

# Flatpicking Guitar Magazine

## Free Monthly Lesson — December 2020

### “Just a Closer Walk with Thee”

Arranged by Mickey Abraham

Hello and welcome once again to Flatpicking Guitar Magazine’s free lesson portion of our monthly newsletter. This month I offer you two versions of the beautiful hymn “Just a Closer Walk with Thee.” The first pass is a straight forward melodic rendition while the second pass has more added licks and ideas of my own. “Just a Closer Walk with Thee” has a classic 16 measure chord progression and a beautiful melody. There are countless ways to play it and it fits the bluegrass style perfectly.

The opening phrase to “Just a Closer Walk with Thee” is very interesting for several reasons. First, I love how the melody goes up three chromatic notes from the 5th to the 6th (in the key of C these are the notes G, G#, and A). Next, the large intervallic jump from the 6th (A note) down to the major 3rd (E note) really creates a strong melody over C. Finally, the line moves down chromatically from the root of G to the b7 of G (this happens at the perfect time to anticipate the G7 chord that is coming). The melody is very strongly hinting at the chords being C6 and G7. This movement reminds me more of Texas style fiddle tunes and jazz phrases more than traditional Hymns. To me, the opening phrase of “Just a Closer Walk With Thee” makes the tune unique and great, and is part of what keeps people singing it and playing it for so many years.

While the chord progression to many songs are the same, it is the melodic content of a song that makes each one unique. In addition to learning to pick songs like this one because they are beautiful I also always learn more about bluegrass improvisation with every melody I learn. For me it’s easier to plaster bluegrass hot licks and random C, F, and G ideas over this chord progression than it is to play the melody. My background in guitar was more blues and rock based before I studied flatpicking. In that style of soloing you are expected to know licks over different keys and chords more than picking a melody. To this day I still get amazed by seeing how the simple chord tones and phrases make up the melodies to songs like “Just a Closer Walk with Thee.” The idea is when you are at a jam and someone plays a song with this chord progression you can steal melodic phrases from songs you have learned and this will make your improvised solos sound more melodic than playing a bunch of lick based ideas. In this arrangement I’m using some classic licks to connect the melody content.

I’m confident you will find this arrangement exciting to learn and fun play. Make sure to click on the included lesson mp3 to hear the melody and chords in action. As always, should you have any comments or questions on this arrangement just drop me a line at [michabraham@comcast.net](mailto:michabraham@comcast.net).

# Just A Closer Walk With Thee

Arranged by Mickey Abraham

1 **C** **G**

**T**  
**A**  
**B**

7 s 1 2 2 3 4 | 0 1 2 2 0 4 3 | 7 0 0 1 2

6 **C**

**HP**

3 1 | 0 1 0 0 2 1 | 2 0 7 s 4 5 5 3 4

10 **C7** **F** **F#dim (optional)**

5 0 | 4 3 1 3 0 | 3 1 - 1 2

14 **C** **G** **C**

**H**

0 0 2 | 0 2 0 | 1 0 2 0 3 2 0 | 3 2 3 4

18 **G7**

0 4 0 1 2 1 0 | 2 3 2 0 2 1 0 | 3 0 1 s 2 0 2 0 | 0 s 0 0 1 2

# Just A Closer Walk With Thee

22 **C**

HP

3 (0) 1 3 1 0 0 2 0 0 0 0 0 2 1 0 H 0 2 0 2 0 2 3

Detailed description: This system contains measures 22 through 25. The top staff is a treble clef with a key signature of one sharp (F#). Measure 22 starts with a treble clef and a common time signature. The melody consists of eighth and quarter notes. The bottom staff shows guitar fretting with numbers 0-4. A 'HP' (Half Pedal) instruction is above the first two measures. A 'H' (Harmonic) instruction is above the fifth measure. The system ends with a repeat sign.

26 **C7** **F** **F#dim**

S

0 3/5 0 1 0 1 0 0 3 0 1 0 0 0 3 2 1 3 2 1 2 3 2 1 1 2 0 1 0 2 1

Detailed description: This system contains measures 26 through 29. The top staff continues the melody. The bottom staff shows guitar fretting. A 'S' (Slide) instruction is above the first measure. The system ends with a repeat sign.

30 **C** **G** **C**

Detailed description: This system contains measures 30 through 33. The top staff continues the melody. The bottom staff shows guitar fretting. The system ends with a double bar line.