

ReDay

Renew...Refresh...Restore...Retreat

... Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place...

(Mark 6:31)



In Christ...

God created man from the dust of the earth, shaped him with his fingers and breathed his very own breath into this lifeless form. Since that time God has sought out relationship with the beings he created in his own image.

Throughout the centuries, the idea of relationship with God has been referred to as “Union with God”, and has been expressed in various ways: the vine and the branches, being crucified with Christ, the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and intimacy with God.

What does this really look like in everyday life?

We can encounter God with our senses: we can hear his voice, speak to him, see him at work around us, walk with him, be the aroma of Christ, use touch to connect with his creation, and so on.

Perhaps the deepest way to encounter God is by using all of who we are to immerse ourselves in him, as we allow him to immerse himself in us.

This reflects Jesus’ own words: Remain in me, as I also remain in you.
Let’s explore what it means to be in Christ, to experience union with him.

(Feel free to look up the songs used here on YouTube to sing along or simply to listen to)

<https://youtu.be/1kz0mfORYkM>

In Christ...

Call to worship

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

Hear, O people of God: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.

We will love the Lord our God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our strength.

Deut 6:4-5

My beloved is mine and I am his.

Song of Songs 2:16

Scripture

Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine.

Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

“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 15:4-5



Prayer

O God
be all my love, all my hope, all my striving;
let my thoughts and words flow from you,
my daily life be in you,
and every breath I take be for you.
(After St John Cassian 360-435)

Scripture

“The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. ²⁵ And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. ²⁶ From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. ²⁷ God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and find him, though he is not far from any one of us. ²⁸ ‘For in him we live and move and have our being.’ As some of your own poets have said, ‘We are his offspring.’

Acts 17:24-28

Song

Jesus, be the centre
Be my source, be my light, Jesus
Jesus, be the centre
Be my hope, be my song, Jesus

Be the fire in my heart
Be the wind in these sails
Be the reason that I live, Jesus, Jesus

Jesus, be my vision
Be my path, be my guide, Jesus
Jesus



Scripture

“Live in me. Make your home in me just as I do in you. In the same way that a branch can’t bear grapes by itself but only by being joined to the vine, you can’t bear fruit unless you are joined with me.

“I am the Vine, you are the branches. When you’re joined with me and I with you,
the relation intimate and organic, the harvest is sure to be abundant.

Separated, you can’t produce a thing.

Anyone who separates from me is deadwood, gathered up and thrown on the bonfire.

But if you make yourselves at home with me and my words are at home in you,
you can be sure that whatever you ask will be listened to and acted upon.

This is how my Father shows who he is—when you produce grapes, when you mature as my disciples.

John 15:4-8 MSG

Prayer

Almighty God,
in whom we live and move and have our being,
you have made us for yourself,
so that our hearts are restless until they rest in you.
Grant us purity of heart and strength of purpose,
so that no selfish passion may hinder us from knowing your will,
no weakness from doing it.
Grant that in your light we may see light clearly,
and in your service find our perfect freedom.
We ask this through Christ, our Lord.
Amen.

(after St Augustine of Hippo 354-430)



Song

I come in simplicity
Longing for purity
To worship You
In spirit and truth
Only You

Lord strip it all away
'Til only You remain
I'm coming back
To my first love
Only You

You're the reason I sing
The reason I sing
Yes my heart will sing
How I love You
And forever I'll sing
Forever I'll sing
Yes my heart will sing
How I love You

I come with my broken song
To You the Perfect One
To worship You
In spirit and truth
Only You, only You

Give me a childlike heart
Lead me to where You are
Cause I'm coming back
To my first love, only You

You're the reason I sing...

How I love You, how I love You
How I love You, my first love

You're the reason I sing...

Reflection

When Christ speaks about him being in us and we being in him, it is pure mystery.

The image of the vine and the branches can help us to picture what this union looks like – yet it remains a mystery as to how this actually works in our lives.

Paul speaks about the great mystery of Christ in me (Col 1:27).
He says that those who are united with the Lord are one with him in spirit (1 Cor 6:17)
and that it is in him we live and move and have our being (Acts 17:28).

Jesus simply and finally says: I will be with you always (Matt 28:20).

Through the ages, other believers have expressed it in other ways:

St Augustine believed that God is closer to us than we are to ourselves and that all the time he was chasing after God outside of himself, God was within him.

He said: “Thou hast made us for thyself and our hearts are restless until they rest in thee”.

Some 1200 years or so after Augustine, St John of the Cross (1542-91) said:
“The centre of the soul *is* God”.

“Love unites the soul with God, and the greater its love,
the deeper it does enter into God, and the more is it centred in Him”.

He described the soul being in God like a stone being buried in the earth*
- they are already at one but the stone can always sink more deeply.

Teresa of Avila (1515-1582): heard God say, 'Seek yourself in me, and in yourself seek me'

Celtic Christianity believed that God is everywhere, but seeking him without first encountering him within is futile. **

In 1935, Brigadier H. Pimm Smith wrote an article in *The Officers' Review* entitled 'Union with God'.
In it he said, “Being thus joined to the Lord does not mean that I am perfect as God is perfect, nor that I have lost my personality. Fire may so penetrate and shine through a piece of iron, in itself dark and cold, that it can send out light and heat, yet the iron does not cease to be.
The iron is in the fire and the fire is in the iron.” ***

It would seem, from the experiences of these earlier believers, that union with God is not something to be sought, rather something to be realised. We just need to live it out!

Reflect: what images or metaphors would you use to describe your union with Christ?

Brigadier Pimm concludes the article with these words:
“We must be content to be discontented; satisfied, but athirst for ever more intimate union with God”.

Silent Prayer

Scripture

- ¹⁵ Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself?
Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never!
- ¹⁶ Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body?
For it is said, "The two will become one flesh."
- ¹⁷ But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit. 1 Cor 6:15-17



Prayer

God be in my head and in my understanding;
God be in my eyes and in my looking;
God be in my mouth and in my speaking;
God be in my heart and in my thinking;
God be at my end and at my departing.
(Celtic Prayer)

Song

Christ be in my waking,
As the sun is rising,
In my day of working,
With me every hour.
Christ be in my resting,
As the day is ending,
Calming and refreshing,
Watching through the night.

Christ be in my thinking,
And my understanding,
Guarding me from evil,
Walking in the light.
Christ be in my speaking,
Every word a blessing,
Pure and not deceiving,
Grace to all who hear.

Jesus, this is my devotion:
All my life to know You,
Every day to walk with You.
Saviour, You're my deepest longing,
You're the One I live for,
Teach me, Lord, to walk with You.

Christ be in my gladness
For the joy of living,
Thankful for the goodness
Of the Father's hand.
Christ be in my sorrow,
In my day of darkness,
Knowing that I follow
In the steps He trod.

Christ when hope has faded,
Nothing left to cling to,
Every pleasure jaded,
Every well is dry.
Christ the loving Shepherd
Draws me with His kindness,
Leads me from the desert
To the streams of life.

Benediction

Out of God's glorious riches may you be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being,
so that you may know the indwelling Christ in your heart through faith.
And being rooted and established in love, may you 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.
May every part of your being, body, soul and spirit, know this love that surpasses knowledge
—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Based on Eph 3:16-19

GOING DEEPER – In Christ...

Here are some suggestions that may help you in your time of reflection.

- **Reflect:** Read through the Reflection again. Notice what stands out for you and think about why this might be. Notice the words: what moved you? What was jarring? What was hard to read? How do you feel when you read these words? Where in your life do these words resonate?

Or reflect further on these words by Brigadier H. Pimm Smith (in *The Officers' Review, Nov-Dec 1935*)

“Being thus joined to the Lord does not mean that I am perfect as God is perfect, nor that I have lost my personality. Fire may so penetrate and shine through a piece of iron, in itself dark and cold, that it can send out light and heat, yet the iron does not cease to be. The iron is in the fire and the fire is in the iron.” P. 93 F

-Union with God, the ‘closer walk’ does not make us self-absorbed or impractical:

“When the heart is full of Creative Love it will not rest content in what it experiences of that Love, but will desire that others should know it too; and a life of loving effort for the souls of men is the result.”

“We must be content to be discontented; satisfied, but athirst for ever more intimate union with God”.

- **The Bible** has several references to the amazing mystery of the deep connection between God and his people, as individuals and also as community. Here are just some of the passages: John 15:1-11; Matthew 28:20; Galatians 2:20; Colossians 1:24-27; Song of Songs 2:16.

Choose one (or more) of these passages and think about what God is saying to you about your connection to Him, about the intimacy of your relationship. Reflect on the description given in these passages and how they might or might not reflect how you see your connection with God.

- Use one of the Bible passages or songs provided in the material to practise **Lectio Divina**.
- **Visualise Scripture!** Choose one of the Scripture passages that readily brings an image to mind – like the fruit and the vine. Slowly read the passage through. Close your eyes and picture what is being described. What do you see, smell, hear? What would it feel like to imagine that is how you are connected with God? How is God speaking to you through this? You could either record this experience in your journal or share it with someone.
- **Be creative:** think of ways you can creatively express what Scripture says about union, or intimacy, with God. You could create a collage, draw, paint or sculpt what intimacy with God looks like for you. You could write a poem, prayer, song that challenges or inspires others, or simply write your own love song or prayer.
- Go for a **walk**. What do you see that reminds you of the mystery: God in you, you in him? Does this challenge you in any way?
- If you are **sharing** this retreat day with someone else, spend some time sharing your reflections or insights. Share what God might be saying to you about this topic. Pray together.
- If you like to **journal**, make a note of what you have experienced during this retreat time in your journal. A simple way to do this is to:

Thank God for Who He is and what He is doing in your life

Notice what is happening around you and in you

Respond to what God has shown you, by thanking Him, repenting, or recommitting yourself to Him

- **Simply sit in His presence.** We don't have to do anything to enjoy being in His presence! We are in His will when we are fully and completely in His presence, with our hearts focussed on Him.

EVEN DEEPER

LECTIO DIVINA

Lectio Divina is an ancient spiritual practice from the Christian monastic tradition. Its title derives from the Latin words meaning reading and divine/holy. In Lectio Divina, we seek to experience the presence of God through reading and listening, meditation, prayer, and contemplation. Lectio Divina can be practiced both by individuals and in groups.

Practicing Lectio Divina Individually

1. Text

Begin by choosing a section of Scripture that you would like to read and pray. You can choose the text randomly or use a liturgical book, such as The Book of Common Prayer. Try not to set a goal for how much content you will cover; the goal is to listen for God and to experience his presence.

2. Preparation

Do what you must to quiet and prepare yourself to hear from God. If you need to find a quiet room, sit in silence for several minutes, or sit in a comfortable chair, take whatever posture will help you prepare to receive and experience God's presence.

3. Reading/Listening

When you sense that your heart is prepared, begin by slowly reading the passage of Scripture that you have selected. Move slowly through sentences and phrases. As you read, pay attention to what word, phrase, or idea catches your attention.

4. Meditation

Begin to meditate on the word, phrase, or idea that has captured your attention. Repeat it again and again.

Consider:

What thoughts come to mind as you meditate on this word, phrase, or idea?

What are you reminded of in your life?

What does it make you hope for?

Meditation is no easy task—as you try to concentrate don't be disappointed if random thoughts enter your head. As they do, offer them to God.

5. Prayer

Now begin to speak to God. Tell God what word, phrase, or idea captured your attention and what came to mind as you meditated upon it. How is God using this word, phrase, or idea to bless and transform you? Tell God what you have been thinking and feeling as you've listened and meditated. Tell God how you hope this word, phrase, or idea will change your heart to be more like His.

6. Contemplation

Finish by focusing your attention on the fact that God's presence is with you. If as you try to focus on God's presence you sense a need to read the text again, to continue meditating, or to simply continue talking with God, allow yourself to do so. As you do, know that you are in the presence of God.

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THE PRAYER OF EXAMEN - Finding the movement of the Spirit in our daily lives as we review our day.

This is something that can be done throughout the day or at the end of the day. It helps us to become more aware of and focused on the presence of God in the midst of everyday life.

1. Recognize the presence of God

Be still and know that you are with God.

2. Look at your day with gratitude

Acknowledge God in the big and small things of life.

3. Review your day

When or where in the past 24 hours did you feel you were cooperating most fully with God's action in your life? When were you resisting?

Ask yourself

- What habits and life patterns do I notice?
- When did I feel most alive? Most drained of life?
- When did I have the greatest sense of belonging? When did I feel most alone?
- When did I give love? Where did I receive love?
- When did I feel most fully myself? Least myself?
- When did I feel most whole? Most fragmented?

4. Reconcile and Resolve

- Seek forgiveness
- Ask for direction
- Share a concern
- Express gratitude
- Resolve to move forward

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** THOMPSON, C. (2008). *Celtic Wisdom: Treasures from Ireland*. Lion: Oxford. p.79

SONGS

Jesus, be the centre: Michael Frye and Kathryn Scott,

Simplicity: Gareth Gilkeson / Chris Llewellyn. © Capitol Christian Music Group

Christ be in my waking: Stuart Townend & Simon Brading, Copyright © 2011 Thankyou Music

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Prayers and Reflection:

St John Cassian

Augustine of Hippo

Celtic prayer

Jo-anne Brown