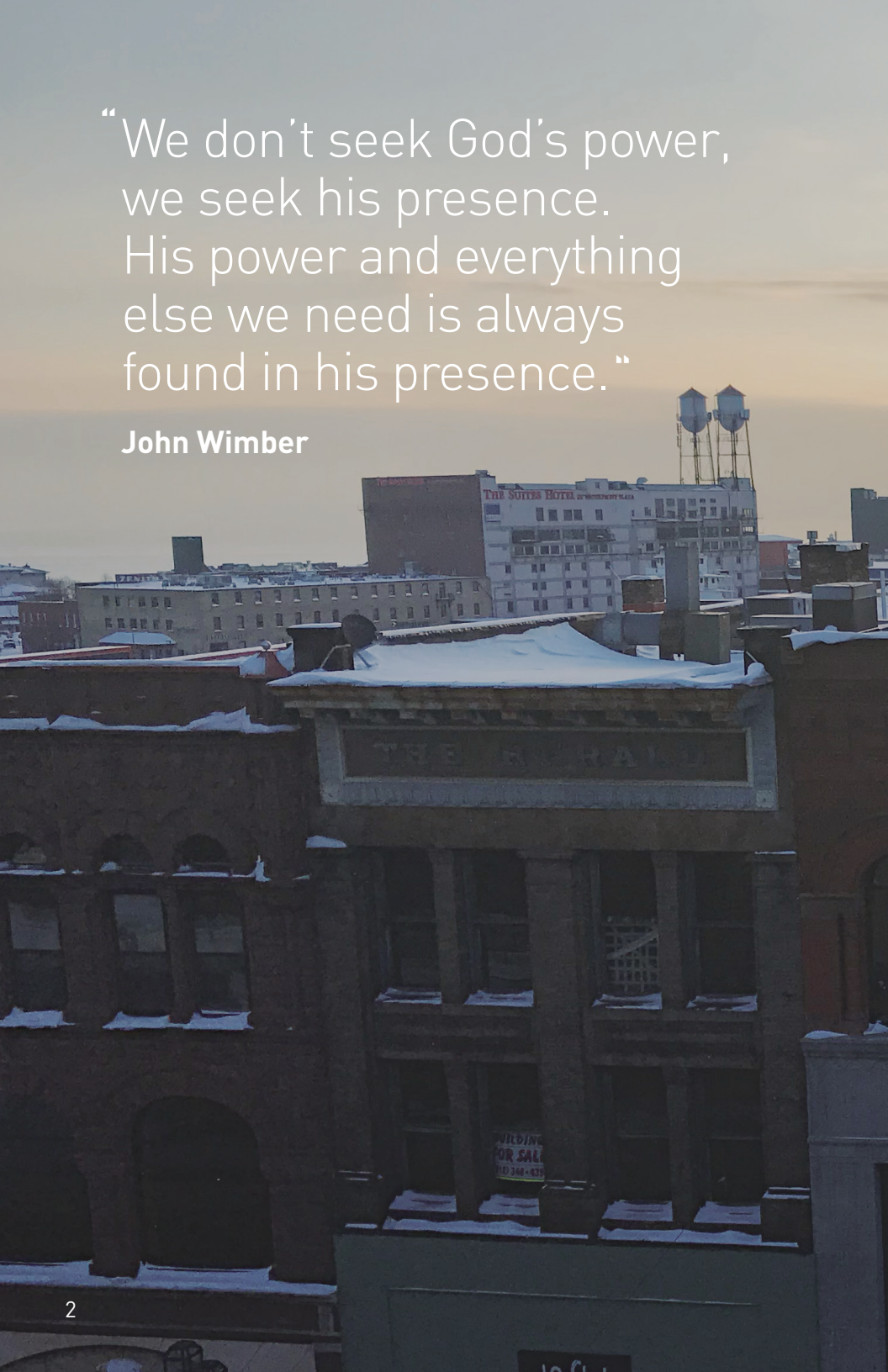
HOW TO SPEND TIME WITH JESUS

A practical guide for developing your relationship with God

the **Vineyard** church

Love God. Love People. Period.



"We don't seek God's power, we seek his presence. His power and everything else we need is always found in his presence."

John Wimber

MINNESOTA NATIONAL BANK

Introduction

HOW TO USE THIS BOOKLET

For many of us, encountering God's presence and growing in our life with him is a real and deep desire. However, many of us have never been shown clear models for exactly how we might build a life lived in the presence of God.

We may have been taught the importance of things like prayer and Bible reading, but weren't given any tools or training in how to do them well. We may have spent years trying to do our best, but it has often felt like homework rather than spending life-giving and life-changing time in the presence of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

This booklet is designed to help with that. It is a step by step guide to building a life of encounter with God one day at a time, that brings change and transformation to our inner life as well as allows us to see the presence of God begin to influence every situation we find ourselves in each day.

It is an invitation to build a daily rhythm of life with Jesus, and is intended to be used multiple times a day for one longer time period and a few brief times to pause and refocus on Jesus and his presence.

Time in the presence of Jesus is so important; it is there we are renewed in our identity as beloved friends and children of God. When we receive the love of God freely given to us, we are set free to love others and live in gratitude. Instead of prodigal searching, we are secure in the love of the Father, and are able to carry the saving goodness and mercy of Jesus the Son in the power of the Spirit to our families, friends, workplaces, communities, and to everyone we meet.

Ideally, this material is to be used as an essential start to your day where you'll invest in time in the presence of God as a foundation for the hours and task ahead.

It is also intended to be used several times a day to help us remember and return to God's presence, and can be used before sleep to evaluate and engage with our day. It is not a time of study or intense intercession. Those are necessary and good practices, and elements of them feature here, but other space should be made for them to be done in fullness.

This space is about the regular rhythm of encountering God and the discipline of becoming fully present to him: Bringing everything we experience each day, every thought, emotion, encounter, joy or disappointment into the light of his presence. It is also intended to be a guide, not a rule. Over time, each person who uses this will be free to experiment and make it their own.

Depending on the time available, these steps can be done in 10, 30, or 60 minutes, or even longer.

1 PREPARE TO MEET WITH GOD

One of the biggest obstacles to regular time in the presence of Jesus is not knowing what to do each time and feeling overwhelmed.

This booklet is designed to give a simple outline to help with that. Many people find getting started the hardest part of sustaining their rhythms with Jesus.

One thing that helps is spending a bit of time preparing what you will need in advance.

Here are some things to think about to help your time go well.

Have what you need, ready to go

This is important if you are going to be up early in the morning. If you don't, you waste precious time looking for the things you need or won't be able to build a rhythm. Have whatever you need, a Bible, journal, pen, device with the right apps, a devotional book you are reading, something to keep time, all in the same place and ready to go for when you need it.

Find a place you can go that is yours

Go somewhere you can spend time uninterrupted. If possible, make it the same place every time. It may be a certain room in your house, a favorite chair, a place in nature, or a certain corner of your office.

Plan to make this time as nice and comfortable as possible

This time is about developing a deep and rich friendship with Jesus and spending time in his presence. It's time with a friend, not homework that needs to be done. So, make the time as enjoyable as possible. Have some elements that bring you joy and give you simple pleasure, like a favorite pen, a beautiful view, a cup of great coffee, whatever brings you joy and creates an atmosphere of gratitude, peace, and rest. It should be a time you look forward to.

Have a notepad or something to collect your thoughts

Your mind will wander towards all the things you need to do and all the things that compete for your attention. As you make yourself fully present to God, you can write down things that come up when your mind wanders, so that you can relax and tend to them later.

2 RECEIVE THE GIFT OF HIS PRESENCE

Become aware of his presence

It is important to begin by acknowledging and honoring God's presence with us, and allowing ourselves to be as fully present as possible to him.

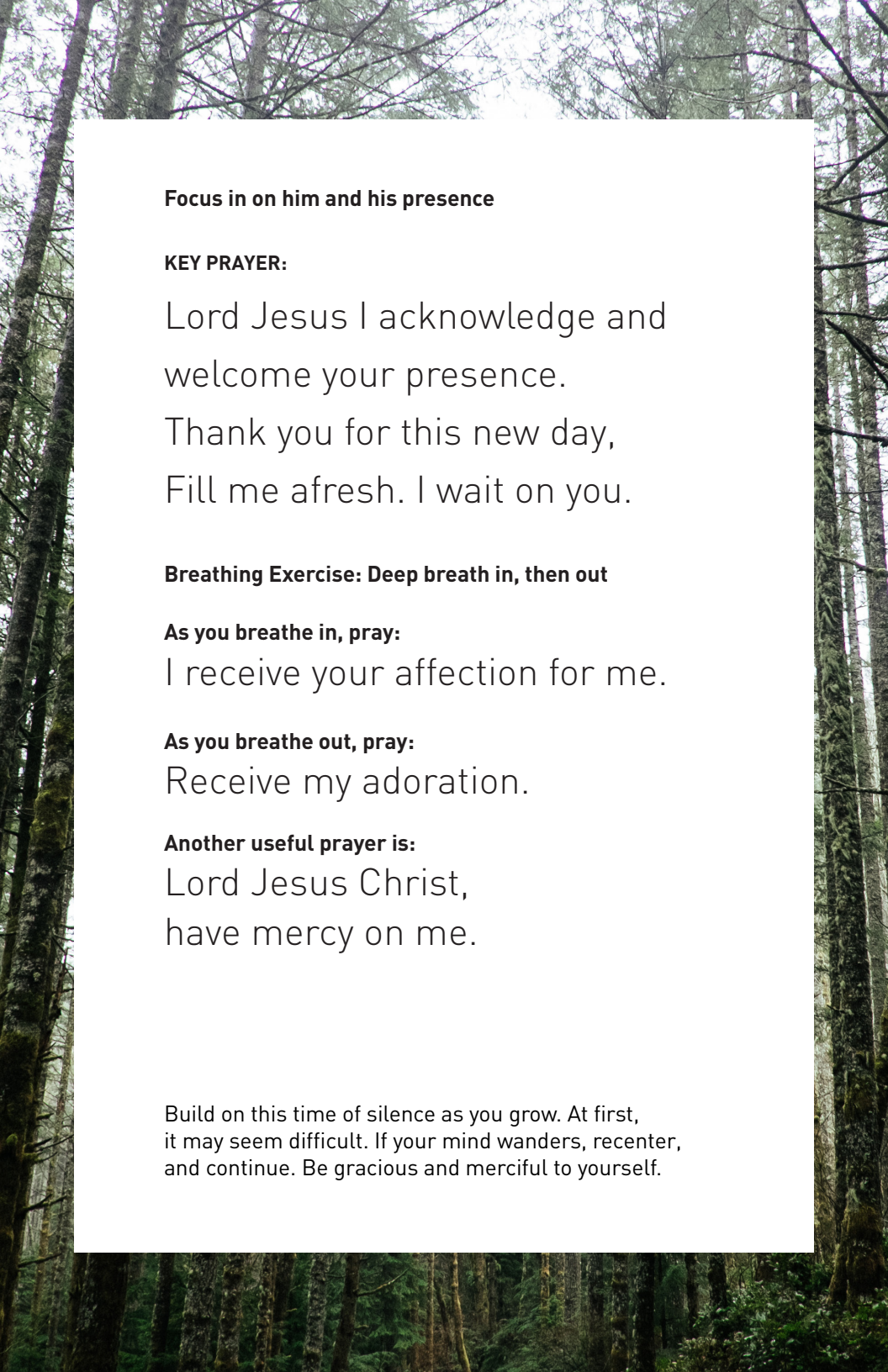
Begin with 2 minutes of silence. Why silence? Silence allows us to not just present our lists to God; it acknowledges holy ground and the sacred space of our lives. It allows us to enter into his presence, yield to him fully, and to hear from him.

Silence in his presence enables us to slow down, become fully present in the moment, and rest before him. In God's presence, there is no need to perform or earn anything. Simply be still and receive his love and care for us.

The more we engage in silence and stillness and simply resting in God's presence, the more those practices will become our defaults as we engage our lives and the world.

"Far from being a mere absence, silence allows the reality of God to stand in the midst of your life. It is like the wind of eternity blowing in your face. Not for nothing does the Psalmist say: "Be still and know that I am God." God does not ordinarily compete for our attention. In silence, we come to attend."

Dallas Willard, The Great Omission



Focus in on him and his presence

KEY PRAYER:

Lord Jesus I acknowledge and
welcome your presence.
Thank you for this new day,
Fill me afresh. I wait on you.

Breathing Exercise: Deep breath in, then out

As you breathe in, pray:
I receive your affection for me.

As you breathe out, pray:
Receive my adoration.

Another useful prayer is:
Lord Jesus Christ,
have mercy on me.

Build on this time of silence as you grow. At first, it may seem difficult. If your mind wanders, recenter, and continue. Be gracious and merciful to yourself.

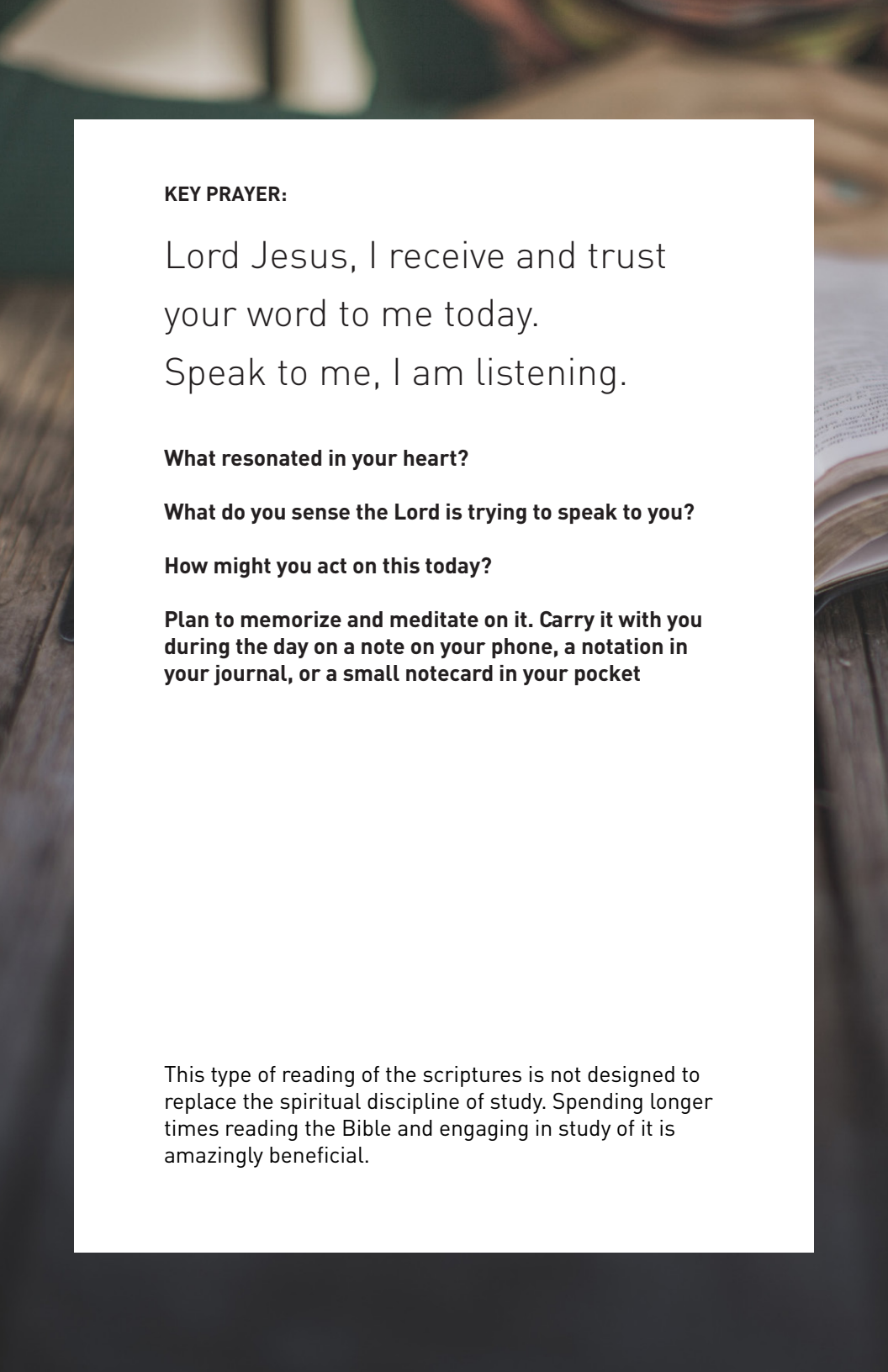
3 RECEIVE HIS WORD

Throughout the centuries, Christians have met with Jesus through the Bible.

The scriptures are a key part of encountering his presence. We hugely benefit from time spent in daily reading. It may be through an app, a read the Bible in one-year program, moving chapter by chapter through a book or the psalms, or time spent memorizing smaller passages of scripture. A key to incorporating more of God's word in our lives is to plan our time in advance so that each morning or moment you aren't wondering what to do. You engage with what you are set to do for that day.

Whatever plan or method you choose, when it comes to the reading, read the passage slowly and more than once. You may wish to read it out loud, to hear the words spoken to you and over you. Pay attention to keywords or phrases that catch your attention. Place yourself in the passage.

Prayerfully interact with what you have read.



KEY PRAYER:

Lord Jesus, I receive and trust your word to me today.
Speak to me, I am listening.

What resonated in your heart?

What do you sense the Lord is trying to speak to you?

How might you act on this today?

Plan to memorize and meditate on it. Carry it with you during the day on a note on your phone, a notation in your journal, or a small notecard in your pocket

This type of reading of the scriptures is not designed to replace the spiritual discipline of study. Spending longer times reading the Bible and engaging in study of it is amazingly beneficial.

4 RECEIVE THE GIFT OF YOUR LIFE

List 3 things you are grateful for, and ask Jesus to keep them at the forefront of your mind today.

Allow them to bring you joy.

Become aware of anxieties, fears, hopes, desires, and the emotions you are currently experiencing. Don't ignore them. Present them to Jesus in prayer and entrust them to him.

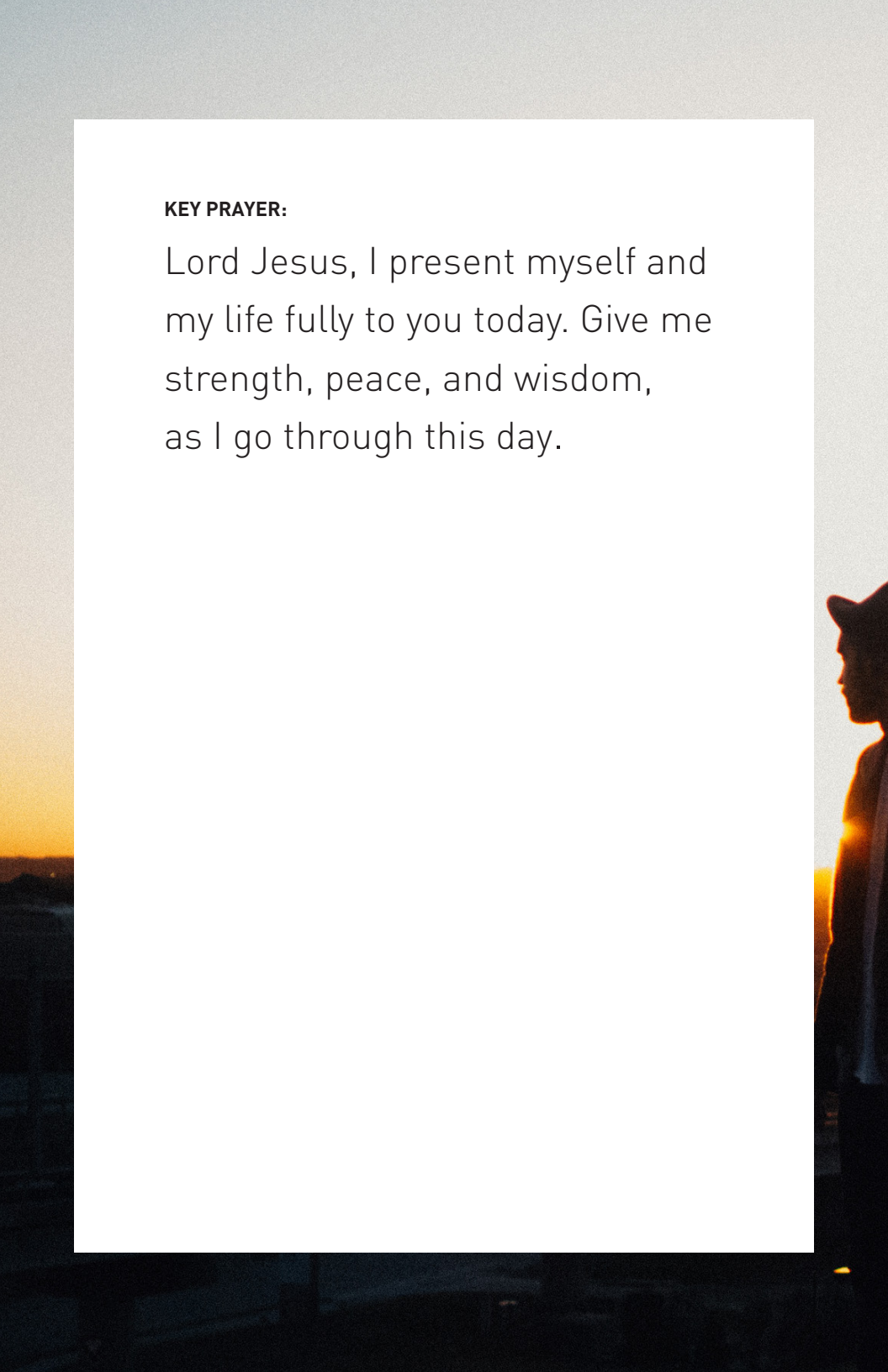
Review the day ahead, and lift any concerns, conversations, challenges stresses to him in prayer. Entrust conversations, people, decisions, and situations to him. Ask for his supernatural revelation and solutions for situations you face. Wait in silence for a few moments and invite Jesus to speak to you about your day ahead.

Pray for those you love and care for and those that the Lord brings to mind.

This is a great time to journal and process through things before the Lord.

KEY PRAYER:

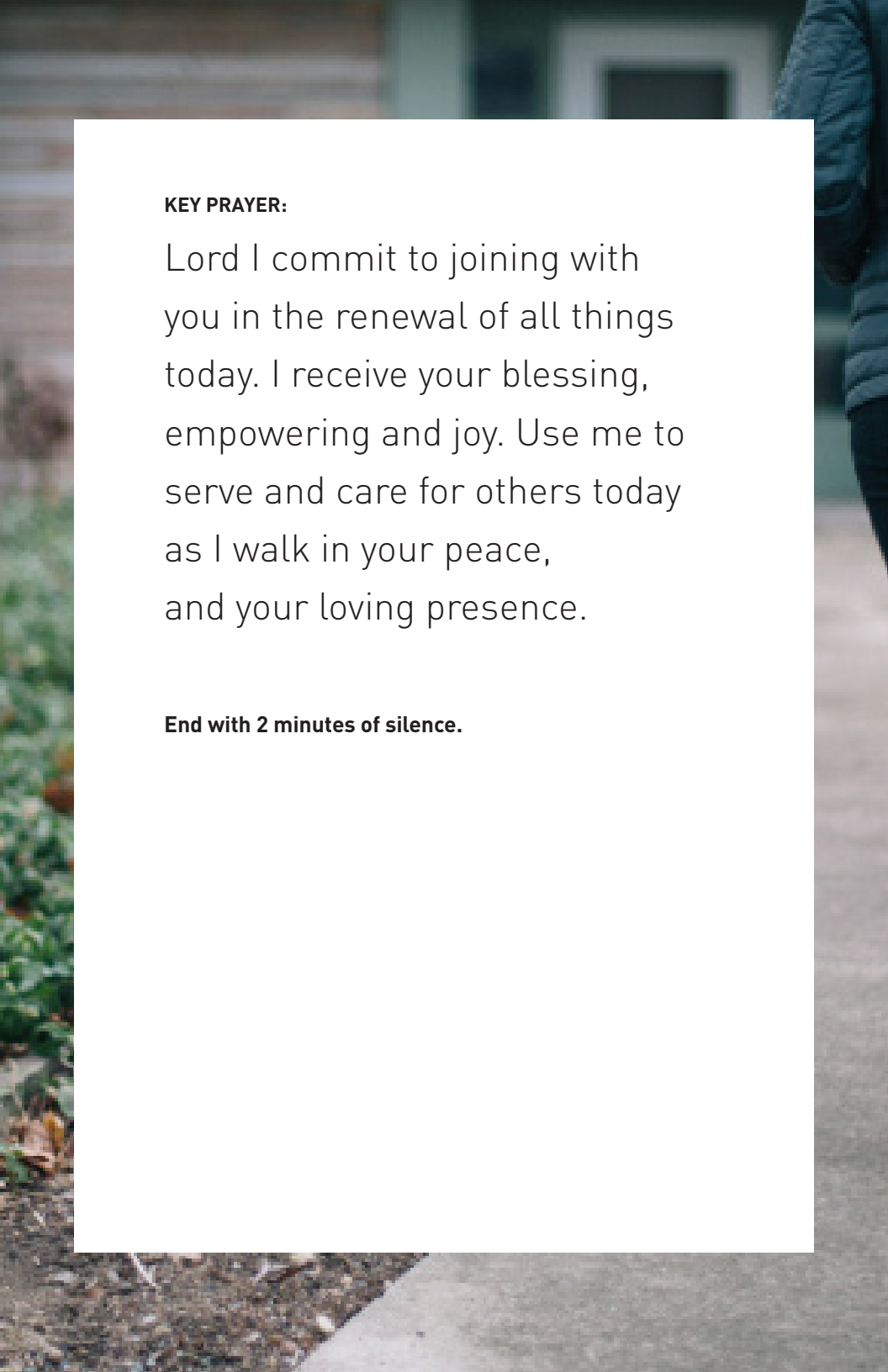
Lord Jesus, I present myself and my life fully to you today. Give me strength, peace, and wisdom, as I go through this day.



5 RECEIVE THE PEACE OF GOD AND EMBRACE THE MISSION OF GOD

As you bring your time to a close, commit your life and the day ahead to Jesus. Make yourself available to be used by him to further his kingdom today.

Ask for his empowering presence to fill you with his peace, power, and his perspective, so they may overflow into every situation you find yourself in.



KEY PRAYER:

Lord I commit to joining with you in the renewal of all things today. I receive your blessing, empowering and joy. Use me to serve and care for others today as I walk in your peace, and your loving presence.

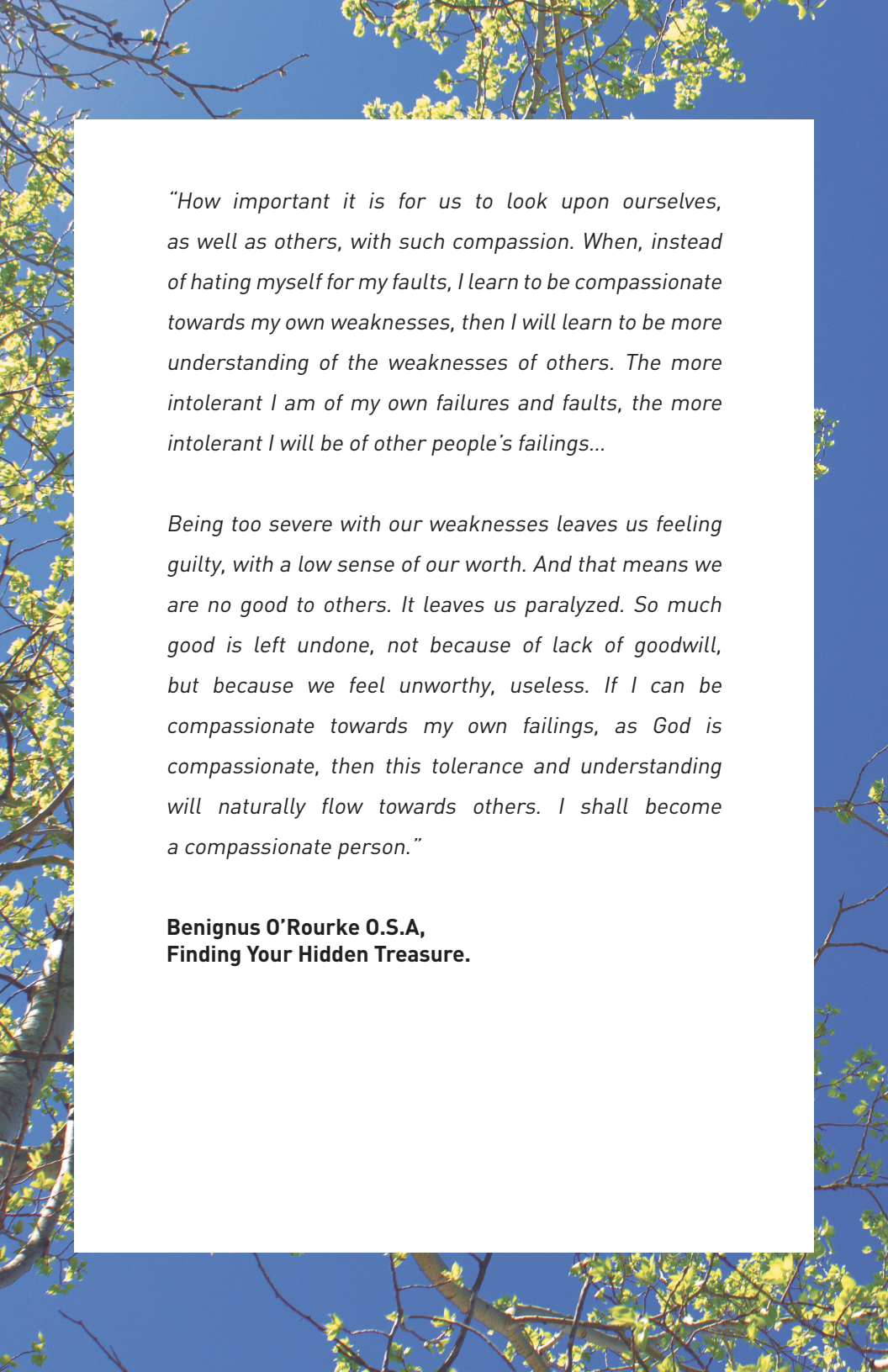
End with 2 minutes of silence.

6 RETURN TO RECEIVE THE GIFT OF HIS PRESENCE

Pause briefly throughout the day to enter into his presence with worship, returning to the scripture reading for the day, lifting up emotions, questions, anxieties, and fears and inviting his peace and security to fill you. Enjoy small moments of silence in his presence.

In the evening, use these steps to review your day. Allow the Holy Spirit to bring to mind the joys, difficulties, and areas we need to confess sin and ask for forgiveness from God and others. Invite the presence of Jesus to be with you as you prepare to sleep.

It is important to remember to be merciful with yourself; this is a journey.



"How important it is for us to look upon ourselves, as well as others, with such compassion. When, instead of hating myself for my faults, I learn to be compassionate towards my own weaknesses, then I will learn to be more understanding of the weaknesses of others. The more intolerant I am of my own failures and faults, the more intolerant I will be of other people's failings...

Being too severe with our weaknesses leaves us feeling guilty, with a low sense of our worth. And that means we are no good to others. It leaves us paralyzed. So much good is left undone, not because of lack of goodwill, but because we feel unworthy, useless. If I can be compassionate towards my own failings, as God is compassionate, then this tolerance and understanding will naturally flow towards others. I shall become a compassionate person."

Benignus O'Rourke O.S.A,
Finding Your Hidden Treasure.

How To Spend Time With Jesus

1 PREPARE TO MEET WITH GOD
Create the time and space for a regular rhythm with God.

2 RECEIVE THE GIFT OF HIS PRESENCE
Slow down, and become aware of God's presence.

3 RECEIVE HIS WORD
Prayerfully interact with the scriptures.

4 RECEIVE THE GIFT OF YOUR LIFE
Bring to God whatever is weighing on your mind.
Entrust him to work in the midst of your life.

5 RECEIVE THE PEACE OF GOD AND EMBRACE THE MISSION OF GOD
Make yourself available to be used by God today.

6 RETURN TO RECEIVE THE GIFT OF HIS PRESENCE
Pause throughout the day reconnect.
Invite his peace to fill you and meet all your daily needs.

Many thanks to Belfast City Vineyard. This content was written by & used with permission from Andrew Smith.

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