

Heart-to-Heart Talks with JESUS

INTIMATE
ENCOUNTERS WITH OUR
LOVING SAVIOR

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INTRODUCTION

What would it be like to have a heart-to-heart talk with Jesus himself? What would Jesus tell you? What would you tell him?

In unsettled times it is natural to seek deep assurance. God's intimate presence provides that assurance. When things are uncertain, we seek the immediate nearness of God, not just ideas about God. We want to be drawn into life-changing intimacy with God.

The daily devotionals in *Heart-to-Heart Talks with Jesus: Intimate Encounters with Our Loving Savior* can help lead you and those you love to that holy embrace. Written in the form of God speaking to you as to his loved and treasured child, these devotionals can reveal the nature of his love more clearly in its depth, its splendor, and its tenderness. Full of practical advice and comfort, these messages lead you to a life-enhancing communion with God.

It may seem presumptuous to write in a form that has messages from Jesus directly to you, yet this form of devotional is classic and has long been acknowledged and respected in the Catholic Church. *The Imitation of Christ* by Thomas à Kempis and many other classics of Catholic spirituality were written in this style.

For several decades I have used this form of devotional writing in my private devotional life, as has Deacon Robert Herrmann. I pray in front of an Icon Wall with one of the icons being the St. Catherine icon of Christ from St. Catherine Monastery at Mount Sinai. In writing *Heart-to-Heart Talks with Jesus*, I would read the Scriptures for long periods of time plus classic and modern spiritual literature, letting it seed my subconscious, letting the message and inspiration sink deep within. I would look at the St. Catherine's icon of Christ as I softly and over and over again prayed the Jesus Prayer, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the Living God, have mercy on me, a sinner," letting the Spirit guide me into a deep state of prayer.

Gazing at the icon, I would then ask questions. This is a classic way of praying with an icon. I would ask, "Dear Jesus, what would you say to me tonight?" and "What would you say to my readers?" I would get a profound spiritual sense of what that might be—sometimes in words, other times in feelings—and then write it out. I do not consider this an extraordinary happening but a normal process of seeking intimacy with God.

The messages in this book are divided into four sections: Feel the Lord's Love, Learn about the Lord, Take Comfort in the Lord, and Feel Amazement in the Lord's Presence. At the end of each section are reflection questions that you may choose to journal about or simply ponder in the quiet of your heart. They are designed to help you to enter more profoundly into relationship with Jesus and others.

I invite you to encounter Jesus through these messages, Scripture passages, and prayers, to know how much he cares for you and wants to be intimately connected to you. Perhaps these messages will inspire you to approach Jesus in this way through your own imaginative and contemplative prayer, to open your heart and mind to Jesus, and to allow him to speak the words and messages he wants most for you to hear.

You might want to read one a day as a daily devotional, or simply read them through. You may want to keep this book handy and read messages that help you in times of need. You might want to use some combination of the ways we have just mentioned.

Feel
the Lord's
Love

I Cannot Contain My Love for You

MY CHILD, I AM CALLING YOU TO A JOURNEY, a journey into the core of my love, a love that so spills out from me I cannot contain it, a love so intimate it heals. Draw near me, for I am as close to you as you are to yourself.

As you are sitting there, reading this message, know that I embrace you, I touch you, and I kiss your heart. I invite you into an intimate friendship. Follow me as I lead you throughout these messages, and your life will sparkle with my brightness. I delight in you, even though you see yourself as wounded and limited.

My love comes from the heart of all eternity. My love is like an ocean, endless in its depths. My love is wonder, joy, singing, and dancing. My vestments are creation, which is beautiful beyond measure.

My love is touchable in those who are so easy to reject. Connect with the outcast and the vulnerable, and you connect with me.

Touch my body under the appearance of wine and bread, for I am of the earth, touchable, as real as your own body, as

touchable as the bodies of your family and those for whom you care.

SCRIPTURE

Though the mountains fall away and the hills be shaken, my love shall never fall away from you nor my covenant of peace be shaken, says the Lord, who has mercy on you.

✦ ISAIAH 54:10

PRAYER

Lord, help me to feel your love, to know that you are always with me. Help me to open my heart to you in intimate friendship and to, in turn, share your love with others. Amen.

My Love Always Pours Out for You

MY CHILD, MY LOVE IS POURING OUT OF ME NOW FOR YOU. I will slow us down as we go on daily in this journey, to talk over the specifics of your life. But for now, I cannot contain myself. I am living and breathing, and my desire is to live and breathe with you every day. Let us draw close, ever closer, as I ask you questions about your life. What is it that is giving you happiness in your life right now? What brings joy? Think about that a moment. My love is like that love but greater. Know that as you walk with me in these messages, I can warm your heart into happiness and love you into joy, for I have abundant joy.

Stop a moment and think of times you have experienced love. Perhaps you are remembering a time when you were little and your parents or grandparents doted on you. Perhaps your parents and relatives did not dote on you but met you with hardness and coldness. I was there with you during that time. In moments of belief, when you have had that tug at your heart that something more than what you could see in front of you cherished you, that was me reaching out to you.

You have touched me in the kiss of husband and wife. You have touched me rocking your newborn infant. You have touched me in teaching your children the good in life, in playing with them, reading to them, ruffling the hair on their heads. These are tastes of my love.

SCRIPTURE

Taste and see that the Lord is good;
blessed is the stalwart one who takes refuge in him.

✦ PSALM 34:9

PRAYER

Dear Jesus, I know that you are near to me. Help me to sense your presence, to feel your love in the relationships I have with those closest to me. Help them to sense your love when I care for them. Amen.

Learn
about
the Lord

Scripture Is a Speedway into Your Heart

MY CHILD, ALL THE SCRIPTURE LEADS TO ME. I have given it to you, not simply to understand, though understanding is important, but to wash over and through you. In Scripture, you see the tenderness with which I loved Israel, my disciples, and everyone. Its words can rearrange your day. Reading Scripture daily is genuinely a light to your path and a lamp to your feet. More than mere words, it is a speedway that I can travel into your heart. The rhythms of Scripture are the heart-beat of my love for you.

Look at Scripture not just with your head but with your entire being, and it will flow through you. When you read Scripture, slow down. If possible, read it out loud, cherishing each word.

Scripture also challenges you to enfold the sojourner, the homeless, the poor, the widow, the lonely, those easily despised; enfold them in your care in the same way I enfold you.

SCRIPTURE

How sweet to my tongue is your promise,
sweeter than honey to my mouth!

Through your precepts I gain understanding;
therefore I hate all false ways.

Your word is a lamp for my feet,
a light for my path.

✝ PSALMS 119:103-105

PRAYER

Dear Lord, in the rhythms of Scripture, I find the rhythms of your very own heartbeat. When I read it, you nurture my soul, and I can feel the waves of your love flow throughout me. Remind me daily of the treasure that is the Bible. Teach me to savor its words slowly as a lover savors the love of his beloved. Amen.

I Call You to Work Miracles

MY CHILD, I SHOWED THE MIGHT OF MY LOVE IN HEALINGS AND MIRACLES. Through prayer, you can also work miracles. You can become a curer of souls, a mender of persons. All your prayer can become a holy burning in your heart, a fire that warms and sustains you in the center of your being. Your personality can be so imbued with me that you become a holy, life-giving image of me to the people you meet.

Take time in quiet and in praise to open wide to my presence. Reaching out to me can be an enormous pleasure, an enormous joy that transforms you into a joy-bringer to all you meet. Prayer is a time when you will be reconstructed, when you bear the innermost workings of your soul to me: the past pain, the past joys, the past accomplishments, your deep search for meaning, your shame, your good and wonderful times. Prayer allows you to feel pain you may have pretended was not there, hurt that you ignored. It allows you to invite my love in, to bring the salve of a great and a wonderful medicine.

The result is not so much that you proclaim the gospel.

Rather, you become the gospel, becoming through me a miracle worker and a healer.

SCRIPTURE

“Amen, I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.”

✦ MATTHEW 17:20

PRAYER

Dear Lord, in your earthly life you performed many miracles, healing bodies and souls. I know that you are also calling me to be a mender of what is torn, a worker of miracles of the heart. Daily soak me in your love so that I may spread the aroma of that love to all I meet. Give me deep sensitivity to the needs of others, just as you show deep sensitivity to me. Help my breathing, my walking, and my doing become emblems of miracle to others. Amen.

Take
Comfort
in the Lord

Taste the Deep Quiet of My Heart

MY CHILD, SLEEP OFTEN CAN RESTORE YOU. After a busy day and hectic evening, you fall asleep on a comfortable mattress, and a few hours later you are up and ready to go, feeling better, restored, rested. In the Scriptures, I say, “Come to me, all you who are tired and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest” (Mt 11:28). These messages that I give to you each day are so that you may rest, rest from your burdens, rest from the distresses of everyday living, and taste the deep quiet of my heart, which is like a still pond with unfathomable depths.

I invite you on a journey of rest and tranquility. So many things may jangle within you: fears from the past, distressed relationships that you may not have dealt with. Apprehension of the future, concern about what is over the next horizon, and worry for tomorrow may at times consume you. My touch can lighten your load and help you develop that rich quiet of the soul that will fill you up forever. My touch refreshes as it remakes.

I came down for you and live for you. I died on the cross for you. I sent my spirit upon you. I am as intimate to you as

your own heartbeat and will always be with you. My love for you is boundless, without measure. And day by day as you go on your journey, I can give you a taste of it. My love is like floating on a rubber raft on the quiet lake of my peace; the stresses of your heart flow away, and anxiety seeps from your body and soul.

SCRIPTURE

Have no anxiety at all, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, make your requests known to God. Then the peace of God that surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.

✝ PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

PRAYER

Jesus, help me see more clearly the contours of my soul and the patterns of my thoughts. Help me touch this moment, this present, and give it to you so that you may flood me with your love and show me the seeds of eternity hidden in the ordinary things. Amen.

I Can Lighten Your Load

MY CHILD, AS YOU TOUCH BASE WITH ME EACH DAY, I can lighten your load and ease your fears.

When you were little, the world probably overwhelmed you with strange new noises, sights, and experiences. If you were gifted with a caring home, those around you reached out to you: your mother, your father, your whole family, and your friends. They reassured you as they wiped your tears away.

You need that same security as an adult—the comfort of someone feeling your feelings, hugging you with a touch that brings peace and calms the worst tumult.

Perhaps your home was not loving and supportive. Be assured I walked with you then.

Today when you find your world crushes in on you and you feel a load of sadness, I can cradle you with an inward embrace, brightening you as you travel through your day.

When there has been terrible loss, terrible misunderstanding, it can be like the despair my earliest disciples felt after my death and burial. And then, on the third day, there was a mighty happening, a return. My resurrection imparts the comfort of all comforts. I restore that which was lost. The wonder of the angels at my tomb and the wonder of my

appearances can heal you after a lifetime of despair. My resurrection is a bursting light that can come unexpectedly to you in the inward parts of your soul. Just as I appeared to Mary Magdalene, to Peter, to the disciples, so I can appear to you. Perhaps my appearance to you is not the same as that with which I met my disciples, but in touching me, you touch the incredible newness of the kingdom, of a world whose despair and hurt I overcame, and your life too can be graced with the tenderness Thomas felt as he touched my risen side.

SCRIPTURE

“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.” ✠ JOHN 14:27

PRAYER

Jesus, gently lead me into your ease so that I can extend your peace to all I meet and become for others a sign of your peace. Surround me with your great peacefulness, calm my heart, and make me ready to meet you in my living and in my prayer. Amen.