

Setting Up a Prayer Space

FOCUS OF THE SESSION

- Provide tips on how to set up a prayer space
- Learn about *Lectio Divina* as a prayer form

“ But whenever you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. ”

– Matthew 6:6

Setting Up a Prayer Space

Prayer is a little like exercise: a bit of pre-arranging goes a long way to ensuring it happens.

- Determine a time and space for prayer. If it doesn't work, try another
- Negotiate the use of space with others you live with
- Collect the prayer items you want
- Possibly use a tray to place the prayer items on so that they can be moved to different locations

LECTIO DIVINA

***Lectio Divina* involves slow, repetitive reading of a Bible passage, allowing a deep encounter with God.**

- Created in the fifth century by Saint Benedict for the benefit of his monks
- Further developed by Guigo II, a Carthusian monk in the twelfth century
- Requires a Bible
- Can be very effective in small groups
- Takes about 10-30 minutes (or longer)

Read the scripture passage four times:

- **READ (LECTIO):** Read slowly and deliberately, listening to the words of the text and noting if a word or phrase pops off the page or stands out for you. What does the Holy Spirit want you to notice?
- **MEDITATE (MEDITATIO):** Mentally chew over the text by purposefully savoring, analyzing, and pondering the meaning of the words of the text. What does Jesus want you to understand?
- **PRAY (ORATIO):** Pray and communicate with God for insight and clarity for how the text relates to you. What does God want you to do?
- **CONTEMPLATE (CONTEMPLATIO):** Be still, surrender and let all thoughts and feelings fade away and rest in the presence of God. How does God want you to be?

Lectio Divina Guide

1

CHOOSE A PASSAGE OF SCRIPTURE.

You might want to use a daily lectionary or a daily reading Bible. It is better if the passage is not too long.

2

BE FULLY PRESENT.

Establish a comfortable position for prayer, relax your body, and take three deep breaths.

3

FIRST SCRIPTURE READING: *Lectio*

Read the scripture passage while listening for a word or phrase that stands out. Be silent for a few moments. Write that word or phrase in your journal. Share with your group the word or phrase (without explanation).

4

SECOND SCRIPTURE READING: *Meditatio*

Read the scripture passage again and reflect on the content. Analyze the structure of the text and the historical and literary context of the passage. You might find it's useful to augment the reading with a devotional reflection resource like Forward Movement's *Forward Day by Day* or a commentary. Take a few minutes for silent reflection. Now record your thoughts, impressions, and insights. Discuss your insights, reflections, and thoughts with the group.

5

THIRD SCRIPTURE READING: *Oratio*

Read the scripture passage again, and this time speak and pray directly to God, asking for insight from the text. Be silent. Write a prayer to God that has been forming in your heart in response to this text. Discuss your insights, reflection, and thoughts with the group. Some may even wish to share their prayer.

6

FOURTH SCRIPTURE READING: *Contemplatio*

Read the scripture passage a final time. This time, abandon speech and reflection and instead rest in the silent presence of God for between two and twenty minutes. If you start to get distracted, simply return to your breathing or the word or phrase from the first reading. After the silent period, record your reflections. Discuss your insights, reflections, and thoughts with the group.

LECTIO DIVINA JOURNAL

1. How was this prayer for you? Describe the experience.

2. Did you feel like you connected with God? Describe the experience.

3. What did you become aware of?

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Philippians 4:1, 4-9 (New Revised Standard Version)

Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved. Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honourable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

LECTIO DIVINA PRACTICE

READ (LECTIO)

MEDITATE (MEDITATIO)

PRAY (ORATIO)

CONTEMPLATE (CONTEMPLATIO)

SETTING UP TIME FOR PRAYER

➤ Where will you pray? _____

➤ When will you pray? _____

➤ How long will you pray? _____

➤ What do you want in your prayer space? _____

➤ Will you need a Bible, journal, pen, icon, candle, etc.? _____

➤ What prayer form will you use? _____

➤ Who do you need to coordinate with? _____

➤ Where will you put your journal? _____

➤ What do you need to do to make your prayer space and time happen?

May God's holy word be a lamp to your feet and a light to your path.

Meditation & Contemplation

FOCUS OF THE SESSION

- Learn the differences between meditation and contemplation
- Learn about Contemplative Prayer and Centering Prayer
- Practice leading public prayer

Meditation and Contemplation

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN MEDITATION AND CONTEMPLATION?

- In the *Lectio Divina* there are two sections called *meditatio* and *contemplatio*, meditation and contemplation
- Often used interchangeably
- But for *Revive*, they are very different!

1. MEDITATION IS TO CHEW OR RUMINATE UPON

- Read, mark, and inwardly digest information (a phrase taken from *The Book of Common Prayer*)
- Focus, study, reflect, pull apart, and analyze
- When we meditate, we use our reasoning capacity as we think and ponder

2. CONTEMPLATION IS TO STILL THE THOUGHTS AND EMPTY THE MIND

- No achievement, no accomplishment, no judgment, no analysis, no goals
- Instead of doing prayers, contemplation is about being in prayer
- Rest in the sheer delight of Divine Love and Presence

“ Likewise, the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. ”

- Romans 8:26

CONTEMPLATION

1. BEFORE GOD YOU HAVE NOTHING TO PROVE

- You cannot earn God's love
- You are loved just because you were created
- You were created because you were loved
- You were loved into creation
- German philosopher Paul Tillich said, "Accept that you are accepted"
- Stop the worry about worthiness, the compulsion to judge, and the urge to achieve, and simply sit with silent love

2. CONTEMPLATION IS A DEEPLY CHRISTIAN PRACTICE

- Jesus went to a desolate place and spent many hours in a deep union with God (Mark 1:35, Matthew 14:23, Luke 5:16)
- Desert Fathers and Mothers, Christian hermits and ascetics of the third century
- Monastics and Christian mystics throughout the ages

3. DEALING WITH MENTAL DISTRACTION

- Our thoughts race to the future, making plans or ruminating about the past, recalling what was
- Do not get frustrated; distractions are to be expected
- Simply and gently push the distracting thoughts as if they were clouds floating across the sky
- Come back to your breathing

CENTERING PRAYER

- Choose a sacred word and repeat it over and over again to express your prayer intention and to stay connected with God
- Thomas Keating, a Roman Catholic monk, developed this contemplative practice
- Repeating the sacred word helps cope with distractions
- Possible sacred words are peace, light, love, or surrender
- Simple, no need for books or accessories
- Difficult to stay mentally open and present

DOES THIS PRAYER FORM WORK FOR YOU?

- You may feel calmer and rested but wonder if you really prayed
- There likely will not be a new Aha! insight or idea; you might just start to notice you are different
- In contemplation, healing and transformation comes through the heart

Your sacred word: _____

Contemplative Prayer Guide

1

DURATION. First, decide how long you want to contemplate. You might consider starting with five minutes and gradually move to twenty- or thirty-minute sessions. Set a timer or use a handy app so you don't have to pay attention to the clock during the duration of the session.

2

SACRED WORD. Choose a sacred word. This might be a word or phrase that came to you in the *Lectio Divina* exercise or another word that is significant for you.

3

PRESENCE. Sit comfortably with a good posture. Put both feet on the floor and let your hands rest on your lap, palms up or down as you choose. Relax your body, especially the muscles of your face and shoulders. Become aware of where you are tense or uncomfortable and begin to settle. Drop your gaze to the floor or gently close your eyes.

4

BREATHE. Take five deep, slow breaths. Imagine you are taking in God's love and light and breathing out anxiety and worry. Shift your mental focus and still your thoughts. Simply bask in God's peace.

5

BE STILL. Take a few moments and just be still. Don't do or think anything. Sometimes this is the hardest part of this form of prayer. Focus...on nothing.

6

REPEAT YOUR SACRED WORD. Silently begin to repeat your sacred word in time with the rhythm of your breathing.

7

DISTRACTIONS. After awhile, you might realize you are thinking. Slowly and gently push any thoughts aside. Let thought, feelings, and judgment float by. Come back to your sacred word or breathing and your sense of presence with God.

8

FINISH. Stay in this space until your timer goes off or the prayer leader says, "Amen."

CONTEMPLATION PRAYER JOURNAL

1. How was this prayer for you? Describe the experience.

2. Did you feel like you connected with God? Describe the experience.

3. What did you become aware of?
