you have a quiet time with God, try to spend some time in spoken praise. If it seems like hard work, see if you can keep on for awhile as the habit forms. It will become something you desire to do as Christ dwells in you and you experience more of Christ's love according to Paul's prayer of Ephesians 3.

Meditation on Scripture

Review

In the last session we did [spoken praise and worship](#). This was our first tool for creating an environment in our time with God where he would strengthen us with power through his Spirit in our inner being, so that Christ may dwell in our hearts through faith. Remember that Ephesians 3 verse?

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith

In this session we will look at another tool we can use in our time with God. It is meditation on scripture.



What comes to mind when you think of meditation? Perhaps you think of eastern mysticism or new age religions that teach meditation. Even secular society talks about meditation for relaxation.

Are you wary of the term meditation because of this?

Does meditation have anything to do with our relationship with God? What do you think?

Does God tell us anything in his written word about meditation?

Let's continue on and see.

Meditation

Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night.

- Psalm 1:1-2

Hāgâ (Hebrew: הָגָה), is the Hebrew word used in Psalm 1. It means to murmur and by implication to ponder. According to this, meditation is not an emptying of your mind as in some eastern religions but a filling and fixing of the mind. So what do we fill our minds with and fix them on in meditation?

Truth in our hearts before God

In his book “Prayer”, Tim Keller describes David’s meditation in the Psalms as “taking truth down into his heart before the face of God”. The truth that we have learned from scripture is already understood from Bible study at some earlier time.

So in meditation, we are not reading the Bible in search of truth. Neither are we working with a particular scripture to understand God’s truth in it. These are both great disciplines and worthwhile to practice. But they are not meditation. Meditation is working with an already understood truth at a heart level. When we meditate upon what we already understand we open up ourselves for the Holy Spirit to affect our hearts with what is in our heads.

When we meditate, we fix our mind on a truth of scripture and do not let it wander. We ponder that truth and keep it at the forefront of our mind. We make statements to ourselves that back up that truth, that clarify it and continue on for some time disciplining our mind to remain on it.

What Happens

Sometimes while we are meditating, God may speak clearly to us in any of a number of ways. He may convict us of sin, he may reveal himself in a special way, he may comfort us or lead us. If that happens, it is certainly fine to engage with him in that context. This may move us towards praise, repentance or thanksgiving. After that, we may or may not move back to meditation on that same truth.

Another thing that is sure to happen is distractions. Our minds are amazing creations of God and he has wired us up for parallel processing. These other streams of thought will vie for the forefront of our minds and will replace that on which we are meditating. This is when we exercise the discipline of bringing our mind back to the initial truth of meditation. It is not uncommon for this to happen many times.

The good news though is that as time goes on during a particular time with the Lord, the distractions usually lessen. For some people, the distracting thoughts may not come at all. For others, they may have to shoo away distractions for a few minutes before their thoughts can properly focus.



What do you think about all of this? What has been your experience in using this type of meditation in your quiet time with God?

Scripture Meditation Examples

Below is a collection of scriptures that we can use to delve into this area of meditating on scripture. After each scripture is a summary of the main truth of that scripture followed by a meditation section. The meditation section may be a single section or divided into a number of parts, each focusing on an area of the truth in the scripture. These meditation sections include

1. guidelines for ways to meditate on the scripture
2. a sample meditation

At the end of each section is a short time to actually meditate on that scripture yourself.

If you are in a group, share the reading. Each person can read a scripture and the corresponding truth summary, meditation guidelines and sample meditation.

Read the sample meditation slowly and deliberately and remember you are speaking these things before God as part of communion with him. If in a group, meditate on what the other person is saying and echo the meditation in your own heart.

Meditation 1

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him (Christ Jesus), and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross. Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior. But now he has reconciled you by Christ's physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation—

- Col. 1:19-22

The truth that we can understand is that all things, including ourselves, were separated and apart from God due to sin. But through Christ's death on the cross that gap between us and God has been closed and we are now close to him.

Let's ponder that truth and address it in three sections.

Apart from God

Think first about previously being apart from God due to our sin. It isn't nice to consider, but think about the statement that we were enemies of God. Let those thoughts roll over in your mind and keep your heart open to God's Spirit. Do this for at least a minute now after reading the sample meditation.



Sample Meditation: I didn't know God because of my sin. It kept me on my own and disconnected from him. The abundant life I know now in Christ was non-existent then. The love of the Father that has been revealed into my heart was not in my heart then. I can hardly remember how poor my life must have been. Was I really an enemy of God because of the control of evil on me?

The Cross

Now set your heart on the cross of Christ. His blood was shed there for you. Dwell on these thoughts for some time before the Lord. Again do this for about a minute after reading the following.



Sample Meditation: Christ's blood was shed for all the world including me on the cross. He was obedient to the Father all the way to death on the cross. Jesus has shown the greatest love possible by laying down his life for his friends. I am one

of his friends. The Father's love by sending his beloved son to die is an incomprehensible demonstration of his infinite love for us. For me.

Near to God

Think about being near to God now because of the cross. Keep thinking about this and be open to God's Spirit as you keep your mind focused on this truth. If you like, speak to your own heart, before God the implications of this truth for you yourself. What it means that you are no longer separated from God but are near to Him because of the cross. Spend some time in meditation after reading through the sample meditation.



Sample Meditation: His death on the cross has brought me close to God. Close to the one who knows me like nobody else does and close to the one who loves me like nobody else can. I am close to God who created me and everything around me. I am close to the purest, holiest and most beautiful God.



Pause for ~1-2 minutes' quiet meditation.

Meditation 2

But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed.

- Isaiah 53:5

The truth we can see here is that we have peace and healing because Christ has taken the

punishment for our sins.

Peace from Punishment

Look at the pairs of words in the verse. He gets **punished** and it results in us having **peace**. Think about those two words together. Jesus took the punishment we deserved. From that, not only is punishment no longer coming our way, but we have this peace. Do you see the gracious love of God in this?



Sample Meditation: Even though I may not think of it much, my rebelliousness against God means punishment for me. But he took that punishment. He didn't need to, but he did it because that is who he is. What love! I really only barely grasp the extent of that love. I know that peace. That peace with God knowing he is for me and not against me. That peace of Christ that passes understanding. What a gift of abundant life this peace is.


Healed by His wounds

Another interesting pair of words is that through his **wounds** we are **healed**. Think about wounds. Wounds are not pleasant. They hurt. Physical and emotional wounds can hurt a lot. Wounds need to be healed. Think about healing. Jesus' wounds were not healed. This verse says that "we" are the ones who are healed by Jesus' wounds. Through his painful wounds, unexpectedly, we are the recipients of healing. Our wounded relationship of being separated from God is healed. We are brought back to the intended relationship of communion with God.



Sample Meditation: He was wounded and my relationship with God gets healed because of the wounding. That just doesn't make sense! God's love just doesn't make sense. Nails were driven in. There had to be unbearable pain with those

wounds. An awareness of the Father's presence and love was taken away. That pain was deep and unexpected. There is no love on earth that comes close to this. There is no one besides God who could love me like he has loved me. This love is not warranted. I have done nothing to deserve it. It is just who He is.

 Pause for ~1-2 minutes' quiet meditation.

Meditation 3

From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over all the land. About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?" (which means "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?").

- Matthew 27:45-46

The truth here is that Jesus was forsaken by the Father when He was on the cross, carrying our sins. He was separated from the one with whom he had always enjoyed complete and intimate fellowship.

Forsaken for our sake

Think about what it means to be forsaken: to be left alone when in such great suffering. Consider how that must have felt for the Lord who brought all things into being in order that He might fellowship with his creation? How does it feel to be forsaken? Abandoned. Deserted. Alone. Rejected. Disowned. Focus on Jesus hanging alone on the cross, completely separated from the Father.

Jesus felt this separation so deeply that he cried out to the Father in a loud voice. He couldn't bear the anguish and despair that he felt. Ponder the weight of that separation.

Jesus endured this separation because of his great love for you. Do you see how deep His love is? Ask the Spirit to reveal to you the fullness of God's love for you.



Sample meditation: "I always thought the physical pain of crucifixion was the hardest part for Jesus, but being left alone by the Father who he was one with seems even more painful for him. The pain of the heart was greater than the pain of the body. He loved me that much."



Pause for ~1-2 minutes' quiet meditation.

Meditation 4

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented Christ as a sacrifice of atonement, through the shedding of his blood.

- Romans 3:23-25

The truth we know here is that every single one of us have sinned and therefore don't measure up to God's standard. But the truth doesn't end there. Because of Christ's blood, we are made right with God freely through his grace.

I have sinned

Think about how you have sinned. Think about how you are sinful in your nature. Consider that without Christ's work on the cross, sin prevents you from being near to God. Think of his standard which is his own glory. Without Christ it just doesn't work. Spend enough time, focusing your mind on these things, avoiding the distractions by bringing your mind back to these meditations.



Sample meditation: “I have sinned. Left to myself, sin will control me to the detriment of myself and those around me. God’s standard and requirement is perfection. Perfect love for others, perfect goodness, pure untarnished devotion to Him. I miss that mark miserably.”

Christ's blood shed for me

Now, set your mind on Christ’s blood shed for you. Remember at the last supper he said his blood is poured out for you. Consider the preciousness, the value of his blood. Think about the love of his blood that was shed so that you could be made right with God, so that your sins wouldn’t keep you apart from God.



Sample meditation: “His blood is more precious than gold or diamonds. His shed blood covers my sins and those of everyone in the world today, everyone passed away and everyone not yet born. I want to do something, but there is nothing to do but accept the free gift of grace. I didn’t deserve that gift. He didn’t deserve to die. That is his grace that I can hardly understand. Pure incomprehensible grace.”



Pause for ~1-2 minutes’ quiet meditation.

On Your Own: Developing the Practice

Take some time now to spend time alone with God doing meditation on scripture. You can use the verses we just went through. If you are in a group separate out to find your own quiet spot to be alone with God. Pick one of the scriptures and ignore the sample meditation that goes with it.

Read through the scripture and then meditate on it conscious that you are doing this before God. Make statements to yourself regarding this scripture before God. The Holy Spirit will be working in your heart as you do this. If you find you are struggling, feel free to read through the sample meditation again to get you started.

If you haven't done this before, try to take at least 15 minutes to continue in this space of meditation. It may seem like a long time at first. If you feel you have exhausted one scripture, move on to another from the list above.

If you are in a group, when time is up, you can reconvene and discuss with others how things worked out.

Tomorrow, when you have a quiet time with God, try to spend some time in meditation on scripture. Beyond that, find out what works best for you with meditation on scripture in your quiet times. You might take extended time for maybe 30-60 minutes on a Saturday morning to do only meditation on scripture. Or maybe you will work it into your quiet times each day balanced with the other tools you are learning in this series. As you meet Christ dwelling in you, may you experience more of Christ's love according to Paul's prayer of Ephesians 3.

Gazing Upon Christ

Review

In the last session, we looked at the practice of [meditation on scripture](#). Like the session before that on [spoken praise and worship](#), meditation on scripture is a tool we can use in our time with God to seek Christ dwelling in our hearts as in Ephesians 3.

"I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith."



How did things go using this new practice of meditation on scripture in your time with God this week?

Introduction

This session introduces a new tool which is gazing upon Christ. It's slightly similar to the previous session of meditation on scripture. The difference is that the object of our meditation is Christ himself. We meditate on, admire and adore Christ whom we know through scripture and by the Holy Spirit.

Obviously, we don't literally gaze upon Christ physically. This brings up some questions. If it is not the physical Christ we see, then what do we see? Also, what do we mean by gazing or seeing? Is it looking with our actual eyes or is it something else? Let's unpack these important questions by turning to the Bible.

Seeing Glory

Jesus prayed to the Father that we would be with Him and see His glory.

Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.
- John 17:24

John Owen, a puritan theologian from the 1600's, wrote an entire book on this verse called "The Glory of Christ". Owen says that while the verse speaks of us seeing Christ's glory when we are with him in eternity, the Bible also speaks of seeing His glory by faith and not sight this side of heaven. "For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known." (1 Cor. 13:12)



What does it mean to see Christ's glory by faith today? If we are not looking with our eyes, what exactly is going on? What does the Bible say about this?

The rest of this session will explore these questions. This session may be a little more challenging than the previous ones. If you haven't gone through the previous sessions and started putting their respective tools into practice in your time with God, it may be best to go through the early sessions before continuing on here.

Eyes of our Heart

The Bible talks about a type of seeing which does not use our physical eyes. In one of Paul's prayers for the church in Ephesus, he talks about seeing with the eyes of our heart.

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people,
- Ephesians 1:18

In this verse, Paul is saying that we can perceive *spiritual* things with the eyes of our hearts.



What do you think he means by the eyes of our heart?

Let's start by thinking about our biological eyes. Biological eyes receive physical light which is reflected from the objects around us and through an amazing series of steps produce images in our brain. This lets us know about the physical objects around us. Also, with our biological eyes we read scripture which enables us to know about God. But Ephesians 1:18 seems to suggest that something other than our biological eyes is at work for us to know God and deeply comprehend what He has done for us in Christ. Paul calls this the *eyes of our heart*. Let's dive into this phrase by first looking at what he means by the heart.

As a start, *heart* in this context is not the organ that pumps blood around our body. The Greek word for heart used in this verse means the centre of our thoughts, emotions, and desires. It is the core of who we are as a person.

How does this heart know the things of God? How does it know God himself? The Bible says in many places that we are naturally spiritually blind to God. By default, we don't know him. When Paul prays that God would enlighten the eyes of people's hearts, he shows that it is necessary for spiritual light to enter the eyes of our heart for us to know the things of God. And we can't do this ourselves. God has to switch on the lights, so to speak, in order for us to spiritually see and know him.

If Paul prayed for God's illumination so that Ephesian church would see at the heart level and know God, then surely we can pray a similar prayer for ourselves and others. Let's stop and do that now before we delve deeper.



God, you can act in the depths of our being so that we can see the gracious things you have done for us through your son Jesus. So we can see His glory. Without your intervention we can see nothing. We pray that you would do that illuminating work in the eyes of our hearts so that we can deeply know what you

have done for us in Christ and see His glory. Amen.

What We See When We Gaze upon Christ

So when the eyes of our hearts are enlightened and we gaze upon Christ, what will we see?

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ.
- 2 Corinthians 4:6

This is a little complicated, so let's break it down into steps.

1. The light of God shines in our hearts.
2. Light helps us to see or know something.
3. The thing that we know (have heart knowledge of) is the glory of God.
4. We "see" this glory in the face of Christ.

Face should not be thought of as an image of Jesus' physical face but rather the person or true identity of Jesus as fully God and fully human. So to answer our earlier question, we will see God's glory displayed in the person of Christ. God has given us spiritual eyes to see, so when we gaze upon Christ we see God's glory.

Glory is mentioned a lot in the Bible. We all know what glory means...or do we?



What do you think about when you hear the term "God's glory"?

As a start we can think of glory as a manifestation of God's attributes or his essence in a way that we can perceive. We may never know God's glory fully until we see Christ face to face in heaven. But as 2 Corinthians 4:6 shows, until we see Christ face to face, we can know God's glory partially through our earthly view of Christ through the eyes of our hearts.

What Happens To Us As We Gaze Upon Christ

As we take in God's glory, what happens? Many different things can happen, but let's look at one mentioned earlier in 2 Corinthians.

And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.
- 2 Corinthians 3:18

Breaking this down:

1. We contemplate the Lord's glory.
2. As we do, we are transformed into his image.

By gazing upon Christ, we become more like Him by a work of God's Spirit. Many people want to become like Christ. If we try to do this only in our own strength we can become discouraged and perhaps lose hope. But as we spend time with God gazing upon Christ, the Spirit does this wonderful work that makes us more like Jesus.

Gazing upon Christ Examples

We will go through some examples of gazing upon Christ from a number of angles including:

- Christ Pre-existent
- Christ Prophesied
- Christ Incarnate
- Christ in Authority
- Christ Crucified
- Christ Resurrected
- Christ's Return

The goal of this devotional practice is to have the eyes of our hearts enlightened by the Holy Spirit as we read scriptures about Christ so that we can see his glory, admire him and worship him. For each example, there will be scripture about Christ, a brief reflection and a sample prayer echoing the scripture that leads into gazing upon Christ. If you are in a group and are time-

constrained, the facilitator can choose just a few from the collection.

The Pre-existent Divine Christ

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
- John 1:1

John 1:1 says the Word (Jesus Christ) has existed from the beginning. It has echoes of Genesis 1 "In the beginning God ..." Unlike us, Jesus was not just born but existed beforehand. We know the nature of his existence before his earthly birth is divine because the end of the verse says "the Word was God".

"Very truly I tell you," Jesus answered, "before Abraham was born, I am!"
- John 8:58

Jesus himself knew of his pre-existence as we can see in John 8:58. Abraham was long dead by the time Jesus was born yet he says that he existed *before* Abraham. Also, Jesus uses the term "I am", an Old Testament name of God. In doing so, he shows understanding of his divinity. In these two verses, we see Jesus as pre-existing and divine.

Read slowly through the following, fixing your gaze upon the glory of Christ in his divine pre-existence.



Lord Jesus, you have existed from the beginning. You existed before Abraham and everyone who was born before him. You existed before the creation of the universe. You were not created but instead your word says that through you all things have been made. You were with God in the beginning and you are God. You are our God who has always been and always will be. Open our eyes to see

your glory in your pre-existence, in you as the eternal divine Christ.

- ⏸ Pause now for a couple of minutes to continue gazing upon Christ in the context of the glory of his pre-existence. Dwell on the glory of his pre-existence without looking at the words above. You can close your eyes if that helps. Then with these thoughts of his pre-existence remaining in your mind, gaze upon Christ's glory, admiring and adoring him in prayer and meditation.

The Prophesied Christ

The Old Testament holds many prophecies about the coming of a saviour and eternal king.

"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."
- Genesis 3:15

Genesis 3:15 comes just after Adam sinned (what is known as "the Fall"). In Eden, humankind lived in perfect relationship with God. There was just one thing that God said people couldn't do if they were to continue in Eden. As we know, they disobeyed God and lost Paradise.

In the verse above, God is cursing the serpent who tempted Eve. The serpent is Satan, or at least represents Satan, and God is saying that Eve's offspring will crush Satan's head and, by implication, restore humankind to right relationship to God. The Old Testament tells of many who showed hope in being the one to crush the head of the serpent including prophets and kings. However, it is Jesus who ultimately fulfils this prophecy. Crushing the head signifies the taking away of power and this is what Hebrews 2:14 says Jesus has done. "Since the children have flesh

and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—"

Let's look at one more Old Testament scripture that prophesies the coming of Jesus.

"In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all nations and peoples of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed.

- Daniel 7:13-14

One of the titles that Jesus used to refer to himself is the *Son of Man*. This name brings to mind the Daniel 7 passage speaking of one who is given authority, glory and power from God. It says everyone will worship him and his kingdom will continue forever.

Read slowly through the following sample fixing your gaze upon the glory of Christ that you see in what the sample says of the prophesied Christ.



Jesus, our prophesied saviour and king. You are the one who has been given power and authority to crush the head of Satan and free us from the power of sin. From the beginning, it was you who was destined to come and save. It is you who was to be, and is now, worshipped by the many nations of the earth in many languages. Your everlasting and indestructible kingdom began when you entered into the world and will be complete when you return again.

- ⏸ Pause now for a couple of minutes to continue gazing upon Christ in the context of the glory of Christ the prophesied Saviour. Dwell on the glory of the prophesied Christ without looking at the words above. You can close your eyes if that helps. Then with these thoughts of the prophesied Christ remaining in your mind, gaze upon Christ's glory, admiring and adoring him in prayer and meditation.

The Incarnation

The incarnation, God the Son taking on the nature of humankind, is an amazing lens of revelation into God's glory in Christ.

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.
- John 1:14

The scripture above says the Word (referring to Christ), became flesh. When Christ entered into the world he created, he who is God and divine also took on a human nature. Unlike us, his human nature was perfect and sinless but it was still human. There is glorious humility in the agent of creation taking on the nature of created humanity.

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!
- Philipians 2:6-8

Although Jesus has a divine nature and is equal to God, he displays glory in humbling himself to take on human nature.

Read slowly through the following, fixing your gaze upon the glory of Christ in his incarnation.



Jesus, you are God and you created this universe. You were outside of the space, time and physics you created. You saw the sad and helpless state of our lost selves. You entered into your creation to rescue us. You took on a lowly human form and nature while retaining your divine nature. That showed such loving humility. You, the holy, omnipotent God, took on our nature to be with us and to save us. How glorious are you Immanuel, God with us. You have become flesh, dwelt among us, died for us and will return to continue to dwell with us for eternity.



Pause now for a couple of minutes to continue gazing upon Christ in the context of the glory of his incarnation. Dwell on the glory of his incarnation without looking at the words above. You can close your eyes if that helps. Then with these thoughts of his incarnation remaining in your mind, gaze upon Christ's glory, admiring and adoring him in prayer and meditation.

Christ in Authority

When the Gospels describe the ministry of Jesus apart from his teaching ministry, they show us

his power and authority over both the natural and spiritual realms. Jesus heals the sick, raises the dead, performs miracles over nature and casts out impure spirits.

A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean." Jesus was indignant. He reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cleansed.

- Mark 1:40-42

As God spoke in Genesis and the world was created, Jesus just speaks and the man is healed. Jesus demonstrates that he has the power and authority of God to restore broken creation.

When he had said this, Jesus called in a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet wrapped with strips of linen, and a cloth around his face. Jesus said to them, "Take off the grave clothes and let him go."

- John 11: 43-44

Jesus demonstrates his power and authority over death by raising Lazarus who had been dead for four days. As in the healings, it is solely the spoken word of Jesus that is needed. This mighty act both shows his glorious power and gives us who believe great hope. Earlier in John 11:25 Jesus says "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die." If we believe in him, though we physically die, we have the promise of a resurrection. That resurrection is not like Lazarus', who died again, but like Jesus' own resurrection to eternal life.

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

- Like 8:22-25

Upon reading the account of Jesus calming the storm, perhaps we too are as amazed as the disciples were when we think deeply about what actually happened. They were both fearful and amazed as they witnessed firsthand Jesus' power over nature. They asked a very worthy question "Who is this?" That is a question that is good for us all to continually ask and respond to in submission and worship.

Just then a man in their synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit cried out, "What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God!" "Be quiet!" said Jesus sternly. "Come out of him!" The impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek. The people were all so amazed that they asked each other, "What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to impure spirits and they obey him."

- Mark 1:23-26

Jesus demonstrated his power and authority over not just the natural realm but also the supernatural. Demonic influence was acutely recognized in Jesus' time and place on earth. In this context Jesus asserted and demonstrated that nothing natural or supernatural would stand in the way of the Kingdom of God which he was ushering in.

Read slowly through the following, fixing your gaze upon the glory of Christ in his authority.



Our Lord Jesus, you have shown us your authority to heal our sicknesses, raise us from the dead, protect us and deliver us from evil through what you did while you were on the earth. You have been given power and authority as the only begotten Son of God. Your power is above all others and you do not abuse your power. You selflessly use it for the benefit of people and the glory of your Father.

- Pause now for a couple of minutes to continue gazing upon Christ in the context of the glory of his authority. Dwell on the glory of his authority without looking at the words above. You can close your eyes if that helps. Then with these thoughts of his authority remaining in your mind, gaze upon Christ's glory, admiring and adoring him in prayer and meditation.

Christ Crucified

The crucifixion of Christ is the climax of Christ's earthly ministry. It is God's means of salvation that was totally unexpected at the time of Jesus. People at that time were expecting a powerful saviour, similar to the judges and kings of the Old Testament, who would free them from Roman oppression. The last thing they were expecting was a saviour who would suffer and die. But a crucified, sacrificial, divine saviour was what they needed, and is what we need to be delivered from the power of sin and death, and this was God's plan from way back.

For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect. He was chosen before the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.

- 1 Peter 1:18-20

The death of Christ at the hands of those he came to save may seem sadly ironic, but it was the plan of God from the beginning. 1 Peter shows that God's provision of Christ as a sacrificial lamb for our sins was pre-meditated from even before the world was created.

It was now about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last.

- Luke 23:44-66

But when Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands, that is to say, is not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, thus obtaining eternal redemption.

- Hebrews 9:11-12

At Jesus' death, the temple curtain was torn in two with no recorded visible force tearing it. The curtain separated out the holy of holies from the rest of the temple. Only the high priest could go into this place and only once a year. This place represented the presence of God, and its limited access reflected the absence of people's direct access to God. The tearing of the temple curtain means that Jesus' death has opened up a new way of access to God. The priestly system with its sacrifices are no longer needed with our new High Priest Jesus and his once-and-for-all sacrifice.

When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

- Colossians 2:13-15

As Colossians shows, the cross of Christ has nullified the penalty required for our sins. Jesus' work on the cross has paid the price of death and we no longer owe it. As well, a power change has happened at the cross. The power of Satan has been overcome at the cross so that we are no longer ultimately under the power of sin. The cross of Christ both forgives and frees.

Read slowly through the following, fixing your gaze upon the glory of Christ in his crucifixion.



Oh Lord, what love that you laid down your life for us, your friends. You, who were chosen from before the creation of the world, in love for us and obedience to the Father, willingly gave your life so that we could be forgiven and live forever with you. You are our high priest who enables us to come to the Father through you. You have conquered sin and death for us so that even before you come again, we are no longer under the power of sin.



Pause now for a couple of minutes to continue gazing upon Christ in the context of the glory of his crucifixion. Dwell on the glory of his crucifixion without looking at the words above. You can close your eyes if that helps. Then with these thoughts of his crucifixion remaining in your mind, gaze upon Christ's glory, admiring and adoring him in prayer and meditation.

The Resurrected Christ

A central point of the Christian faith is that Christ was raised from the dead. Paul says if that is not true we still have a huge problem with sin. "And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins." (1 Corinthians 15:17)

He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again.

- Mark 8:31

Jesus predicted his death and resurrection numerous times. In Mark 8 he says he would be killed and rise again after three days. He knew that was his glorious purpose in coming to earth. "I have brought you glory on earth by finishing the work you gave me to do." (John 17:4)

While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you."

- Luke 24:36

Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him.

- Matthew 28:9

After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

- Acts 1:3

The Bible records many eyewitness accounts of people seeing the resurrected Christ.

Christ's resurrection is glorious in that it shows that the curse of Genesis 3 is undone and our ultimate destination is no longer death in the ground,. "By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return." (Genesis 3:19)

Our ultimate destination is eternal life in Christ if we believe. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16).

Christ's death purchases forgiveness of sins and in his resurrection, he is the firstfruits showing

our future resurrection "But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep." (1 Cor 15:20)

Read slowly through the following, fixing your gaze upon the glory of Christ in his resurrection.



Jesus, you are the risen Lord. Your paying for our sins through your death on the cross shows us God's great love for us and your resurrection shows God's great and glorious power over the grave. You, who have taken on our nature through coming into the world you created, have been raised from the dead with a glorious resurrected body. Death could not hold you because you have conquered over sin and death. And you share that victory with us who believe in you.



Pause now for a couple of minutes to continue gazing upon Christ in the context of the glory of his resurrection. Dwell on the glory of his resurrection without looking at the words above. You can close your eyes if that helps. Then with these thoughts of his resurrection remaining in your mind, gaze upon Christ's glory, admiring and adoring him in prayer and meditation.

The Return of Christ

Jesus is now at the right hand of God and all power and authority has been given to him. But his story and our part in his story is not complete. He has promised to return to us in his glory to rule as king and be worshipped.

“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne.”

- Matthew 25:31

When Jesus comes to earth again, it will be very much unlike the first time. First of all, he will be accompanied by angels. Although angels announced his birth when he previously came to earth, they were not with him at that time, and their appearance was restricted to a select group of people. In his second coming, angels will be with him and his appearance will be to all people on earth. While with the first coming there was no throne for him, in his second coming he will be revealed as our ruling king on a glorious throne.

Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory.”

- Matthew 24:30

“In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven”.

- Daniel 7:13

Matthew 24:30 says that everyone will see Jesus this time and echoes an end times vision of Daniel.

When Moses went up on the mountain, the cloud covered it, and the glory of the Lord settled on Mount Sinai. For six days the cloud covered the mountain, and on the seventh day the Lord called to Moses from within the cloud.

- Exodus 24:15-16

The connection between clouds and God's glory starts back in Exodus. The clouds covering Mount Sinai relate to God's glory settling on the mountain. Taking this back to the Matthew verse above, at Jesus' second coming, God's glory in Christ will be manifest for all to see. It will be unlike any other time, including Jesus' first coming to earth.



Can you imagine what it will be like to see Jesus in his glory when he returns?

... and among the lampstands was someone like a son of man, dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. The hair on his head was white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and coming out of his mouth was a sharp, double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.

- Revelation 1:13-18

Some idea may be gleaned from the revelation of Jesus Christ to John in the book of Revelation. The similes John uses to describe Jesus suggest that it was a sight unlike any he had seen before. The passage indicates that Jesus' glory is overwhelming and even frightening. John fell down like he was dead in the presence of Christ's glory.

Read slowly through the following, fixing your gaze upon the glory of Christ in his return.



Jesus you will come into the world again to complete your kingdom establishment and reign forever. We cannot fathom what that return will be like. We do know that the fullness of your glory, that was veiled when you first came to earth, will be manifest for all to see. It will cause all knees to bow and all tongues to declare that you are Lord.

- Pause now for a couple of minutes to continue gazing upon Christ in the context of the glory of his return. Dwell on the glory of his return without looking at the words above. You can close your eyes if that helps. Then with these thoughts of his return remaining in your mind, gaze upon Christ's glory, admiring and adoring him in prayer and meditation.

On Your Own: Developing the Practice

Take some time now to spend time alone gazing upon Christ. If you're in a group, separate out to find your own quiet spot to be alone with Jesus. Pick one of the scriptures above and create your own prayer based upon it. If you are one who journals or benefits from writing things down, you may want to write down your prayers. As you pray and meditate consider Christ's glory in the context of the verse you choose seeking God's Spirit to help you gaze, admire and adore Christ.

If you are in a group, when time is up, you can reconvene and discuss with others your experience with gazing upon Christ.

Tomorrow, when you spend some dedicated time with God, try the new practice of gazing upon Christ. Find a place that's quiet where you feel you can keep your thoughts focussed on Jesus. You can spend at least 15-20 minutes there (or as long as you like) asking God to help keep your heart and mind focussed on Christ himself.

As you gaze on Christ more and more in your times alone with God, you may find that you naturally start to do this at other times throughout your day as well.

Confession and Repentance

Review

In the last session we spent time learning the practice of [gazing upon Christ](#).



Have you been able to incorporate [gazing upon Christ](#) into your time with God?

How did that go?

In this session we will cover confession and repentance. These are related to sin and that is where we'll begin.

Sin

Sin. It's a terrible word isn't it? We don't talk about it. Maybe because we don't want to offend people or seem self-righteous. But sin is mentioned in the Bible quite a bit, so it must be important.



What is sin anyway? If you had to describe sin to someone who had never heard that word, what would you tell them?

Let's look at what we can learn from two characters of the Bible: Peter and Moses.

Peter

Peter has a very interesting response to Jesus when they first meet. The topic of sin comes up. Let's read through and see if we can learn something about sin.

When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, "Go away from me, Lord; I am a sinful man!"

- Luke 5:8

Peter just met Jesus and after getting a glimpse of who Jesus really was, told Jesus to go away from him. Why would Peter say this? Did he actually want Jesus to leave him? Did he think that Jesus should leave him, even though deep down he didn't want that?

His reasoning was because he (Peter) was sinful. What is the connection between sin and being separated from Jesus? Today, Peter's reasoning probably doesn't make much sense to us. That might have something to do with our understanding of sin, and of God's holiness.

Moses

Similarly, Moses had an encounter with God.

"Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.

- Exodus 3:5,6

In this case, it's God speaking to man saying don't come any closer. In effect saying, "There needs to be distance between you and Me." It seems there's a repulsive force between sinful us and our holy God. Let's look at that more closely in the next section.

So regardless of our definition of sin, we can see its effects in Peter and Moses. Sin keeps us apart from God. If we want Christ to dwell in us, something has to happen to overcome the gap that sin creates between us and God.



Have you ever felt distanced from God like Peter and Moses?

After considering these things, has your view of sin changed?

Sin Separates Us From God

We saw the effects of sin in Peter and Moses just now. Sin keeps us apart from God. God is holy, righteous and pure.

There is no one holy like the Lord; there is no one besides you; there is no Rock like our God.

- 1 Samuel 2:2

In ourselves naturally, we are not holy or righteous.

Indeed, there is no one on earth who is righteous, no one who does what is right and never sins.

- Ecclesiastes 7:20

So we and God are opposites on the scale of holiness, and in this case opposites do not attract; they repel. Our sin causes God to be separated from us even though he created us to be with him.

But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.

- Isaiah 59:2



How do we feel when we consider this? Is there any sense of awe of God, or perhaps even fear? Is there any sense that we shouldn't be able to approach him, that we're not worthy enough to be in His presence?

Sin In Us

If we're honest with ourselves, we know that there's sin in us.

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.
- 1 John 1:8

If God is so concerned about sin and it affects our relationship with him, then it's probably a good idea to know a little of what it is.

In both the Old and New Testaments, the word sin means *to miss the mark*. It means we knew what the goal was, and what we needed to achieve, but we didn't achieve it.

So what's the goal? Well, a simple way of thinking of this is anything and everything that God has shown us about how we should live life. How we live life is not just things we say and do that are observed by others, but includes the thoughts and attitudes in our hearts that people don't see. The Ten Commandments might come to your mind, or maybe Jesus' Sermon on the Mount, or even the concise verse in Micah 6:8 that answers the question "What does God require of us?" by saying "To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God."

You would think we'd be able to nail those few words of Micah, but remember the 1 John verse above as well as Romans 3:23.

for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God
- Romans 3:23

We've missed God's mark and continue to miss it.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.
- 1 John 1:9

If we want Christ to dwell in us, something has to happen to overcome the gap that sin creates between us and God.



What is needed to overcome this sin gap?

The Cross

Jesus' death on the cross closes the sin gap between us and God. It brings us forgiveness as Christ Himself said at the last supper.

"This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins."
- Matthew 26:28

It is the only way we can come to God.

Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

- John 14:6

This is what God did for us in Christ. But that isn't the end of the story. We still have a role to play.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

- John 3:16

It is when we believe in the amazing work of Christ on the cross for us that the deal is sealed, so to speak.

If you have come this far in the series, you probably know all about this. But if it is new for you and you do believe in the overwhelming love God has shown us in Jesus, now would be a great time to slow down and talk to God about that.

The Cost of Forgiveness

Tim Keller in his book "Prayer" speaks of the mutual costliness and freeness of forgiveness. We probably all understand the freeness in that we don't have to do anything to pay for God's forgiveness. But do we understand the costliness?

Keller goes on to reference Martin Lloyd Jones who points out that sins are like debts that need to be paid for in God's economy. We have missed God's mark by so much and the debt is so great that it requires an infinite payment. The only way it could be paid was by God himself who is infinite in numerous ways. The Father sent the Son to pay that debt through his costly death on the cross. It cost the Father and Son to an extent we may never understand when Jesus cried out on the cross "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" If we can begin to understand how costly our forgiveness was to God, it can make a big difference in how we interact with God when we confess our sins to him.

Confession

So we have talked about sin. We have talked about God's holiness and our separation from Him due to sin. And we have talked about the cross and forgiveness. Surely that covers everything. Well, there is this thing of confession.

David is an awesome guy. He loved God so much and was so expressive about that. We referenced the Psalms he wrote when we talked about [praise and worship](#), and we'll reference him here talking about sin, confession and repentance. He was called a man after God's own heart because he was blessed to have a proper understanding of the fullness of God. That's what we're seeking - a full heart revelation of the fullness of God in Jesus.

Burden of the Heart

David knew the burden on his heart when he didn't confess.

When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.
- Psalm 32:3,4

In the verses right after that, we see that burden led him to confess.

Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord." And you forgave the guilt of my sin.
- Psalm 32:5

Who We Sin Against

When David sinned, he said,

Against you, you only, have I sinned.
- Psalm 51:4

He most likely was aware of and regretted how his sin hurt people. However, he understood that God was the one he sinned against, and that knowledge changes things completely.

When we know it's against God and God only that we sin, and we remember the great cost that Jesus paid for our sin on the cross, it can make us hate the sin in much the same way that God does. This hating of sin goes beyond guilt and on to a stronger emotion that will result in action; a God-pleasing change in behavior. Then we are in a better position to repent or turn our back on our sin.

Confession Outcomes

In 1 John, we start to understand the outcomes of confession.

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.
- 1 John 1:9

That's an amazing message. When we confess our sins, God both forgives us and purifies us.



What has been your experience of Confession in your personal times with God so far?

Repentance

That turning our back on sin mentioned above is repentance. Repentance comes from the Greek *Metanoia* (μετάνοια). It means to change our heart, mind and actions.

Early on in Jesus' time on earth he told people to repent.

From that time on Jesus began to preach, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near."

- Matthew 4:17

According to 2 Timothy, repentance is actually a gift from God. Notice the word *grant* in the text below.

Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth,

- 2 Timothy 2:25

When we hate our sin like we saw earlier, and take steps of changing our actions, this is evidence that God is giving us the gift of repentance.

Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.

- 2 Corinthians 7:10

Practice

In this section, let's see what it means to develop the practice of considering God's holiness contrasted against our own sin. If you're in a group, this is not intended to be a time of confessing out loud to each other. As a group, we're learning this practice to take into our personal times with God. So as we continue through the sections below, our interaction is with God. We just happen to be doing this together in a group setting to learn the practice.

God's Holiness

Scripture gives many great images of the holiness of God. Slowly read through the verse below from Isaiah.

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory."

- Isaiah 6:1-3

This verse gives a picture of God as high and separate from all else, with his holiness affecting these angelic beings to their core. Let's take time now to meditate on the holiness of God as portrayed in this verse.



Pause for ~2 minutes to meditate on God's holiness.

Our Sinfulness

The apostle Paul said that he was the worst sinner.

Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst.

- 1 Timothy 1:15

If Paul said this, certainly we are in the same position to say it.

Romans makes it pretty clear that there isn't a single person who is without sin.

There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one.

- Romans 3:11-12

⏸ Pause for ~2 minutes to meditate on our sinfulness.

Personal confession and reflection

Let's think about particular areas of our life. When we look inside, we can see sin in many different areas of our lives. Let's start with something that's common to many of us: how we think of other people. When we judge others, even though it's something in our minds that nobody else may know about, we fall short of God's plan for us. Sometimes this doesn't just stay in our minds as shown in James.

With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness.

- James 3:9

Take a moment to think if there is anyone you judge. Consider the person or people affected by your sin. Remember that they are God's creation and he loves them as much as he loves you.

⏸ Pause for ~2 minutes to consider this.

If judging others isn't an issue for you at the moment, you can use this prayer from the Psalms to ask God what, if anything, you should bring before Him now.

Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

- Psalm 139:23-24

- Take a few moments to see if God shows you something.

Whatever God has put on your heart, whether it's judging someone or something else, let's take that a bit further.

Consider that it is against God that we are sinning. Stay with this awhile. You may get to a point where you feel quite upset that you've done this to God. It's good to be repulsed and to hate the sin so that you not only *want* to turn away from it, but you *do* turn away from it.

- Take a couple of minutes with this.

The Cross and Forgiveness

It is spiritually healthy for us to remember our sinfulness and confess our sin to God. When we are honest with God about our general sinfulness and specific sins, his grace and mercy will often remind us of the amazing forgiveness He has given us through Christ's death on the cross. So, let's continue on to consider how our sins have been forgiven through Christ's death on the cross.

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us.
- Ephesians 1:7,8

Meditate on this verse before God. Think of the use of the word *riches* to describe God's grace in the blood of Christ for us. Think of the verb *lavish* used to describe the extent of his grace towards us through the cross. Nothing is spared or held back in lavishing. Keep these thoughts rolling over in your mind before God.

Now move into praise and worship in the context of this verse.

Sample Praise: Father, your grace is most obvious to me in the gift of your Son Jesus. His death is your gift to me. His blood is your gift to me. The precious blood of your eternal Son is what makes your gift rich. You have held nothing back from us in your giving. You gave the one thing that you love and value the most; your own Son.

From Romans we can see that this gracious forgiveness is given to all who have faith in Jesus.

But now apart from the law the righteousness of God has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness is given through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.

- Romans 3:21,22

Let's take time now to re-affirm our faith in the work of Christ for us on the cross.

Sample Praise: Jesus, through your sacrificial gift of your own life on the cross, I have been made right. I have been brought back to the Father because of your blood that was shed. He sees me in a new way because of you. I believe this as much or more than I believe in the existence of the physical objects I can see before myself now. This is true. This is the reality that you have made. My heart overflows with thanks that you have made this my reality.

Developing the Practice

Now spend some time alone in confession and repentance. If you're in a group, separate out to find your own quiet spot to be alone with God. Go through the steps that we just discussed.

1. Meditation on God's holiness
2. Meditation on our sinfulness
3. Meditation on the cost of forgiveness through the cross
4. Confession
5. Repentance
6. Meditation on and praise and worship for forgiveness

Feel free to use the scriptures, notes and sample meditations and praises from the earlier section.

Take about 15 minutes. If you are doing this in a group, come back together and discuss how things went.

Tomorrow in your time with God, set aside a part of that time for confession and repentance. From there on, you might decide to use this practice every time when you spend time with God or, maybe once a week, your entire time with God might be focused on confession and repentance. May Christ dwell in our hearts and may we know the fullness of His love as we come before Him in confession and repentance.

Dwelling Outcomes

Review

When we started the series, from our anchoring scripture we saw how Christ dwelling in us involves a kind of intimacy with him.

For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that **Christ may dwell** in your hearts through faith.

And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

- Ephesians 3:14-19

We looked at a number of tools for entering into this intimacy such as:

Worship

Meditation on Scripture

Gazing upon Christ

Confession and Repentance

Spoken Praise and



Have you have been using these tools to enter into intimacy with Christ in your personal time with Him? In those times, do you think more and more you are grasping how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ for you? Do you feel you know this love that surpasses knowledge? Have you seen that you are being filled to the measure of all the fullness of God?

If you did the [Getting Started](#) session, you may have written down how you felt about these things at that time. Have they changed at all?

Different Responses

If you haven't experienced as much of this as you expected, don't lose heart. God has made us all different (how boring it would be otherwise) and these practices are going to impact each of us differently. The tools are not formulae or recipes that are guaranteed to give the same result for everyone.

The Spirit of God works in every person's heart, doing what only He can do so that Christ may dwell there. This same Spirit of God also gives us the capacity to experience His love. The way we experience His love is according to the unique way He has made each one of us.

Faith

Each time we enter into time with Christ and we make the effort to connect with him deeply, we are exercising faith – faith that God has strengthened us with power by his Spirit in our inner beings so that Christ may dwell in our hearts. Ephesians 3 says God will do this, and we are acting upon our belief that He will do what He says.

So if you have tracked through all of the sessions so far, where to from here?

Transformation

As Christ dwells within us and we experience His love, change is bound to happen.



Have you noticed any changes on the outside as a result of what's been going on in the inside?

John the Baptist seemed to understand the change that happens when Christ comes near.

He must become greater; I must become less.
- John 3:30

This verse is in the specific context of John's unique ministry of preparing people for the arrival of Jesus. However, it also describes what happens in our lives when Jesus approaches us. The *old us*, with all of its destructive habits, fades away while *Christ in us* increases more and more. With more of Christ and less of the old us, there should be a noticeable difference over time.

Another verse from our [Gazing Upon Christ](#) session speaks of this transformation.

And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.
- 2 Cor 3:18

As we spend time with Jesus, deepening our heart relationship with him, we are changed to be more like Him.



What do you think this transformation looks like? What do you think will be noticeably different in you as Ephesians 3: 14-19 happens in your life?

His Love -> Our Love

1 John gives us some hints on evidence of Christ dwelling in us.

We love because he first loved us.
- 1 John 4:19

As we grasp how wide and long and high and deep the love of Christ is, we desire to love in return. We may want to show God love and/or we may want to show this love to others. Let's start with love towards God.



How do you think we can show God we love Him?

Loving God

In John, Jesus relates love towards God with obeying Him.

If you love me, keep my commands.
- John 14:15

Also 1 John tells us something more about keeping His commands.

We know that we have come to know him if we keep his commands.
- 1 John 2:3

When we can see that we're keeping his commands, that's a demonstration of our love to God and evidence that we know Christ.



But which commands do we keep? All of them? What are his commands?

Before we get overwhelmed in this, let's look and see what Jesus says.

Command To Love

In the gospels, Jesus gives us many instructions on how to live. However, in John 15 He gives us one overarching command.

My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you.
- John 15:12

We are all called to love, but it doesn't have to be in the same way. Each of us is a unique creation of God and He has wired us to love in different ways. When we seek Him, He will show us specific ways that we can love others.

He did this for Peter, a leader of the church, in John 21.

When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."
- John 21:15

Peter was told specifically to teach, guide and nourish the church that was soon to be born. For us individually, we can ask God how he specifically wants us to love others.

1 Corinthians paints a picture of what that kind of love looks like.

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.
- 1 Corinthians 13:4-7

- Take some time now to think of how God has made you and what he has put on your heart. Wait and listen for anything he may reveal to you about loving others. What is He showing you about how you can express your love to Him through how you love others?

24/7 Dwelling

Well, we have almost finished the series. We have gone through a number of sessions focussed on what we can do to increase our intimacy with Christ when we spend time with Him alone. In this session we looked at what happens as a result of our increased intimacy with Christ.

Before we wrap up, let's touch on Christ dwelling in our hearts beyond our personal devotional times.

- What does Christ dwelling look like in our everyday life? Is it possible to consciously be aware of Christ dwelling in us while we're with our friends or family, working, studying, commuting and doing all the other activities that make up our day? What does this look like? How do we get to this place from where we are now?

It is certainly possible that God will reveal himself to us as we are walking down the street or

talking with someone and not thinking of Him at all. However, that is not the norm. If our goal is continuous communion with Him, we will move more quickly towards that goal if we exercise the faith of Ephesians 3:17 in our everyday activities.

Colossians gives a clue to some things we can do to encourage that continuous dwelling.

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

- Colossians 3:1,2

Notice the “set your hearts” and “set your minds”? We are encouraged to take action to set our hearts and minds on things above. We can take that to include setting our hearts and minds on Christ himself.

A.W. Tozer talks about a continuous inward gaze of the soul upon Christ. Just like we learned in the Gazing Upon Christ session, we fix our eyes upon Christ. The difference is that we do it not just in a time alone with God but continuously in the midst of our everyday life.

Paul may have been hinting at this type of lifestyle when he spoke of praying continually.

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.

- 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Sound impossible? While it doesn’t come naturally, it can be slowly learned over time. It does require persistence over a longer period to break old habits and develop new ones.



What has been your experience in connecting with God throughout your everyday activities? What have you found practically helpful to walk with God beyond your devotional time and through your day?

Series Wrap Up

Well this brings us to the end of the Dwelling series. But it doesn't have to be the end of Dwelling for you. Hopefully it is the beginning of a lifelong practice of intentionally providing space for God's Spirit to strength your hearts so that Christ may dwell there.

You can come back to the material at any time to remind yourself of one of the practices for your devotional time. You may even want to use some of the sample practical material in your quiet time to get you started again.

If you have found Dwelling useful, feel free to share it with your friends. If you want to make it more personal with your friends, you can always facilitate a group. There is a facilitator's guide on the [download page](#).