FREE SAMPLER

The Imitation of Christ

In Plain English



The Classic Daily Reader, with 300 Reflective Questions, a prayer index, and more

Thomas à Kempis

tr. W Benham *ed. C. Featherstone*

THE IMITATION OF CHRIST IN PLAIN ENGLISH

A Daily Reader for Spiritual Growth with Reflection Questions, Reading Plans, and Indexes

By Thomas à Kempis
Edited by Charles Featherstone

Based on the anonymous English translation published by James Finch & Co., Limited, London, 1901

ABOUT THIS SAMPLER

This free sampler contains selected pages from the first edition, with a publication date of 16 December 2026. Chapter references in it, such as I.1 or III.17, are to the full edition. Please share it as it is.

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THIS SAMPLER

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THE BOOK

About This Edition

The Imitation of Christ is often described as the most widely read Christian devotional book after the Bible. This edition presents it in clear modern English, arranged for daily reading, with reflection questions after every reading.

This sampler gives you the full Introduction, one reading from each of the four books, and selections from the reading plans, the situation index, the group leader guide, and the recovery section.

IN THE FULL EDITION

- 114 short chapters in four books
- 300 reflection questions, two after every daily reading, plus closing questions for each book and for the whole work
- A 141-day reading plan with alternates, a 30-day starter plan, and plans for Lent and Advent
- A group leader guide with a first-session script
- A section for readers in Twelve-Step recovery
- A glossary, indexes of reflection questions, scripture quotations, situations, and prayers, and a general index
- An audio edition narrated by Charles Featherstone, with one track for each day of the 141-day plan

FROM THE FULL EDITION

INTRODUCTION

THE HISTORY OF THE IMITATION OF CHRIST

The Imitation of Christ is often described as the most widely read Christian devotional book after the Bible. Written in the 1420s, it has gone through thousands of editions over six centuries.

It is traditionally attributed to Thomas à Kempis, an Augustinian canon regular, and was first written for people in religious communities, but its appeal has always been wider. It holds up the life of Jesus as the pattern for a spiritual life: kind, humble, wise, resilient, and steady in belief under the harshest pressure. It teaches that this inner life is open to everyone, that no one stands above anyone else, and that all are equally deserving of loving-kindness. Many readers, whatever their religious background, have found its model of inner strength and selflessness compelling.

Within the church, the book directly influenced the founders of the Jesuits and the Methodists. Ignatius of Loyola, who founded the Society of Jesus, read a chapter each day and gave copies away as gifts. John Wesley, founder of the Methodist movement, read it in 1725 and published an abridgment, The Christian's Pattern, in 1735.

Others read it while awaiting execution. José Rizal had it with him in his cell in Manila during his final hours before he was shot in December 1896. Louis XVI held on to a copy through his last months as a prisoner in the Temple.

Beyond the church, it has influenced artists, scholars, soldiers, and leaders of faith. The sculptor Auguste Rodin is said to have read it with "sculpture" in place of every "God," and to

have found that it still held true. Erasmus read it, General Gordon carried a copy with him, and Swami Vivekananda, who founded the Vedanta Society and spoke about Hinduism at the Parliament of the World's Religions in 1893, translated portions of it into Bengali himself.

The psychologist C. G. Jung also took the book into his private visions. In The Red Book (Liber Novus), which he worked on between 1914 and 1930, he borrows the Imitation from a library and talks about it with a cook in the kitchen, who treasures it for the comfort it gives her. The scene comes in the chapter "Divine Folly," where Jung weighs the book against the challenge of Nietzsche. He concludes that Christ imitated no one, so to imitate Christ truly is to go one's own way. Whatever one makes of that conclusion, the scene shows how seriously a modern reader could take the book's central question.

It spoke deeply to these people and to many others. In an age of distraction, anxiety, and burnout, its counsel on humility, resilience, and inner peace is needed as much as ever.

HOW THIS EDITION DIFFERS

This edition starts from the anonymous English translation published in London in 1901 by James Finch & Co., Limited, itself a revision of William Benham's 1874 translation. Both are in the public domain. A few sections that the 1901 text omits or misplaces were restored from an earlier public-domain English edition. We modernized the language for a general reader. The main changes are listed in Appendix 7, along with how the text was checked.

There are also general, prayer, reflection question, scripture quotation, and situation indexes (Appendices 8, 9, 11, and 12, with the general index at the end of the book), along with a glossary (Appendix 1). Additional material includes this introduction, book summaries, reading plans, group leader guidance, and a recovery section.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

The Imitation of Christ is meant to be read slowly and returned to often. It has stayed in print for over 500 years because its short, direct meditations still speak to ordinary life.

This edition is built for regular, unhurried use. It has 114 brief chapters in four books. Every daily reading ends with two reflection questions. Most readings are a whole chapter, but longer chapters are split at the original section breaks into daily-length parts. Each book closes with four review questions, and twelve final questions look back over the whole work. Treat each of these closing sets as a reading in itself, so you have time to absorb what you've read before moving on.

This edition is for anyone who wants a readable way into the book: individual readers, study groups, and people in Twelve-Step recovery. It isn't affiliated with or endorsed by A.A. or any other formal group, but many of its key concepts connect directly to the practice of stepwork, as the Recovery section (Appendix 4) shows.

The text keeps à Kempis's Christian framework and doesn't translate it into other terms, but readers from other traditions, or none, are welcome to read it as a work of spiritual self-examination.

If the Christian vocabulary is a barrier, you can read it in other terms: sin as wrongdoing or a character defect, grace as a power greater than ourselves, and God as the God of your understanding. Appendix 4 gives a longer list.

Reading the harder passages. À Kempis wrote for fifteenth-century monks, in a tradition that speaks of the self with great severity: contempt of self, nothingness, unworthiness. In this book that language describes humility, which à Kempis understands as dependence on God. The language is strongest in I.2, I.22, I.24, II.12, III.3, III.4, III.8, III.13, III.14, III.25, III.28, III.40, III.41, III.47, III.50, III.52, and IV.2. If a passage weighs on you,

set it aside, read it with someone you trust, or turn to the chapters listed under discouragement in Appendix 11. If you are thinking about suicide or self-harm, contact your local emergency number or a crisis line now. In the United States, you can call or text 988. In the UK, you can call Samaritans at 116 123 (the same number works in Ireland), call CALM at 0800 58 58 58, or text SHOUT to 85258. In England, you can also call NHS 111 and choose option 2 (the First Response Service). In South Africa, you can call the SADAG suicide crisis line at 0800 567 567.

Detailed reading plans for Lent, Advent, 30 days, and the full 141 days are at the end of the book. Recovery-specific questions are in Appendix 4. The group leader guide, with a first-session script, is in Appendix 3.

If you'd rather listen along, the audio edition, narrated by Charles Featherstone, is available at any good audiobook store. It has one track for each day of the 141-day plan, so a chapter that spans several days runs across several tracks.

Whichever way you use the book, don't rush. The aim is change, not information, so be patient with yourself and with the text. In time, its teaching on humility, patience, inner peace, and the love of God may take root and bear fruit in your life.

BOOK I

THE SPIRITUAL LIFE

Book I is practical advice for getting started. À Kempis asks you to loosen your grip on honors and possessions, to see yourself honestly and humbly, and to treat ordinary daily troubles as the raw material of growth.

CHAPTER I.1

IMITATE CHRIST, REFUSE VANITY

1. "Anyone who follows Me does not walk in darkness."

These are the words of Christ. They teach us to imitate His life and ways if we want to see clearly and be free from all blindness of heart. Our primary goal should be to meditate on the life of Jesus Christ.

2. Christ's teaching is greater than any other holy doctrine, and those who have the Spirit will find in it the hidden treasure.

But many who often hear the Gospel are only slightly moved, because they don't have the Spirit of Christ.

Anyone who wants to fully feel and understand the words of Christ needs to work at living the way He lived.

3. What good will it do you to argue about the Trinity, if you don't have humility, and therefore displease the Trinity? Fancy words don't make us holy and just, but a virtuous life makes us dear to God.

I'd rather feel sorrow for sin than define it. If you knew the whole Bible by heart, and the sayings of all the philosophers,

what good would it do without the love of God, and without grace?

Vanity of vanities, all is vanity, except to love God, and want only to serve Him.

This is the highest wisdom, that we should have contempt for the world and tend toward the heavenly kingdom.

4. It's pointless to chase passing riches or trust in them. It's just as pointless to chase honors or puff ourselves up, to follow the flesh's desires or want things that will bring us punishment later, to want a long life without wanting to live well, to care only about this life and not prepare for what's coming, and to love things that perish instead of rushing toward the everlasting joy that waits for us.

5. We should often remember the proverb, "The eye is not satisfied with seeing, or the ear filled with hearing."

Try to pull your heart away from the things you can see, and turn it toward the things you can't. Those who follow sensual gratification stain their own consciences and lose the grace of God.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Q1. *Which of these pursuits (riches, honors, pleasures, a long life) do I lean on most, and what am I failing to prepare for?*

Q2. *Which of the vanities in this chapter do I still chase, and what would change if I stopped?*

BOOK II

TURNING INWARD

Book II turns inward. À Kempis writes about quiet humility, a clear conscience, and friendship with Jesus, and he warns against stubbornness and restless curiosity. It ends with the call to take up your Cross and trust God's will cheerfully.

CHAPTER II.8

FRIENDSHIP WITH JESUS

1. When Jesus is present, all is well, and nothing seems difficult. When Jesus is absent everything is hard. Did Mary Magdalene not rise immediately from the place where she wept, when Martha said to her, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you"? Happy is the hour when Jesus calls you from tears to spiritual joy. How cold and hard you are without Jesus! How foolish and empty you are if you want anything apart from Jesus! Isn't that a greater loss than losing the whole world?

2. What good can the world do you without Jesus? To be without Jesus is a grievous hell, and to be with Jesus, a sweet paradise. Anyone who finds Jesus finds a good treasure, yes, a good above all good. Those who lose Jesus lose much, yes, more than the whole world! Poorest are those who live without Jesus; and richest are those dear to Jesus.

It requires great skill to know how to converse with Jesus. To know how to keep Jesus is great wisdom. Be humble and peaceable, and Jesus will be with you. Be devout and quiet, and Jesus will stay with you. You could soon drive Jesus away and lose His favor if you turn to outward things.

3. If you drive Him away and lose Him, who will you run to? Who will you look to as your friend? Without a friend you can't live long. If Jesus isn't above all to you, you will indeed be sad and desolate. So you act most foolishly if you trust or rejoice in any other.

It's preferable to have the whole world against you, rather than to have Jesus offended with you. Among all the things that are dear to you, let Jesus alone be especially beloved.

4. Love all for Jesus, but Jesus for Himself. Jesus Christ alone is to be loved in a special way. He alone is found Good and Faithful above all friends. For Him, and in Him, let friends as well as foes be dear to you. All these are to be prayed for, so He can make them all know and love Him.

Never wish to be singled out for praise or love, because that belongs only to God, who has no equal. Don't want anyone else's heart set on you, and don't set your heart on anyone's love. Let Jesus be in you, and in every good person.

5. Be pure and free within, and don't entangle your heart with any creature. Be open and unguarded before God, always turning your pure heart toward Him, if you want to be free to see how sweet the Lord is.

Truly, unless His grace goes before you and draws you, you'll never know the happiness of leaving all others behind, so you might be united to Him alone.

When the grace of God comes to us, we can do anything. When it goes away, we're poor and weak, and it feels like we've been left with nothing but the whip. Then we shouldn't be discouraged. We should calmly accept God's will and endure whatever comes for the glory of Jesus Christ, because summer follows winter, day follows night, and a great calm follows a storm.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Q1. *Do I hold friends and enemies dear "for Him, and in Him," and what would that change?*

Q2. *When did I last feel the loss of closeness to what I hold sacred, and what had I put in its place?*

BOOK III

INNER COMFORT

Book III is a conversation between Christ and a Disciple about inner comfort. They talk about finding strength in suffering, not trusting your own strength, and leaning on God's grace rather than on how you feel.

CHAPTER III.5

THE POWER OF DIVINE LOVE

PART 1/2

Disciple:

1. I bless You, Heavenly Father, Father of my Lord Jesus Christ, because You thought to remember me, a poor creature. Father of mercies and God of all comfort, thanks be to You, who sometimes refresh me with Your comfort, unworthy as I am of any comfort. I will always bless and glorify You, with Your only-begotten Son and the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, forever and ever.

Lord God, You holy lover of my soul, when You come into my heart, everything in me rejoices. You are my glory and the joy of my heart. You are my hope and refuge in the day of trouble.

2. Since I am as yet weak in love, and imperfect in virtue, I need to be strengthened and comforted by You. You visit me often, and instruct me with all holy discipline. Set me free from evil passions, and heal my heart of misplaced attachments, so that, cured inside and thoroughly cleansed, I may be fit to love, ready to suffer, and steady to persevere.

3. Love is a great thing, yes, a great and complete good. By itself it makes every heavy thing light, and it carries smoothly everything that is rough. It carries a burden which is no burden, and makes everything that is bitter, sweet. The noble love of Jesus drives us to do great things, and stirs us up to always be longing for the more perfect.

Love desires to be high, and won't be kept back by anything low and mean. Love wants to be free and cut loose from all worldly attachments, so its inner sight is clear, so it won't get tangled up in passing success or beaten down by any difficulty.

Nothing is sweeter than love, nothing more courageous, nothing higher, nothing wider, nothing more pleasant, nothing fuller or better in Heaven and earth. Love is born of God, and can't rest except in God, above all created things.

4. Anyone who loves flies, runs, and rejoices. They are free and unbound. They give all for all, and have all in all, because they rest in One High above all things, from whom all that is good flows and proceeds. They don't fix their eyes on the gifts, but look past all good things to the Giver.

Love knows no bounds, but is passionate beyond all measure. Love feels no burden, thinks nothing of trouble, attempts what is above its strength, pleads no excuse of impossibility, because it thinks all things lawful for itself and all things possible. It can take on everything, and it finishes many things and sees them through, where those who don't love give up and lie down.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR PART 1

Q1. *Whom or what do I love enough to attempt more than I thought possible?*

Q2. *What would I need to be free from for my love to be freer?*

PART 2/2

5. Love keeps watch, and even asleep, it isn't sleeping. Though weary, love isn't tired; though pressed, not crushed; though

alarmed, not shaken. Like a bright flame and a burning torch, it forces its way upward and passes safely through everything.

If any person loves, they know the cry of this voice. It's a loud cry in the ears of God, this passionate affection of the soul which says, "God, my Love, You're all mine, and I am all Yours."

6. Enlarge me in love, so that with the internal senses of my heart I may taste how sweet it is to love, to melt away, and to bathe myself in You. Let love take hold of me, lifting me above myself, in overflowing passion and wonder.

Let me sing the song of love, let me follow You, my Beloved, on high. Let my soul spend itself in Your praise, rejoicing through love. Let me love You more than myself, and love myself only for Your sake, and love in You all who truly love You, as the law of love commands, shining out from You.

7. Love is active, sincere, affectionate, pleasant, and friendly; brave, patient, faithful, wise, long-suffering, noble, and never self-seeking. Whenever a person seeks themselves, there they fall from love.

Love is watchful, humble, and upright; not soft, not fickle, not set on vain things; sober, steady, chaste, calm, and guarded in all the senses. Love is respectful and obedient to those in authority, humble and small in its own eyes, devout and thankful to God, trusting and hoping in Him even when it can't taste His sweetness, for no one lives in love without pain.

8. Those who aren't ready to suffer anything and stand by the will of the Beloved aren't worthy to be called lovers of God. A lover should willingly embrace everything hard and unpleasant for the sake of their Beloved, and never turn away from Him because of any opposition.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS FOR PART 2

Q3. *Does my love carry burdens easily, or give up at the first obstacle?*

Q4. *Which of the qualities listed here (patient, humble, steady, never self-seeking) does my love most lack, and when did I last see it in someone else?*

CHAPTER III.17

REST YOUR ANXIETIES IN GOD

Christ:

1. My child, let Me do with you what I please. I know what is useful for you. You think as a person, and judge things by your feelings.

Disciple:

Lord, what You say is true. Your care for me is greater than all care I can take for myself. Those who don't cast all their cares on You stand very unsafely. Lord, I only want my will to stay right and firm toward You, and for You to do whatever You please with me.

After all, whatever You do with me can only be good.

2. If You want me to be in darkness, be blessed. If Your will is that I should be in the light, be also blessed. If You grant me comfort, be You blessed. If You grant me pain, still, be blessed.

Christ:

My child, this should be the way you are, if you want to walk with Me. Be as ready to suffer as to rejoice. Be as cheerful when you're poor and have nothing as when you're rich and have plenty.

Disciple:

3. Lord, for Your sake, I will cheerfully suffer whatever comes to me with Your permission. From Your hand I am willing to receive good and evil alike, sweet and bitter, joy and sorrow. For everything that happens to me I will be thankful. Keep me safe from all sin, and I will fear neither death nor hell. No trouble that happens to me will hurt me so long as You don't cast me from You forever, or blot me out of the book of life.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Q1. *How do I respond to an unwelcome change, compared with a welcome one?*

Q2. *What does anxiety most often tell me, and how would I answer it if I trusted God to hold the outcome?*

BOOK IV

ON COMMUNION

Book IV centers on the Sacrament of Holy Communion, also called the Eucharist, in which bread and wine are received as spiritual food. Many traditions understand them as the real presence of Christ, and churches differ on how Christ is present. This book reflects the Catholic understanding of à Kempis's day. If that tradition isn't part of your own practice, you can still read it with an open mind.

These chapters describe a path of preparation, humility, gratitude, and union: making yourself ready to receive a sacred gift, and approaching it with a sense of your own unworthiness and God's great mercy. À Kempis presents this as the way the human soul comes into direct contact with the divine presence, and holds that feeling God's grace in this way brings overflowing gratitude.

Whatever your tradition, you can apply these principles to your own spiritual progress toward a more reverent, humble, and loving approach to union with the divine.

CHAPTER IV.15

DEVOTION COMES FROM HUMILITY

Christ:

1. Look for the grace of devotion and ask for it earnestly, wait for it with patience and confidence, receive it gratefully, hold onto it humbly, and put it to work faithfully. Humble yourself especially when you feel little or no devotion at all, but without becoming too discouraged or grieving too much.

God often gives in one brief moment what He's held back for a long time. Sometimes He gives at the end of your prayer what He put off giving at the start.

2. If grace were always handed over instantly, ready the moment you wished for it, a weak person couldn't handle it well. So the grace of devotion has to be waited for, with good hope and humble patience. When this grace isn't given, or is quietly taken away, you should blame yourself and your own sins.

Sometimes it's only a small thing that blocks and hides grace from you, if anything blocking a gift this great can really be called small rather than serious. If you clear it away, whether it's big or small, and truly overcome it, you'll get what you're asking for.

3. As soon as you give yourself to God with your whole heart, and stop chasing this or that just to please yourself, you'll find yourself joined to Him and at peace, since nothing tastes as sweet, nothing feels as good, as being pleased with God's own will.

Anyone who fixes their heart on God with total sincerity, and stays free from excessive love or dislike of anything created, will be best prepared to receive grace and ready for the gift of real devotion. The Lord pours out His blessings where He finds empty vessels. The more completely you let go of these small things, and the more you die to yourself through genuine self-forgetfulness, the faster grace arrives, the more fully it pours in, and the higher it lifts a free heart.

4. Then you'll see it, your joy will overflow, you'll marvel, and your heart will be enlarged, because the Lord's hand is with you, and you've placed yourself fully in His hands forever. This is how those who look for God with their whole heart are blessed. A person like that, receiving Holy Communion, gains the grace of union with God, because they're not looking for their own devotion or comfort, but for God's honor and glory.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Q1. *When devotion doesn't come, can I wait patiently and look to my own obstacles rather than despair?*

Q2. *What small thing may be blocking what I am asking for?*

EXCERPT FROM APPENDIX 11: SITUATION INDEX

FIND A READING FOR WHAT YOU ARE FACING

If you are looking for a chapter that speaks to what you are facing now, start here. Each entry is a starting point, not a prescription.

When you are discouraged or have failed

III.57 Don't Lose Heart When You Fail; III.50 When You Feel Abandoned; II.9 When Consolation Leaves; III.29 Call on God in Trouble; I.12 How Adversity Helps

After a relapse or a repeated failure

III.57 Don't Lose Heart When You Fail; I.22 The Misery of Human Life (section 6); II.9 When Consolation Leaves; III.30 Look for God's Help

When you feel guilty or ashamed

I.21 A Repentant Heart; III.57 Don't Lose Heart When You Fail; II.6 A Clear Conscience Is Joy; IV.7 Examine Your Conscience

When you are tempted

I.13 Resisting Temptation; III.35 No One Is Safe from Temptation; III.12 Patience and the Fight Against Desire; I.6 The Trap of Misplaced Desire

When you are anxious or overwhelmed

III.17 Rest Your Anxieties in God; III.39 Don't Worry So Much; III.44 Don't Let Externals Trouble You; III.29 Call on God in Trouble

When you are worn out

III.51 Do Humble Things; III.39 Don't Worry So Much; II.9 When Consolation Leaves; III.26 Prayer Frees the Mind

When you are angry or resentful

I.16 Accept People's Faults; III.19 The Proof of True Patience; II.3 The Peaceable Person; II.5 Look to Yourself First

When you are criticized or misjudged

III.28 When Others Slander You; III.36 People Make Empty Judgments; III.46 Trust God When Words Hurt; II.6 A Clear Conscience Is Joy

When you need quiet or feel alone

II.1 The Kingdom Within; II.8 Friendship with Jesus; III.2 Truth Speaks in Silence; I.20 Love Solitude and Silence (this chapter praises withdrawal from company, so read it alongside I.15 and I.16)

When you are suffering

III.18 Bear Suffering with Patience; II.12 The Royal Road of the Cross; II.11 Why So Few Love the Cross; I.12 How Adversity Helps

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Ten of the 19 situations in the full index are shown here. Each entry points to the chapters in the full edition.

EXCERPT FROM APPENDIX 2: READING PLANS

THIRTY-DAY STARTER PLAN

One chapter a day for thirty days, drawn from all four books. If you want more afterward, the 141-day plan covers the whole book. Some chapters are divided into parts (days 12, 13, 15, 19, and 20): read the first part on the day, and finish the chapter when you can. Each day, choose one or two of the chapter-end questions to carry with you.

DAY	CHAPTER	TITLE
1	I.1	Imitate Christ, Refuse Vanity
2	I.2	The Humble Path to Wisdom
3	I.3	Learn From Truth
4	I.6	The Trap of Misplaced Desire
5	I.7	Put Your Trust in God, Not People
6	I.11	The Way to Inner Peace
7	I.12	How Adversity Helps
8	I.13	Resisting Temptation
9	I.14	Judge Not Rashly
10	I.15	Love Gives Actions Their Worth
11	I.16	Accept People's Faults
12	I.19	Devout Life Practices
13	I.20	Love Solitude and Silence
14	I.21	A Repentant Heart
15	II.1	The Kingdom Within
16	II.3	The Peaceable Person
17	II.5	Look to Yourself First
18	II.6	A Clear Conscience Is Joy
19	II.9	When Consolation Leaves
20	II.12	The Royal Road of the Cross
21	III.1	Christ Speaks Within
22	III.3	Listen Humbly to God's Word
23	III.17	Rest Your Anxieties in God
24	III.23	Four Ways to Inner Peace
25	III.26	Prayer Frees the Mind
26	III.37	Total Self-Surrender Brings Freedom
27	III.46	Trust God When Words Hurt
28	III.57	Don't Lose Heart When You Fail
29	III.59	Put All Your Hope in God
30	IV.9	Offer Yourself to God

The full edition also has a 141-day plan and plans for Lent and Advent.

EXCERPT FROM APPENDIX 3: GROUP LEADER GUIDE

FOR STUDY GROUPS

You don't need theological training to lead this book. Read the chapter beforehand, ask a few good questions, and keep the room safe. The edition is in plain modern English for general readers, including people who don't share its Christian framework, and the glossary (Appendix 1) explains the unfamiliar devotional terms.

A SIXTY-MINUTE SESSION

A sixty-minute pattern:

5 minutes	welcome, and read the confidentiality agreement
10 minutes	read the chapter aloud, a section or two each, anyone free to pass
25 minutes	discuss two or three of the chapter's questions, with the leader speaking last
10 minutes	quiet, then one sentence each on something to take away, or pass
10 minutes	agree on the next chapter and a time to meet

READING THE DIALOGUE ALOUD

Books III and IV are written as conversations, and the speakers are marked in this edition with "Christ:" and "Disciple:". Two volunteers can read the parts aloud while everyone else listens.

The full guide also covers preparing the group, confidentiality and safety, using the questions, mixed groups, and a first-session script.

EXCERPT FROM APPENDIX 4

FOR READERS IN RECOVERY

Disclaimer: This book is an independent publication. It is not affiliated with, approved by, or endorsed by A.A., Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc., or any other fellowship, and it is not Conference-approved literature. It is not a substitute for your sponsor, group, or own program, which come first. It is suitable for private reading as a companion that can enrich your recovery practice. Use what helps and leave the rest.

If you are working a Twelve-Step program, you may find that this book speaks your language more directly than you expected. It can be an effective supplement for recovery journeys.

Several themes of the Devotio Moderna, the movement behind this book, will feel familiar to Twelve-Step readers: honest self-examination, recognition of human limits, surrender to a higher power, daily review, and service to others.

The book uses traditional Christian language (sin, grace, confession, Communion, and so on), but you can still use it if your group isn't Christian. The underlying concepts are universal: honesty, surrender, self-examination, patience, and service. Some suggested paraphrases:

sin	→	wrongdoing, character defect
grace	→	the power greater than ourselves
God	→	the God of your understanding
consolation	→	being upheld
desolation	→	being left to one's own resources

The chapters on humility, obedience, and self-examination (I.2; I.9; II.5) are especially useful for early recovery. The chapters on patience, suffering, and trust (III.18; III.19; III.47) are useful for later stages.

TWELVE-STEP READING PLAN

Below are suggested chapters for each of the twelve Steps. Under each Step, the chapters that speak to it most directly come first, followed by supporting chapters. The Imitation wasn't written for recovery, so some Steps have fewer direct matches than others. Steps 8 and 9 have the fewest, because the book speaks more about humility and forgiveness than about restitution. A chapter that appears under more than one Step has a main theme that fits both.

The matching is our own reading. Thomas à Kempis wrote more than five hundred years before the Twelve Steps, and this book doesn't claim he anticipated them. These pairings are offered as reading, not as program literature. The Steps are referred to here by number and in our own words.

Step 1: Powerlessness and unmanageability

I.6 The Trap of Misplaced Desire unmanageability; desire beyond measure breeds restlessness, and giving in does not bring the peace hoped for

I.13 Resisting Temptation limits of willpower; temptation has its root within us, flight alone fails, and victory comes through patience and God's help rather than one's own strength of will

III.20 Own Your Weakness admitting weakness

III.55 Nature Is Corrupt, Grace Is Strong the inclination toward harm and the need for grace

III.40 Nothing Good to Boast About having no resources of one's own

Supporting: I.22 The Misery of Human Life (section 6 on confessing a fault one day and repeating it the next)

Step 2: Hope of restoration

I.7 Put Your Trust in God, Not People hope placed beyond people and one's own cleverness

III.30 Look for God's Help hope and help from God (also Step 7)

III.59 Put All Your Hope in God hope in God alone

Supporting: III.16 True Comfort Is in God Alone; III.50 (see Step 3)

Step 3: Turning our will and lives over to God

III.15 Watch Your Words and Actions surrender of the will

III.17 Rest Your Anxieties in God casting care on God

III.37 Total Self-Surrender Brings Freedom surrender of self-will

III.39 Don't Worry So Much entrusting one's affairs to God

III.50 When You Feel Abandoned surrender in desolation (also Step 2)

IV.9 Offer Yourself to God offering of self

Supporting: IV.8 Christ's Offering and Ours; I.9 The Safety of Obedience and III.13 Humble Obedience (yielding self-will, accepting guidance)

Steps 1 to 3 of the twelve are shown here. The full section covers all twelve Steps and adds recovery questions, a note on the book's influence on early groups, and a note for sponsors.

About the Author and Editor

THOMAS À KEMPIS

Thomas à Kempis was born Thomas Hemerken in Kempen, in the Rhineland, around 1380. He spent most of his life as an Augustinian canon regular at Mount St. Agnes, near Zwolle in the Netherlands, where he copied manuscripts, wrote, and advised novices. His community belonged to the Devotio Moderna, a reform movement that stressed simple, practical devotion and the inner life. He died in 1471. The Imitation of Christ is traditionally attributed to him, though its authorship has been debated.

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Charles Featherstone is the editor of this edition and managing editor of Brimir & Blainn. He studied Latin and Greek through high school and kept up an academic interest in Latin through an English literature degree at Royal Holloway, University of London. He began his work with Christian texts by modernizing The Cloud of Unknowing, and has narrated Christian books including Soul Surgery, Tolstoy's The Gospel in Brief, The Genius of GK Chesterton, The Reformation, 1495–1553, and James Allen's Through the Gates of Good.

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