

# Lift Up Your Hearts

FR. JOHN BURNS

Book Study

**Prior to Week 1: Please read *To Begin* on pages vii & xviii**

**Week One: The First Meditation is On Our Creation, Page 1-12**

We are made and created for love with the freedom to choose for or against God. It is within human nature to be self-focused and not God-focused. Yet it is a choice.

**Lack of Peace Today, Page 3**

- Jesus, please reveal to me, “In what ways do I compare myself to others and feel that I desire more or deserve more?”

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- Consider the goodness in your life (even if things are hard). Look up and thank God for this **present moment**.

- What is good in my current state of life? What am I grateful for in this present moment?

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## The Sculpture & Origin of Goodness, Page 4-7

- God has sculpted each one of us individually according to His plan and design. Do I have ways that I think that I am not enough? YES NO Explain:

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- We can get caught up in the swirl of pursuit of happiness and nobody can define.

Happiness to me is:

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- Prayer: I will seek with gratitude to receive God's help to see the light in what I already have. Jesus help me to be more like You with joy. Amen.

- What does it look like for me to seek God's help? What are practical ways I can do that?

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## The Threat of Independence & The Start of Healing, Page 8-9

- Exclusion of God brings chaos. In our human nature we try to be self-reliant without turning to the Lord. What is a way that I am being self-reliant where I could be taking the situation to prayer and asking the Lord for help?

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- Hiding our failings from God and ourselves never works. Pointing out and realizing our own faults and telling them to God can help us to not accuse or be too hard on ourselves.

When I think of this statement I realize that I often accuse myself of:

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### **Focus for Prayer, Page 9-10**

- *Silent Meditation:*
  - In your mind, picture yourself with Jesus...hold any failures or weaknesses that you see in yourself up to Him and ask, “Jesus, how do YOU see me?” Hear God say, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” 2 Cor 12:9
- *Pray the prayer together on page 10*

## **Week Two: The Second Meditation on the End for Which We Were Created, Page 13-32**

Praising God, learning more, and having gratitude toward Him may not immediately be attractive to us, but the desire can grow. Consider these things....

### **The Role of Faith, Page 15-16**

- Draw a bicycle wheel writing on each spoke how you spend your time and with the important things in your life. Consider if God is the central part that holds the spokes all together or is He one of the spokes? Reflect...

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### **God and Our Purpose in Life, Page 16-18**

- Was there ever a time in my life where I gave a situation to God over figuring it out myself and felt peace?

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- Think of a situation in a saint's life where they surrendered something to God and found great peace.

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### **Choices, Goals, and Destiny & Perspective through Communion, Page 19-23**

- Consider a circumstance in your life (big or small) where you failed at making the choice that draws you closer to God. How would the outcome differ if I had paused to identify your motivation? Has this scenario directly or indirectly brought me close to God?

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- The goal for happiness at the deepest level is God's will. Think of a recent decision I've made. What was my motivation and who did I go to when making the decision? How can I bring God into my decision making process? (page 23)

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### **Know Thy Self & Risk of Complacency, Page 23-29**

- Consider this: knowing thy self... in this present moment, whether I realize it or not, Jesus loves me no matter of my past!
- Spend 1-2 minutes in this meditation and share with the group if you wish
  - Close your eyes if you feel comfortable and think of a negative emotion that you have been struggling with (anger, sadness, fear, frustration, grief, etc). Picture in your mind standing face to face with Jesus as He is looking at you with kindness. Imagine putting this emotion in your hand and place it in His hands. He takes this hard feeling and puts it into his Sacred Heart. Remember...it is not the 'thing' (job, child, etc) causing the difficult emotion, but the feeling itself to hand over in this meditation.

## Complacency, Page 29

- What might be a small step for me today to come out of complacency?

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- *Pray the prayer together on page 31*

## Week Three: The third Meditation on God's Benefactions, Page 33-46

### Our Gratitude List, Page 34-36

- What am I grateful for? (focus on the Giver!)

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### The Nature of Gifts & Deepening the Gratitude List, Page 36-39

- After reading page 37, what am I grateful for?

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### Sacramental and Spiritual Blessings, Page 39-42

- After reading this section, what am I grateful for?

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- Is there a sin that is gone that has been forgiven that I hold on to in shame? Is there a "Spiritual Miracle" that I am forgetting (pg 41)? (No need to share details unless you want to)

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- What is a 'sticking point' or memory in your life that helps you when you need encouragement in your faith (page 42)?

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### **Stepping Back in Gratitude & Focus for the Day's Prayer, Page 43-46**

- Can you think of a time when a prayer was not answered in the way that you had asked and realized God's plan was greater than your own

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- Read 43-45 together. Share your thoughts
- *Pray the prayer together on page 46*



## Week Four: the Fourth Mediation on Sin, Page 47-66

### The Cleansing of the False Self & The Nature of Sin & Back to the Beginning.... and Ever Since, Page 48-53

- What is a sin that I continue to rationalize that I can work on mastering through prayer and self-awareness?

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### The Beginnings of an Examination of Conscience, Page 54-56

- What is a small step that I can make towards ridding myself of the disordering thing that I continue to do?

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- When is a time that I chose to sin or what is an example of choosing a sin due to my own ingratitude of the gifts from God?

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- Can you think of a time when you overcame a temptation because of your faith and were grateful?

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### **Thematic Ingratitude, Page 56-57**

- Is there a sin from your past that you thought was ok back when... but hate it now?

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### **Gift in Sacrament, Page 57-59**

- Consider a memory when you were filled with gratitude for a sacrament received that gave you strength to avoid sin or the strength to be joyful. Write about it below:

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### **To Calvary, Page 59-62**

- Is there a shame that I carry that I feel is bigger than Jesus on the Cross and His love for me?

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- After Confession, through repentance and forgiveness, Jesus is saying, “You do not have to be sorry anymore. Come....follow Me.” Can you see a place in your life where Jesus would desire for you to let go of the shame from a previous sin?

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## **The Garden of the Soul, Page 62-65**

- Ponder and Share.....Consider a time when you initially did not like someone and maybe judged them harshly and then as you got to know them better, you really liked them! In a sense, that is everyone. Jesus sees beyond the surface. Christ's love in us kills the roots of sin in the garden of the human soul.
- *Pray the prayer together on pages 65-66*

## Week Five: The Fifth Meditation on Death, Page 67-72

### A Farwell to Control, Page 69-71

- What is an area in my life that I have done well with a child-like trust in Jesus and in my faith?

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- What relationship or circumstance in my life do I hold my fists closed, not allowing Jesus to lead me?

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### Time and Eternity & Body and Soul, Page 71-73

- What fears do I have about death?

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- Do I find comfort to know that in reality our time on earth is like a grand of sand on the beach of eternity?

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## Shifting out of Time and Into Eternity, Page 73-76

- What is a part of my life where I have a difficult time finding the right balance?

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- As you consider your last answer, what are your goals or deepest level of desire in this area of your life?

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## The Long Farewell & Freedom From Fear

- Do I have a proper balance on the importance of body image as far as vanity?

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- On the other extreme, have I allowed myself to become unhealthy, not caring well for the gift that God has given me?

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- What is my motivation behind the care that I give to my body, whether it is good care or neglect? Do I need to change this motivation?

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- Read page 78 and answer the questions below about priority of friendships
- Who are my friends of utility? \_\_\_\_\_
- Who are my friends of pleasure? \_\_\_\_\_
- Who are my friends of true and holy friendship who desire for my goodness?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Where do I cling too much for control?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
- This week had a lot to take in. Consider the gift of your freedom of choice with gratitude and awareness of time.
- *Prayer the prayer together on page 81*

## Week Six: The Sixth Meditation on Judgement, Page 83

### Freedom's Weight, Page 85-86

- When I think of Freedom to choose in the context of judgement, does it give me a feeling more of hope or fear? Reflect below:

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### Justice & The Judge and Judgement & A New Creation and the Judgement Seat, Page 86-90

- What is a freedom that I can be confident that I have handled well in my life?

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- What is a freedom or choice that I need to work on?

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- *Prayer: Jesus, in what ways do I judge myself too harshly?.....Jesus, in what area of my life may I be too easy on myself?*

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### **The Wicked and The Good, Page 91-92**

Good choice after good choice in our lives breeds goodness. Just as choosing bad or sinful choices breeds more sin or evil.

- Give an example of ways that you can see these two instances in our world today

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### **The Final Word, Page 92-95**

- Read the last paragraph on page 94-95. In what ways has this difficult meditation on judgement given me encouragement?

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- *Pray the prayer together on page 96*



## **Week Seven: The Seventh Meditation on Hell, Page 97-105**

This week is not fun, but it is valuable. It is important to realize the reality of hell. Just as it is important to realize the reality of Heaven. (That much more enjoyable meditation comes later!) Hang in there.....

### **The Gray City of Sadness & Suffering of the Senses, Pages 99-101**

- What are some of the greatest physical discomforts of your life (page 101)?

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- Considering what it would feel like to have no end, what word describes the feeling or thoughts that come to mind after thinking about the question above?

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### **Emotional and Spiritual Suffering & Eternal Suffering, Pages 101-102**

- What is a 'transcendental' (pg 101)?

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- What is the greatest emotional suffering you have ever experienced?

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- What is one word to describe what it would feel like if the suffering from the question above would have no end?

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**The Madness of it All, Pages 103-104**

- Does this section help me to feel grateful that I have the freedom to choose?

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- In what ways do these very difficult meditations give me strength or hope?

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## Week 8: The Eighth Meditation on Paradise, Pages 107-116

### To See Heaven, Pages 108-109

- Why does it matter to meditate on hell and now on Heaven?

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### Heaven's Inhabitants, Pages 110-111

- In our lives, we strive for happiness. On pg 110, it says seeing the inhabitants of Heaven we see the *fulfillment of our purpose!*
  - How does this statement help me think beyond day to day struggles or discomforts?

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- “We would want more than anything to be near to them, to be like them, to be one of them (pg 111). Am I keeping my eye on ‘the prize’?”

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### The Ultimate Perfection, Page 111

- We are called to communion with others. Heaven is perfect harmony. Consider it is not only a place where we receive perfect love, but is it a place that our love is always perfectly received and there is NEVER rejection, only love.

- How does it feel to consider that you would never be rejected in any way ever again?

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**Eternal Happiness, Pages 112-113**

- Bring to mind the happiest most perfect moment in your life and imagine that state never coming to an end. What is this moment?

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- Do these meditations help me to make Heaven my goal?

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**Delaying, Page 113-115**

- What are some of my obstacles to charity and Heaven?

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- Read together the last paragraph on page 114 and top of 115. Share your thoughts.
- *Pray the prayer together on pages 115-116*

## Week Nine: The Election and Choice of Heaven, Pages 117-125

### Spiritual Creatures-Angels and demons, Page 118

- How can understanding angels and demons help me put my freedom to good use?

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- Give an example in a very small way that I may be following a 'bad spirit.' Example: 'bad spirit' demon: going down a rabbit hole of gossip....good spirit: look to the desire of seeing the good in another and choosing not to gossip

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### Election, I Choose, Pages 120-121

- Very slowly read the second paragraph on page 120 to page 121 out loud
- *Pause* for a minute or two
- Discuss what you are thinking and feeling

### Lord of All Creation, Page 121

- Please take the time to read pages 121-124 *slowly* when you have time alone
- As a group, read it together (optional)
- Does my perspective change as I look at my journey in this life with my family, friends, and other relationships? How?

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- Christ is Merciful. Am I able to put my focus on the loving Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Loving heart of Mary?

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- Read “I Choose” on page 124 together

**Week Ten: The Tenth Meditation on the Election and Choice the Soul Makes of a  
Devout Life, Pages 127-137**

- Read the 2nd paragraph on page 128 very slowly out loud. Pause a minute or two.

Discuss what you are thinking or feeling.

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**The Kingdom of Sin, Pages 128-130**

- Give specific examples in our world today that come to mind while reading this section.

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**The Kingdom of Love, Pages 130-133**

This describes Heaven coming down to Earth

- Is there an example in my own journey that I failed to notice darkness until I saw the light?

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- What are the examples in the world and in my own life of the “Kingdom of Love”?

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- Read the second paragraph on page 133. What are your thoughts or feelings?

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- Read “The Election” together on page 133

**“Live Jesus!” Amen.**