

Thomas à Kempis'
Imitation of Christ:

A One Year Study Guide
& Daily Devotional

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{Suggestions for reading *The Imitation of Christ*, adapted from *The Sodalist's Imitation of Christ*, Revised, corrected and edited by Father Elder Mullan, S.J. (New York: P.J. Kenedy & Sons, 1909.)}

THE *Imitation* is best read slowly. The reader will do well, then, to read a line or two and think and pray; then take a second line or two in the same way, and so fill out the allotted time of mental prayer or reading. Some will find it useful to look out, in the alphabetical Index, passages which suit their present mood or need. Some will prefer to begin at the beginning and read the chapters successively. Some will reserve the fourth book for the time of Holy Communion. Some will usually open the book at random and make their mental prayer on whatever they chance upon; it is wonderful how often this process provides apposite food for thought.

But in all cases, the proper way is to read slowly and ponder.

Perhaps there is no more helpful method for this than the SECOND METHOD OF PRAYER:

Spiritual Exercises

1. Let your mind repose a little. Seated or walking, think what you are going to do and for what purpose.

2. Make a *Preparatory Prayer*, according to the person to whom the prayer, which you are going to make your subject, is addressed.

3. Take the text you wish to use. Kneel or sit down, whichever makes you better able to pray or gives you greater devotion.

Keep your eyes shut, or fixed on one spot, without allowing them to wander about.

Read the words of the text singly; dwell on each as long as you find meanings, comparisons, relish, and consolation in it.

Be more reverent when addressing a sacred person directly.

4. At the end, turn to the person with whom the text was concerned and in a few words ask for the virtues or graces you feel you want most. You may add a vocal prayer if you choose.

5. Jot down in your Spiritual Diary notes of your lights and Resolves.

NOTE: If in one or two words you find enough to think of, be not anxious to pass on.

WEEK 1 (January 1)

BOOK ONE : THOUGHTS HELPFUL IN THE LIFE OF THE SOUL

Chap. 1: Imitating Christ and Despising All Vanities on Earth

Chap. 2: Having a Humble Opinion of Self

WEEK 2 (January 8)

Chap. 3: The Doctrine of Truth

Chap. 4: Prudence in Action

WEEK 3 (January 15)

Chap. 5: Reading the Holy Scripture

Chap. 6: Unbridled Affections

Chap. 7: Avoiding False Hope and Pride

WEEK 4 (January 22)

Chap. 8: Shunning Over-Familiarity

Chap. 9: Obedience and Subjection

Chap. 10: Avoiding Idle Talk

WEEK 5 (January 29)

Chap. 11: Acquiring Peace and Zeal for Perfection

Chap. 12: The Value of Adversity

WEEK 6 (February 5)

Chap. 13: Resisting Temptation

Chap. 14: Avoiding Rash Judgment

WEEK 7 (February 12)

Chap. 15: Works Done in Charity

Chap. 16: Bearing with the Faults of Others

Chap. 17: Monastic Life

WEEK 8 (February 19)

Chap. 18: The Example Set Us by the Holy Fathers

Chap. 19: The Practices of a Good Religious

WEEK 9 (February 26)

Chap. 20: The Love of Solitude and Silence

Chap. 21: Sorrow of Heart

WEEK 10 (March 5)

Chap. 22: Thoughts on the Misery of Man

Chap. 23: Thoughts on Death

WEEK 11 (March 12)

Chap. 24: Judgment and the Punishment of Sin

Chap. 25: Zeal in Amending our Lives

WEEK 12 (March 19)

BOOK TWO : THE INTERIOR LIFE 123

Chap. 1: Meditation

Chap. 2: Humility

WEEK 13 (March 26)

Chap. 3: Goodness and Peace in Man

Chap. 4: Purity of Mind and Unity of Purpose⁹

Chap. 5: Ourselves

WEEK 14 (April 2)

Chap. 6: The Joy of a Good Conscience

Chap. 7: Loving Jesus Above All Things

Chap. 8: The Intimate Friendship of Jesus

WEEK 15 (April 9)

Chap. 9: Wanting No Share in Comfort

Chap. 10: Appreciating God's Grace

WEEK 16 (April 16)

Chap. 11: Few Love the Cross of Jesus

Chap. 12: The Royal Road of the Holy Cross

WEEK 17 (April 23)

**BOOK THREE: INTERNAL
CONSOLATION**

Chap. 1: The Inward Conversation of Christ with the Faithful
Soul

Chap. 2: Truth Speaks Inwardly Without the Sound of Words

WEEK 18 (April 30)

Chap. 3: Listen Humbly to the Words of God. Many Do Not
Heed Them

Chap. 4: We Must Walk Before God in Humility and Truth

WEEK 19 (May 7)

Chap. 5: The Wonderful Effect of Divine Love

Chap. 6: The Proving of a True Lover

WEEK 20 (May 14)

Chap. 7: Grace Must Be Hidden Under the Mantle of
Humility

Chap. 8: Self-Abasement in the Sight of God

Chap. 9: All Things should be Referred to God as their Last
End

WEEK 21 (May 21)

Chap. 10: To Despise the World and Serve God is Sweet

Chap. 11: The Longings of our Hearts Must Be Examined
And Moderated

WEEK 22 (May 28)

Chap. 12: Acquiring Patience in the Fight Against Concupiscence

Chap. 13: The Obedience of One Humbly Subject to the Example of Jesus Christ

WEEK 23 (June 4)

Chap. 14: Consider the Hidden Judgments of God Lest You Become Proud of Your Own Good Deeds

Chap. 15: How One Should Feel and Speak on Every Desirable Thing

Chap. 16: True Comfort Is to Be Sought in God Alone

WEEK 24 (June 11)

Chap. 17: All Our Care is to Be Placed in God

Chap. 18: Temporal Sufferings Should Be Borne Patiently, After the Example of Christ

Chap. 19: True Patience in Suffering

WEEK 25 (June 18)

Chap. 20: Confessing Our Weakness in the Miseries of Life

Chap. 21: Above All Goods and All Gifts We Must Rest in God

WEEK 26 (June 25)

Chap. 22: Remember the Innumerable Gifts of God

Chap. 23: Four Things Which Bring Great Peace

WEEK 27 (July 2)

Chap. 24: Avoiding Curious Inquiry About the Lives of Others

Chap. 25: The Basis of Firm Peace of Heart and True Progress

WEEK 28 (July 9)

Chap. 26: The Excellence of a Free Mind, Gained Through Prayer Rather Than By Study

Chap. 27: Self-Love is the Greatest Hindrance to the Highest Good

Chap. 28: Strength Against Slander

WEEK 29 (July 16)

Chap. 29: How We Must Call Upon and Bless the Lord When Trouble Presses

Chap. 30: The Quest of Divine Help and Confidence in Regaining Grace

WEEK 30 (July 23)

Chap. 31: To Find the Creator, Forsake All Creatures

Chap. 32: Self-Denial and the Renunciation of Evil Appetites

WEEK 31 (July 30)

Chap. 33: Restlessness of Soul—Directing Our Final Intention Toward God

Chap. 34: God is Sweet Above All Things and in All Things to Those Who Love Him

WEEK 32 (August 6)

Chap. 35: There is No Security from Temptation in This Life

Chap. 36: The Vain Judgments of Men

WEEK 33 (August 13)

Chap. 37: Pure and Entire Resignation of Self to Obtain Freedom of Heart

Chap. 38: The Right Ordering of External Affairs; Recourse to God in Dangers

WEEK 34 (August 20)

Chap. 39: A Man Should Not Be Unduly Solicitous About His Affairs

Chap. 40: Man Has No Good in Himself and Can Glory in Nothing

Chap. 41: Contempt for All Earthly Honor

WEEK 35 (August 27)

Chap. 42: Peace is Not to Be Placed in Men

Chap. 43: Beware Vain and Worldly Knowledge

WEEK 36 (September 3)

Chap. 44: Do Not Be Concerned About Outward Things

Chap. 45: All Men Are Not to Be Believed, for It Is Easy to Err in Speech

WEEK 37 (September 10)

Chap. 46: Trust in God Against Slander

Chap. 47: Every Trial Must Be Borne for the Sake of Eternal Life

WEEK 38 (September 17)

Chap. 48: The Day of Eternity and the Distresses of This Life

Chap. 49: The Desire of Eternal Life; the Great Rewards
Promised to Those Who Struggle

WEEK 39 (September 24)

Chap. 50: How a Desolate Person Ought to Commit Himself
Into the Hands of God

Chap. 51: When We Cannot Attain to the Highest, We Must
Practice the Humble Works

WEEK 40 (October 1)

Chap. 52: A Man Ought Not to Consider Himself Worthy of
Consolation, But Rather Deserving of Chastisement

Chap. 53: God's Grace Is Not Given to the Earthly Minded

WEEK 41 (October 8)

Chap. 54: The Different Motions of Nature and Grace

Chap. 55: The Corruption of Nature and the Efficacy of
Divine Grace

WEEK 42 (October 15)

Chap. 56: We Ought to Deny Ourselves and Imitate Christ
Through

Chap. 57: A Man Should Not Be Too Downcast When He
Falls Into Defects

WEEK 43 (October 22)

Chap. 58: High Matters and the Hidden Judgments of God
Are Not to Be Scrutinized

Chap. 59: All Hope and Trust Are to Be Fixed In God Alone

WEEK 44 (October 29)

BOOK FOUR: AN INVITATION TO HOLY COMMUNION

Chap. 1: The Great Reverence With Which We Should
Receive Christ

WEEK 45 (November 5)

Chap. 2: God's Great Goodness and Love is Shown to Man in
This Sacrament

Chap. 3: It Is Profitable to Receive Communion Often

WEEK 46 (November 12)

Chap. 4: Many Blessings Are Given Those Who Receive
Communion Worthily

Chap. 5: The Dignity of the Sacrament and of the Priesthood

WEEK 47 (November 19)

Chap. 6: An Inquiry on the Proper Thing to Do Before
Communion

Chap. 7: The Examination of Conscience and the Resolution
to Amend

WEEK 48 (November 26)

Chap. 8: The Offering of Christ on the Cross; Our Offering

Chap. 9: We Should Offer Ourselves and All That We Have
to God, Praying for All

WEEK 49 (December 3)

Chap. 10: Do Not Lightly Forego Holy Communion

Chap. 11: The Body of Christ and Sacred Scripture Are Most
Necessary to a Faithful Soul

WEEK 50 (December 10)

Chap. 12: The Communicant Should Prepare Himself for
Christ with Great Care

Chap. 13: With All Her Heart the Devout Soul Should
Desire Union with Christ in the Sacrament

WEEK 51 (December 17)

Chap. 14: The Ardent Longing of Devout Men for the Body
of Christ

Chap. 15: The Grace of Devotion is Acquired Through
Humility and Self-Denial

WEEK 52 (December 24)

Chap. 16: We Should Show Our Needs to Christ and Ask His
Grace

Chap. 17: The Burning Love and Strong Desire to Receive
Christ

WEEK 53 (December 31)

Chap. 18: Man Should Not Scrutinize This Sacrament in
Curiosity, But Humbly Imitate Christ and Submit
Reason to Holy Faith