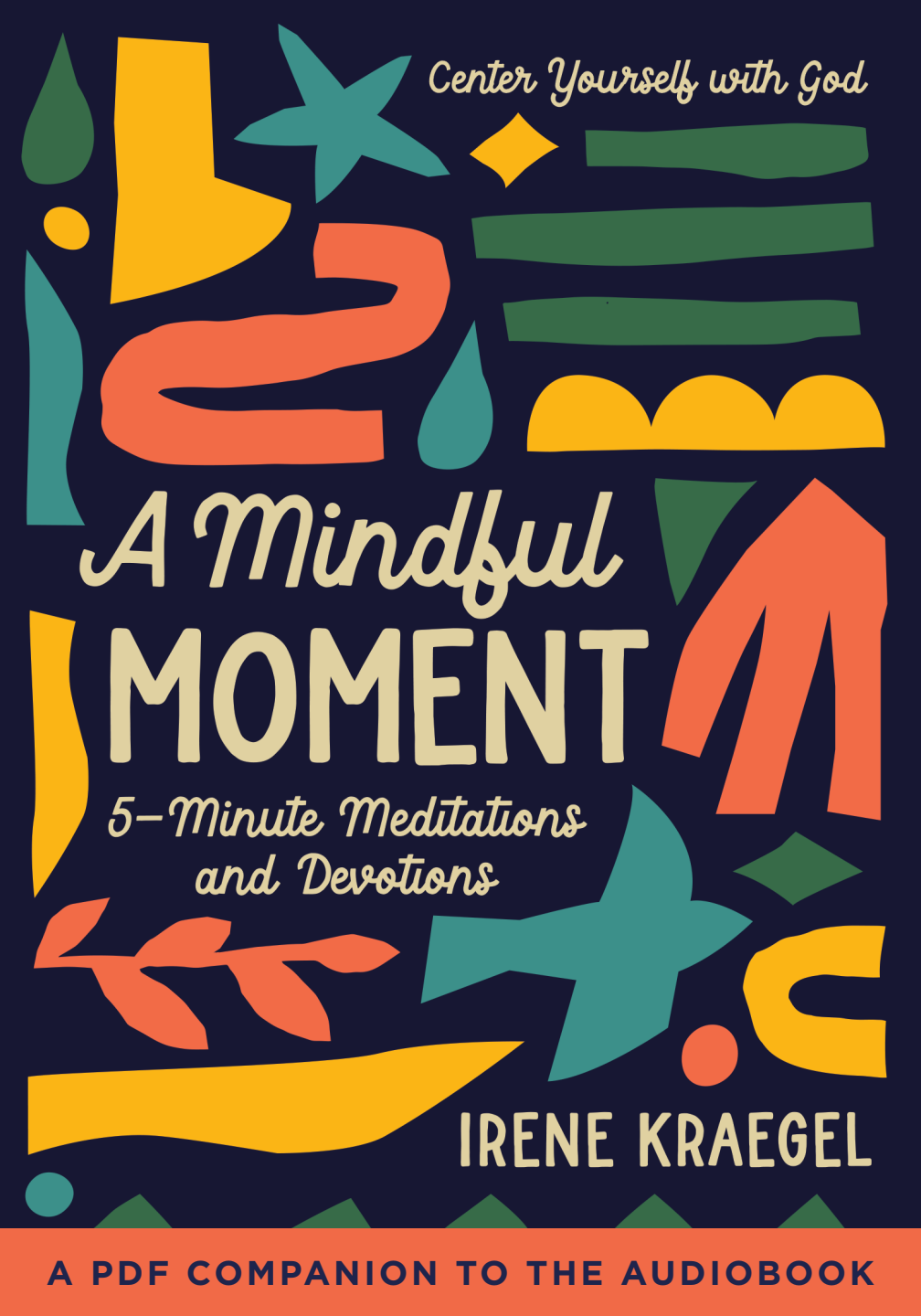


The background is a dark navy blue. It is decorated with various abstract geometric shapes in bright colors: yellow, orange, teal, and green. These shapes include stars, diamonds, teardrops, wavy lines, and stylized floral or leaf-like patterns. Some shapes are solid, while others are outlines. The overall style is modern and artistic.

Center Yourself with God

A Mindful
MOMENT

*5-Minute Meditations
and Devotions*

IRENE KRAEGEL

A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

ZONDERKIDZ

A Mindful Moment

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Noticing Guide

During my meditation practice, I noticed the following:

Physical sensations <i>(what I felt in my body)</i>
Thoughts <i>(what went through my mind)</i>
Feelings <i>(what emotions I felt)</i>
Behaviors & urges <i>(what I did or wanted to do)</i>
Spiritual awareness <i>(what I noticed about God)</i>

Mindfulness Meditation Guides

The devotionals throughout this book are accompanied by mindfulness practices for you to use in connecting with God in the present moment. While some of these are *informal* mindfulness practices that can be used any time during the day, there are also several *formal* mindfulness practices that invite you to set aside a few minutes of intentional time.

The following *formal* mindfulness practices match up with the Practice sections throughout this devotional collection. Each is written to be used for as little as 3 minutes, with the option of longer practices as well—10–20 minutes is a common length of time for mindfulness meditation. If you work best with some outside direction during meditation (as many of us do), you can choose instead to listen to the audio guides for Christian mindfulness meditation at www.TheMindfulChristian.com.

Here are some tips for getting the most out of your formal mindfulness practice:

- Find a quiet place where you do not expect to be interrupted.
- Have a blanket on hand in case you feel chilly—body temperature tends to drop during meditation.
- Set a timer before you start so you aren't watching the clock during your meditation.

- Modify the postures and the instructions in any way that works best for your mind and body—you are the expert on your own experience.

One common mistake in meditation is to think you have to feel a certain way (like calm) or have a certain experience (like peaceful thoughts) to benefit. The goal of mindfulness meditation is just to notice whatever is in the moment, even if it's uncomfortable. So don't feel you need to change anything as you meditate or do it any differently. You're just becoming aware and letting God do the rest.

If you are experiencing any difficulties related to physical or mental health, you are encouraged to consult with a professional before embarking on these meditations—a doctor or therapist can be helpful in adapting the practices to your particular needs. This is especially important if you have any history of trauma (physical or mental), suicidal thoughts, substance misuse, or psychosis.

If you ever feel overwhelmed during a meditation, give yourself permission to stop the meditation or to change it in a way that feels more comfortable for you. For example, you might choose to open your eyes, focus on a “safe” sensation in your body, or listen to sounds around you. God is with you, and you have the choice to move your attention to whatever feels safe and anchoring in the moment. Whatever your experience, consider talking with an adult that you trust about your experiences with Christian mindfulness meditation in order to maximize your benefit.



Body Scan

This meditation practice invites you to move attention through your body in order to become aware of physical sensations. In the process, you are likely to also notice thoughts, feelings, behaviors/urges, and God's presence. This is a way to become more acquainted with your body as a wonderful creation of God!

1. Lie on your back on a firm surface with feet apart, toes falling away from one another, and arms at your sides.
2. Get comfortable. Close your eyes if you choose, or close them halfway with a soft gaze.
3. Take a couple deep breaths, then allow your breathing to return to its normal rate. Notice the sensations of your breath coming in and out.
4. Move your attention down to your toes. Notice what you feel there—maybe temperature, contact, tingling, etc.
5. Gradually move your attention through your body, pausing to notice what you feel in each body part. Move slowly from your toes all the way up to the top of your head.
6. As you pay attention to your body, see if you can notice your physical sensations directly, without overthinking them or trying to change anything. Be curious, not judgmental.
7. When you are done, notice the feeling of your whole body lying here, held together by your skin. Thank God for this wonderful creation of your body and continue on to your next activity.



Sitting Practice

The instructions for this meditation practice are how most people think of meditating—sitting with a straight back, closing your eyes, and focusing your mind. The primary focus will be your breath, but you may choose to “anchor” your attention anywhere you would like as you go through the practice (ex. sounds around you).

1. Sit at the edge of a chair with your feet on the floor (or cross-legged on a meditation cushion) with a straight spine and hands on your thighs or lap.
2. Get comfortable. Close your eyes if you choose, or close them halfway with a soft gaze.
3. Take a couple deep breaths, then allow your breathing to return to its normal rate. Notice the sensations of your breath coming in and out.
4. Choose where to “anchor” your attention—you can remain focused on your breath coming in and out, or choose somewhere else to focus.
5. As you pay attention to your breathing (or other anchor), see if you can experience it directly rather than thinking about it or trying to change it. Be curious, not judgmental.
6. When you are done, take a deep breath and open up your attention to the space around you. Thank God for the breath you are receiving in your body and continue on to your next activity.



Walking/Wheeling Meditation

This practice will help you become more aware of the miracle of walking or moving a wheelchair—all the many movements and sensations involved in moving our bodies through space. We often walk or wheel along with our minds in a completely different place than where we are, lost in stories and interpretations that have nothing to do with the moment. This meditation (involving very slow movement) shifts your attention from your head down into your body so you can be aware of your moment-to-moment experience as you journey.

1. Stand still—or if you are using a wheelchair, sit still—for a moment. If you choose, close your eyes halfway with a soft gaze. Take a couple deep breaths, then allow your breathing to return to its normal rate.
2. Feel your feet and/or body grounded in the surface beneath you. Notice the firmness of the earth holding you up.
3. For a walking meditation, begin to walk, focusing your attention on the sensations of your feet and legs moving through the air. See if you can notice each part of each step—the heel lifting, the ball of the foot lifting, the toes coming off the ground, the body shifting weight, the foot and leg moving through space, the heel reconnecting with the earth.

For a wheeling meditation, begin to roll your chair, focusing on the specific sensations involved in moving. For example, you might feel your hand cradling the joystick or

connecting with the wheel, your muscles yielding to the seat, and your body responding to the various textures and surfaces that you wheel over.

4. As you pay attention to the physical sensations of walking/wheeling, see if you can experience them directly rather than thinking about them or trying to change them. Each time you notice that you're back in thinking mode, return your attention to a direct awareness of your body moving through space.
5. Experiment with walking/wheeling at different speeds, seeing if your attention is more focused when you move more slowly. Some people practice this at such a slow pace that you can hardly see them moving.
6. When you are done, take a deep breath and open up your attention to the space around you. Thank God for the miracle of walking/wheeling and continue on to your next activity.



Stretching/Yoga Meditation

Your mind and body are constantly interacting with one another, and this stretching practice will utilize some simple yoga poses to increase your awareness of that interaction. It will also help you loosen up some tense muscles.

1. Stand still (or sit still) for a moment, with your arms at your sides. If you choose, close your eyes halfway with a soft gaze. Take a couple deep breaths, then allow your breathing to return to its normal rate. Notice that God is with you.
2. Feel your feet and/or body grounded in the surface beneath you. Notice the firmness of the earth holding you up.
3. Turn a kind attention toward your body, releasing any harsh or self-critical tone that might creep into your thoughts. Any time during this practice that you notice judgments, you might smile at yourself and gently move your attention back into your body.
4. If it is accessible to you, take a deep breath in and slowly lift your arms up so they are above your head. Keeping your shoulders soft, stretch your hands up while rooting down firmly with your feet or body. As you breathe out, lower your arms down again.
5. Now on an in-breath lift one arm up slowly, following your hand with your eyes as it moves. Stretch up with that hand, as if you are reaching to pick a piece of fruit from a tree above. When you are ready, on an out-breath, bring that hand down slowly (drinking in colors and shapes as your eyes follow it down), and then repeat on the other side.

6. On an in-breath, move both arms up above your head. On an out-breath, bring your arms down toward the floor as you allow your entire upper body to bend down, dangling from the waist as far as your body goes. Adapt this to your particular needs and abilities, noticing with gratitude what your body is able to do. Continue to breathe.
7. When you are ready, roll up slowly through your back, one vertebra at a time. Take a deep breath in as you raise your arms toward the ceiling and look up, lowering your arms and eyes down again on the out-breath.
8. You can repeat these simple stretches as many times as you would like, along with any others that feel good to your muscles (notice what your body is asking for).
9. When you are done, take a deep breath and open up your attention to the space around you. Thank God for the miracle of movement and continue on to your next activity.



Lovingkindness/Blessing Practice

Being kind toward ourselves and others can take some practice, and this meditation is a chance to practice that kind of compassion in our thoughts. It can be used as a prayer or blessing—lifting ourselves and others before God as we hope for good things.

1. Identify one or more people to whom you will practice extending lovingkindness, choosing from the following categories:
 - Yourself
 - Someone you love, care about, or admire, who brings you warm feelings when you think about them
 - Someone you do not know well, a stranger or distant acquaintance
 - Someone who is difficult for you, who you do not get along with well or who has caused you some pain
 - All people, animals, and plants in the world, all living beings everywhere
2. Sit at the edge of a chair with your feet on the floor (or cross-legged on a meditation cushion) with a straight spine and hands on your thighs or lap. Alternately, you may choose to lie on your back on a firm surface with feet apart, toes falling away from one another, and arms at your sides.
3. Get comfortable. Close your eyes if you choose, or close them halfway with a soft gaze.
4. Take a couple deep breaths, then allow your breathing to return to its normal rate. Notice the sensations of your breath coming in and out.

5. One at a time, bring to mind an image of yourself or the person(s) to whom you are extending compassion. If you would like, you can imagine them resting in God's loving hands. Recognize that like everyone, you and/or the other person in your mind is in need of compassion.
6. With each image in mind, choose one of these two sets of phrases (or a different set of compassionate phrases that is more comfortable for you) and repeat them several times toward each of the people you have chosen to extend compassion to during your practice. As you repeat the phrases, recognize that all people desire these good things, and all people are loved by God.
7. When you are done, rest for a moment in the compassionate kindness you have practiced. Then take a deep breath and open up your attention to the space around you. Thank God for his lovingkindness toward us all and continue on to your next activity.



Mountain Meditation

The Bible is rich with imagery and metaphors that illuminate our understanding of ourselves and God. This meditation uses the imagery of a mountain to help ground you in the stability God has created within you—the strength that sustains you in the midst of life’s constant changes.

1. Sit at the edge of a chair with your feet on the floor (or cross-legged on a meditation cushion) with a straight spine and hands on your thighs or lap. Alternatively, stand up straight with your feet firmly rooted in the floor and the top of your head reaching up toward the sky—allow your arms to hang loosely at your sides and make sure your knees remain unlocked throughout the practice.
2. Get comfortable. Close your eyes if you choose, or close them halfway with a soft gaze.
3. Take a couple deep breaths, then allow your breathing to return to its normal rate. Notice the sensations of your breath coming in and out.
4. Expand your awareness to the feeling of breath moving through your whole body, and notice your body sitting/standing here as a cohesive whole.
5. Imagine that you are a mountain. The weight of gravity holds you down, heavy and connected to the earth. The top of your head is a peak, reaching up with pride and dignity to the sky.
6. Imagine the many things living on the mountain (trees, plants, and animals) and imagine the movement of water across the mountain’s surface (rivers, waterfalls, and lakes).

7. Imagine changing weather patterns moving across the mountain—calm days (with sun and mild temperatures), thunderstorms (with thunder and lightning), blizzards (burying everything in snow), hot days, cold days.
8. Notice and acknowledge your stability and groundedness through all of the changes.
9. When you are done, take a deep breath and open up your attention to the space around you. Thank God that you are created strong and resilient, ready for what each moment brings, grounded in divine providence and provision. Then continue on to your next activity.



Breathing Space

This practice is similar to a regular sitting practice, but it is meant to be more portable—an opportunity to quickly “drop in” at any point during the day to check in with how you are doing. The practice is often divided into three one-minute sections that have an hourglass shape of awareness (see below). However, there is no need to time each minute separately; just set your timer for three minutes if you choose, and then estimate one minute for each of the three sections.

1. Pause wherever you are and become still. If you're able, close your eyes if you choose, or close them halfway with a soft gaze. Take a couple deep breaths, then allow your breathing to return to its normal rate. Recognize that you are in God's presence.
2. First minute: Starting with a broad awareness, check in with what is going on for you in the moment. This “wide awareness” is the top part of the hourglass shape in this meditation. You might notice things in these different areas:
 - Physical sensations, including your breath moving in and out
 - Thoughts going through your mind
 - Emotions, either prominent or under the surface
 - Behaviors or urges you are having
3. Second minute: Narrowing your attention to breathing (as the middle part of the hourglass shape), notice where you feel your breath most vividly (ex. your upper lip, shoulders

moving, chest expanding/contracting, belly moving up and down). Rest your attention there, paying close attention to the sensations of your breath coming in and out of your body, given by God. If focusing on breath is triggering for you, choose a different anchor for your attention that allows you to regulate your emotions more effectively.

4. Third minute: Broadening your attention once again (as the bottom “wide awareness” part of the hourglass shape), imagine that your whole body is breathing. Imagine the air moving all the way from your head down to your toes, and then back out through your body again. Allow your whole body to experience the breath of life, given by God, restoring your body and soul, one moment at a time.
5. When you are done, open up your attention to the space around you. Notice if there are any adjustments needed in your circumstances or self-care in response to what you noticed during the practice. Thank God for this moment of life and continue on to your next activity!



Working with Difficulty Meditation

This practice is an opportunity to pay special attention to any challenges that you are experiencing, noticing a tendency to ignore or avoid the difficulties and instead staying with them for purposes of opening up to God's healing.

1. Sit at the edge of a chair with your feet on the floor (or cross-legged on a meditation cushion) with a straight spine and hands on your thighs or lap. Alternately, you may choose to lie on your back on a firm surface with feet apart, toes falling away from one another, and arms at your sides.
2. Get comfortable. Close your eyes if you choose, or close them halfway with a soft gaze.
3. Take a couple deep breaths, then allow your breathing to return to its normal rate. Notice the sensations of your breath coming in and out.
4. Become aware of a difficulty that is present in your life right now—not your most difficult challenge, but something in the mild to moderate range. See if you can allow your attention to rest with that difficulty for a bit.
5. Notice what comes along with that difficulty, aware of the following areas:

Physical sensations, including your breath moving in and out

Thoughts going through your mind

Emotions, either prominent or under the surface

Behaviors or urges you are having

6. See if you can keep observing the difficulty without judgment or analysis, just continuing to notice what comes along with it. As much as possible, keep an attitude of compassion and kindness toward yourself.
7. Allow yourself to rest in God's presence as you stay present to your difficulty, without needing anything to be changed or different. Feel whatever you need to feel. Know that you are in God's hands.
8. When you are done, open up your attention to the space around you. Thank God for being with you through life's challenges, and see if you can bring an attitude of self-compassion with you as you continue on to your next activity.



Sensing Meditation

Our body is bringing in so much information through our senses all the time that we miss most of it! This meditation helps open you up to what your body is experiencing, awakening you to God's miraculous creation revealed through your senses. Once you've followed the sensing meditation in a formal sense, you might want to try just increasing your awareness through the day of sensory input.

1. Identify one sense that you will focus on, choosing from the following categories:
 - Hearing—sounds near or far
 - Seeing—shapes, colors, light/dark, patterns
 - Touching—textures, contours, pressure
 - Smelling—aromas
 - Tasting—food, drink, or any taste in mouth
2. Get comfortable in a seated position.
3. Tune into whichever sense you've chosen. Rather than searching for sensory input (sounds, sights, textures, smells, and tastes), simply allow the sensory input to come to you and then pass away all in its own time.
4. See if it is possible to observe the sensory input directly rather than through the filter of language, noticing what the experience is like just before your mind has put a label on it.
5. Whenever you notice that your mind has wandered away from sensory input, smile at yourself and bring your attention back to where you intended it to be.

6. When you are done, take a deep breath and open up your attention to the space around you. Thank God for the wealth of sensory input available to you in each moment and continue on to your next activity.



Eating Meditation

Food is our fuel, and we literally need it for everything we do. Also, it can be fun and delicious! This meditation helps us tune into the experience of eating as well as the way that our food connects us with God and the rest of the world. As you eat, notice God's presence with you and the way that this food is nourishing your body.

1. Find something to eat, preferably something simple and unprocessed like a raisin or other fruit. Sit in a quiet place and prepare to bring your full focus to the food with curiosity, as if you have just dropped in from another planet and have never seen this object before.
2. Hold the food in your hand and notice how it looks, including color, shape, symmetry, darkness, patterns, etc.
3. Consider the journey this food has been on. (If your food contains multiple ingredients, you might consider choosing just one in order to avoid getting overwhelmed!) For example, God may have used many people to get this food to you, including farmers, truck drivers, grocery store workers, and parents/guardians. It is likely that there was sun and rain that touched the food as it grew, and technology systems that enabled people to grow, nurture, harvest, and transport the food. Notice how this food demonstrates our deep interconnectedness with each other, the earth, and God.
4. Notice thoughts you are experiencing, without judging them

- (even if they're thoughts like "This is a dumb meditation!"), and then bring your attention back to the food in your hand.
5. Hold the food close to your ear and move it around a bit, noticing if it makes any sounds as it is manipulated.
 6. Allow yourself to drink in the smell of the food, and observe any reactions in your mouth, stomach, thoughts, or feelings in response to smelling.
 7. When you put the food in your mouth for chewing, take your time. Notice how your body knows how to get it into your mouth and what to do once it is there. Observe the changes of texture and taste as you chew, and observe the movement of the food down into your stomach.
 8. When you are done, take a deep breath and open up your attention to the space around you. Thank God for providing you with food to eat that helps keep your body, mind, and emotions as strong as they can, and then continue on to your next activity.



Centering Prayer

This prayer practice is not a traditional mindfulness practice, but it can easily be converted into a mindfulness practice for Christians. Through centering prayer, you will be focusing on God's presence as the object of your attention, just as you might focus in other mindfulness practices on different parts of the present moment (such as physical sensations or emotions).

1. As you prepare to “anchor” your attention in God, choose a prompt that you will use during the practice to remind you of God's presence. This could either be your breath or a word (such as peace or love or Father).
2. Find a comfortable seated position, perhaps with your back straight and your feet on the floor. Close your eyes if you choose, or close them halfway with a soft gaze.
3. Take a couple deep breaths, then allow your breathing to return to its normal rate. Notice the sensations of your breath coming in and out.
4. Settle your attention on the near presence of God, within you or in the room. No need to think about God, see if you can just notice that you and God are together.
5. Allow each breath to serve as a reminder of God's presence—or if you've chosen a word as your prompt, allow that word to be repeated quietly and lightly in the back of your mind as a way to connect you with God. Each time you notice your mind has wandered away, smile and gently bring your attention back to God's presence with you in the moment.

6. When you are done, take a deep breath and open up your attention to the space around you. Thank God for his divine presence that is with you all the time and continue on to your next activity!