

## **Exercise**

### **EXPERIENCE OF APPRECIATION**

This can be used in a large group to practice the basics of positive memory, appreciation and connection with Jesus our Friend and Savior.

Pass out sheets of paper for people to write down some notes.

#### **Opening Prayer....**

(Use a prayer similar to the one in Chapter 5, Appreciation, The Beginning.)

#### **Positive Memory**

We are going to take just a few minutes for you to think about a positive memory.

Here are a few ideas to help you brainstorm:

- big moments (e.g., weddings or births)
- small moments (e.g., glistening colors on a bubble, an amazing nap, meal with a friend)
- long ago or recent memories; different ages, or school grades, seasons of life
- location memories— special moments in special places
- favorite activities or a special event or trip
- an encounter with a person that brought joy, peace and/or gratitude
- a *positive* weather event
- a special gift, or an object or item that brought you joy
- a moment of wonder, surprise, hope, satisfaction, laughter, or feeling particularly loved

Just think of two or three things and jot down a note to remind yourself and we will be coming back to it shortly.

#### **Quieting**

Let's just relax, bring our minds back from all the tasks and activities of the day.

Take a deep breath with me...let your body and mind relax

Feel yourself relaxing....finding a place of rest and peace

Check your body for tension. Take a deep breath in....breathe in life...full of oxygen going into tense places. Exhale and see the tension leaving. You are breathing in the Prince of Peace....not just that He gives us peace ....but He IS peace...He is person

#### **Memory recall**

I invite you to think about a memory that you really felt peace and joy. It can be very simple and should focus on something specific in time rather than just a general memory.

Go back there in your mind's eye. It will probably be easier if you close your eyes to be free of distraction as you remember.

#### **Describing**

As you think about someone, or something, or a place in time when you felt joy and peace look around inside of this memory and allow yourself to re-enter into that time and moment in your mind's eye, see and experience that moment again.

Notice how your body feels in this memory. Were you walking, standing, sitting? Notice what's around you. If it's a person you are grateful for,,think about what you appreciate about this person.

Notice any smells you might have been experiencing in this memory. What are you hearing around you? Colors?

If it is helpful to you, make a few notes of what you are experiencing.

### **Appreciating**

What do you really appreciate about this person, place, moment in time? Allow your mind and heart to stir up appreciation for this particular memory. You can even start thanking God..... quietly, in your mind. Just as simple as” Thank you God for this beautiful sunset” or whatever you thinking about.

### **Invite Jesus**

Now I Invite you to aim this appreciation toward Jesus.

Allow yourself to express and feel appreciation to Jesus for this time, moment or person you are thinking about

He is the giver of all good gifts.  
Jesus is Immanuel...God with us...His Presence with us.  
As He is with us now He was with us then.  
He is always the same.  
Be assured He was with us in this memory.  
We just are not always aware of His presence.

Now we are going to ask Jesus to help us be aware of His presence in this memory

I invite you to make a heart invitation ....as simple as, ”Jesus will you show me where you were in this appreciation memory?”

“Help me perceive your living interactive presence with me.”

Now I invite you to notice **the first thing** that comes into your awareness

Jesus says my sheep hear and know my voice, they won't follow another

Ask: “Jesus, show me where you were.”

Notice what comes into your awareness

His presence may come as a sensation, we may hear Him, see Him or just know He's there.

Everyone experiences Him differently.

Just notice what you are experiencing as you made this heart invitation to Him.

As you look around in this appreciation memory and after you have invited Him in, notice where you sense or see Him or hear Him.

Notice how it feels to experience Him in this positive memory.

What does it feel like to have Jesus in this memory?

You can even look at how close He is to you....you could even invite Him to come closer if you like -He loves to be with us....to be with you

If He is close enough to see, notice the expression on His face.

If you have a sense of His presence what does that feel like?

### **Sharing with Jesus**

If you have this connection with Him, share with Him what's on your heart right now.

He delights to hear us, listen to us, hear our hearts.

Jesus calls us His friend...friends have conversations with one another don't they?... one talks, one listens and vice versa so we know that when we talk to Jesus He delights to respond.

So we are going to ask Him a couple questions and just notice what He says, how he responds in this place of connection and appreciation. With your focus on him I invite you to ask Him a question....and as you do, just notice the very first thing that comes into your mind or your awareness.

"Jesus, how do you feel about being with me?"

"Jesus what about me brings you delight?"

"Jesus what is on your heart for me today?"

The Bible says that God is the giver of good gifts.....let's ask Him what gift He has for us today.....with full expectation that He delights to give good gifts

"Jesus what good gift do you have for me today?" Take a moment to listen to Him.

...just notice whatever word, picture, sensation comes into your awareness.

Take a few minutes to write down what you felt Jesus was communicating to you. You do not need to share this with anyone if you don't want to. It will help you to remember this experience of a personal encounter with your Lord and Savior.

### **Closing Prayer**

Jesus, I thank You for Your presence. I thank You that You are closer than the air we breathe. I would ask that you make all of us more aware of Your presence with us at all times....not just in good times or bad times, but all times.

Romans 15:13 (NLT) I pray that God, the source of hope, will fill you completely with joy and peace because you trust in him. Then you will overflow with confident hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.

I bless you with His hope and peace as you trust in Him....Amen