Golden Bowls of Incense

A Six Week Survey of Prayer

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First United Methodist Church

Center for Transformative Prayer

Contents

Curriculum Overview

"When he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell before the Lamb, each holding a harp and *golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints*."

−Revelation 5.8

Preface

The late priest, author and mystic Henri Nouwen asserted that spiritual formation is a discipline without which the "Church will be accused of having failed at its most basic task: to offer people creative ways to communicate with the divine source of human life."[1] Seen in this proper light, spiritual formation represents a complement of practices through which we not only learn *how* to commune with God, but we actually *do* it.

Spiritual formation has many facets. As a discipline its only definition is described by its end goal—evolving growth into the spiritual life with Christ.[2] Traditionally, however, we have identified several practices of piety that are core to formation, including but not limited to reading of Scripture, attaining to the sacraments, fasting, giving, and serving others. But arguably the most fundamental of all of these practices is prayer.

Nouwen goes on to claim that it's through prayer that we arrive at "the highest level of spiritual life, in which the created world is transcended and we experience directly our being lifted up into God's inner life."[3] Given this lofty appraisal, we would do well to better understand this vehicle of divine intimacy. The remainder of this text is designed to provide a general overview of prayer in its various forms.

Intended Use

This manual's intended use is fourfold. First, the chapters that follow represent a foundational curriculum structure that may be used for an instructor-led, six-week overview of different types of prayer. Second, while the opening portions of each week will be informational, this study is intended to be *pragmatic* in its application; that is, the intent is to learn both intellectually *and* experientially, with emphasis on the latter.

Third, the body of this text is primarily constructed for course leaders. However, the primary sections of each week's content is perfectly suitable for both the leaders and the participants, and those sections can be readily reproduced and distributed for greater preparation and interaction. Lastly, this material is meant to be introductory in nature. The myriad forms of prayer and the variations thereof are basically innumerable. This study merely attempts to survey a handful of prayer types, hopefully enticing the participants to learn (and practice!) these and other methods in greater depth.

Study Format

The study opens with a general overview of prayer from biblical and traditional perspectives. The subsequent five lessons sample various types of prayer from the Christian tradition. Each week's content assumes a maximum allotment of sixty (60) minutes per class time. These classes will share the same general structure of *background, methodology, practice, reflection,* and *supplemental resource s*.

Background. The background sections of the study are meant to ground the leader and the participants in the biblical, theological and historical aspects of the week's prayer method. These sections are relatively brief, but they should be robust enough to set the tone for the method and practice to come. (~10 mins)

Methodology. Each week the group will examine and practice a different prayer methodology. This section is intended to serve as a written guide to the various steps, postures, prayers, etc. that are related to the approach. Also, the text will provide one or more variations to the method as applicable. (~5 mins)

Practice. The entirety of this study is primarily concerned with the *experience* of prayer. As such, the majority of the class time should be spent on this portion of the lesson. Instructions on imagery, postures, timing, etc. should be kept to a minimum so that participants can maximize the prayer period. (~25 mins)

Reflection. This segment of the study is intended to garner the participants' experiential feedback. This post-prayer dialogue is unrestricted, but the study does supply several questions to help guide the discussion. The leader may choose to preview these questions prior to the session, as some may be useful to "set the tone" for the experience to come. (~15 mins)

Supplemental resources. As the class concludes, resources are supplied within the lesson for those who want to learn and/or experience more about the week's content.

Paraphrasing a bold claim of the 16th century mystic John of the Cross, Harvard theologian Sarah Coakley says that through deep contemplation, our souls "can actually breathe with the 'very breath' of the Spirit that moves between the Father and the Son."[4] It is for the participation in that divine breath that this study is intended.

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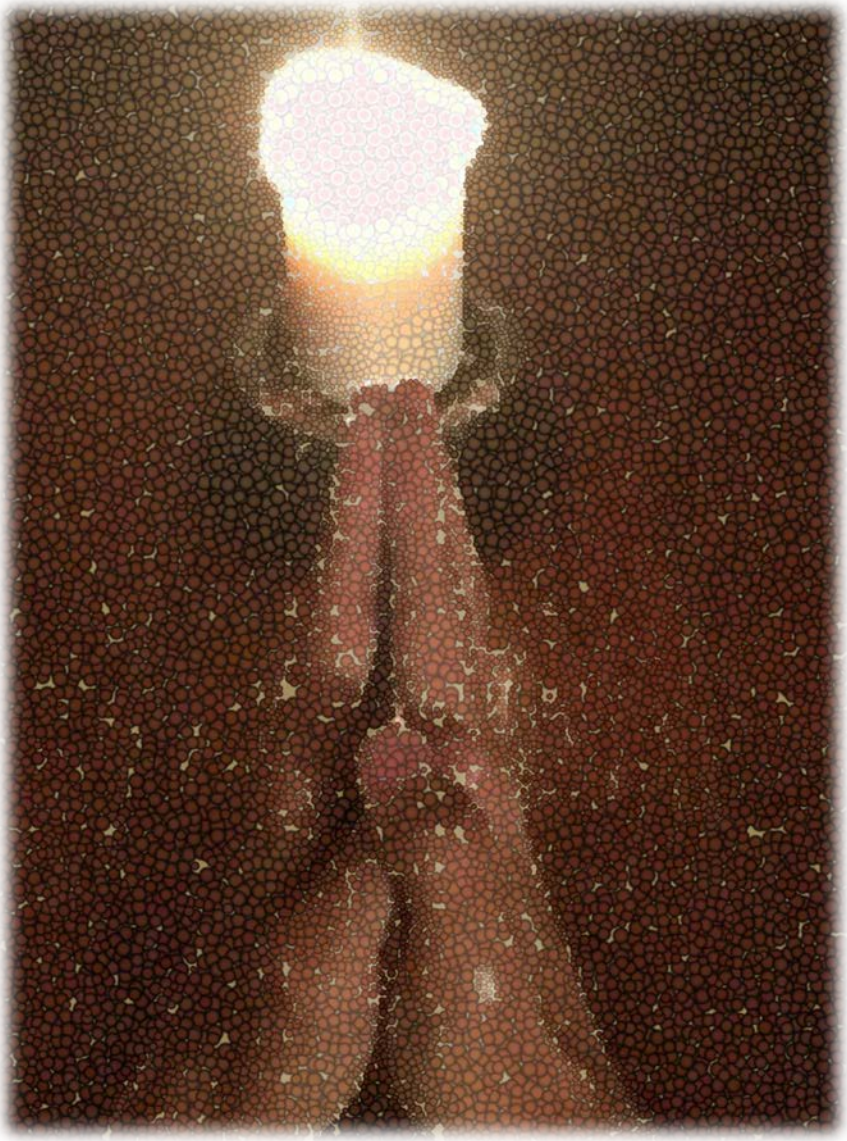
[1] Henri Nouwen, *Spiritual Formation: Following the Movements of the Spirit* (New York: HarperOne, 2010), xix-xx.
[2] Donald K. McKim, "Spiritual formation." *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), 267.
[3] Nouwen, 12-13.
[4] Sarah Coakley, "Deepening Practices: Perspectives from Ascetical and Mystical Theology," in *Practicing Theology: Beliefs and Practices in Christian Life*, eds. Miroslav Volf and Dorothy C. Bass (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2002), 89.

Week 1: What is Prayer?



"Pray without ceasing."

−1 Thessalonians 5.17

Background & Definitions

A mainstay of Christian belief is the notion of prayer. While not unique to Christianity, we view prayer as fundamental to our relationship in the life of God. Methodism's founder John Wesley deemed prayer so important as to label it one of the principal "means of grace," on par with the reading of scripture and even receiving the sacraments.[1] Prayer is a primary vehicle of growth in our faith walk.

We begin our study with some foundational words about prayer. While the following weeks will be primarily concerned with practicing prayer, some background will help contextualize that practice. The English word *prayer* finds its roots in the Latin term *precari*, which means "to entreat," "to request," or "to beg." It is a term we typically apply to our approach to God, whether we are entreating the heavens to accept our praise and thanksgiving, requesting daily edification, or begging for God's forgiveness. Sometimes we speak prayers aloud, while at other times we offer them mentally with no audible sounds. We pray ceremoniously, as in communal worship, but our offerings can also be as casual as the under the breath uttering of "thank God." Whatever the content, method, or context, prayer is an integral part of the Christian spiritual experience.

A useful distinction to make throughout this study is the difference between the words *meditation* and *contemplation*. Christian *meditation* is an intellectual activity in which words, ideas, images, etc. are pondered to discern personal meaning with the material and/or God. *Contemplation*, on the other hand, does not involve the rational faculties, per se. Instead, contemplation as an act is a "resting in God," a means of simply being in the Divine presence.[2]

Before we dive into the various prayer methods presented in the weeks to come, it may also be useful to ground ourselves in an historical perspective of Christian prayer. Many cultural artifacts and experiences have contributed to that history, far too many to be noted here. However, we can get a sample of these influences by briefly overviewing two main sources—the Bible, and the tradition.

Biblical Roots

The biblical record is replete with instances of the authors reminding us to be prayerful and present with God. From Genesis to Revelation, prayer is one of the most common means through which human beings enter into and maintain an intimate relationship with the Divine. The Apostle Paul implores us to "pray without ceasing" and to "give thanks in all circumstances," and he goes on to tell us why: "this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thess 5.17-18). Experiencing God in gratitude is God's will for us, and prayer is a sacred means by which we achieve this experience—it has a transformative impact on our lives.

There are several major categories or "types" of prayers we encounter in the Bible. *Petitions* or *supplications* are requests made for ourselves or on behalf of someone else; when many think of prayer, this is the category that typically comes to mind (Job 6.8; Phil 4.6). *Lamentations* are cries to God out of sorrow or appeal for pity (Hab 1.3-4; Matt 27.46). A form of the lament is *confession*, where we admit our shortcomings before God (Ps 51; Luke 18.13). Another common prayer is that of *thanksgiving*, expressing gratitude to God for the many blessings we enjoy (Ps 75; 1 Thess 1.2). A close relative to the prayer of thanksgiving is the offering of *praise* (*adoration, worship*), glorifying God purely for God's sake (1 Sam 2.1-10; Luke 1.46-55). Most of our prayers fit into one of these categories, and throughout the Bible, these forms are often combined. One of the most well-known prayers is an example of this mixture.

The *Lord's Prayer* (Matt 6.9-13; Luke 11.2-4) combines many of the elements above. It begins with praise (Matt 6.9); moves into supplication for God's will (v10; also a form a worship); and then progresses to direct human petitions, with elements of confession around forgiveness (vv. 10-13). For the extended text ("For the kingdom…"), the bookend of praise is added. Because of its completeness, this prayer of Jesus has been called an "integral" prayer. Originating with the *Incarnate Christ*, it's not only concerned about the praise that is rightly due to God, but it's also very much interested in human concerns. However, since it's intended to be prayed by *people*, the words don't solely focus on human needs, but instead place those needs in proper context—in between the celebration of the source of our existence.[3] It is a simple prayer that satisfies all the complexities of the human condition.

Church Tradition

Moving from the pages of the New Testament into the post-biblical world begins the church's history. And a prominent undercurrent of that roiling history is the practice of prayer. A handful of prominent figures are highlighted here.

Origen of Alexandria (185-254) represents the early stages of Christian thought. Origen and his contemporaries equated seeing God with faithful discipleship, faithfulness modeled in the biblical text. Origen's greatest achievements involved the interpretation of Scripture. He believed that understanding the sacred text flowed from a literal sense towards a mystical one. And that mystical interpretation was only accessible via "the movements of prayer," contemplative actions that condition us for God's revelation.[4]

Benedict of Nursia (480-547) was another who made a lasting imprint on the Western Church, specifically as it relates to prayer. As the founder of the Benedictine order of monastics, his *Rule* became the de facto standard of all monastic orders thereafter. With a motto of "*ora et labora*" (pray and work), these monks' schedules emphasized these two aspects of life—prayer and work. Stressing scriptural prayer, especially the Psalms, Benedict and his disciples carved out eight periods of the day to drop everything and take up prayer.[5]

Meanwhile, the Eastern tradition (the Orthodox Church) moved prayer in a slightly different direction. The sacred images called *icons* became a focal point of worship and prayer in the middle ages. Figures like John of Damascus (675-749) defended this practice of prayer as a legitimate means of revelation to humanity, not unlike the Bible or even the very incarnation of Christ.[6]

Moving forward in history, Western reformers such as Martin Luther (1483-1546) also help us with our understanding of prayer. From Luther's perspective, prayer was nothing short of an *obligation* for Christians. He interpreted the second commandment as a mandate for prayer, insisting that its true meaning implied that we "call upon the name of God in every time of need."[7]

Lastly, Luther's modern day namesake, Martin Luther King, Jr (1929-1968), preached and exemplified this type of incessant prayer. For King, prayer was "indigenous to the human spirit," serving as "the sacred heart of faith, as the foundation of devotional life, as an essential component of prophetic social witness, and as a vital ingredient in the overall effort to free, humanize, and empower humanity."[8]

His was a *lived* theology, his prayer life both informing and sustaining his efforts towards human dignity.

As we might imagine, there are literally thousands upon thousands of other "saints" that together form our spiritual legacy of prayer. We will see how some of those mentioned here and others impact our study in the weeks to come. However, the single thread that they all share is constant: prayer is foundational to Christian life. As Martin Luther is credited with saying, "To be a Christian without prayer is no more possible than to be alive without breathing."

Prayer and the Character of God

Finally, we noted in our earlier definitions that prayer literally means to make a request of God. It is most certainly the fundamental way in which we communicate. However, we also saw that the *Lord's Prayer* rightly articulates the *relationship* between us and the Holy One. As such, the notion of prayer gives us insights into God's self.

God is personal. This is a view of the Creator that set apart the early Hebrew people from their Mesopotamian neighbors. God didn't simply bring the universe into being and then leave it to its own devices. The people believed the Almighty to be present and real in their daily lives. And their ideas of that close proximity were revealed in their prayer life. Abraham prayed to God on behalf of King Abimelech, and his wife and servants were free to bear children (Gen 20.17-18). God "heard the voice" of Ishmael when his mother Hagar cried out (Gen 21.15-19). God responded to Isaac's prayers for Rebekah's barrenness (Gen 25.21-23). And Jacob prayed to God for deliverance from his brother Esau prior to his now famous encounter (Gen 32.9-12). In all of these, the prayers of the faithful spoke to the immediacy they knew as the character of God. Because of this personhood, our prayers represent a dialogue with the Divine.

God is relational. When we pray we can consider it as a conversation with God, as if we were talking to our best friend. We come in awe and reverence due to the majesty of the Divine, but we can also know that God respects our own unique personhood. As such, there is mutual "growth" in our exchange of ideas. God desires connection with us, and prayer is a means of building that relational bond. However, we should be mindful that all conversations are synchronous in nature; that is, there is a "talking" part *and* a listening part. A famous motivational speaker says that we don't listen to understand, we "listen to reply." The net result is that everyone's talking, but

no one's listening.[9] We must respect God as our partner in dialogue, heeding the fact that we are open to speak, but assuming a deferential posture of listening. Through this reciprocity we love and are loved. And that mutual love is synergistic.

God is cooperative. *Cooperation* is defined as the process of working together to the same end. God chooses to work with us to achieve God's purposes. Therefore, when we pray, our intentions must align with our actions, which in turn should be in line with God's will—namely justice and mercy. If our prayers are ultimately out of sync with our actions, they may in fact be hollow and/or insincere. For example, we may pray heartily for peace and healing, but if our lives are characterized by tension and divisiveness, there is seemingly a gap between our intentions and our behaviors. True prayer represents a deep encounter with God. As a result, that encounter becomes the motivation for our outward lives. Theologian Leonardo Boff provides us with a clear working relationship between prayer and action:

> Genuine liberation…starts with a deep encounter with God that moves us to committed action. It is here that we hear his voice as he tells us continually: Go! And, at the same time, any radical commitment to justice and love of others moves us back to God as the true Justice and supreme Love. Here also we hear his voice as he tells us: Come![10]

This "coming" and "going" with God speaks not only of our synergistic relationship, but it expresses our very lives in the Spirit. Prayer is our access to that life.

Reflections

Possible questions for group reflection/discussion throughout the lesson:

- What does *prayer* mean to you?
- Why do you pray?
- Do you expect an "answer" to your prayers? In what form might that response come?
- In what ways do you pray? Do you consider your prayers as a "conversation?" If so, who does most of the talking?
- When you pray, how do you "picture" or imagine God?
- How might understanding prayer from a biblical or historical context help in your prayer life?

- Why is it useful to distinguish between types of prayers?
- What does it mean to understand God as personal? Relational? Cooperative?
- What do you hope to get out of this study in the weeks to come?

Supplemental Resources

http://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionary/prayer/

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Ng, Nita. *My Little Meditation Book*. UNKNOWN. Kindle Edition.

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Wolski Conn, Joann, ed. *Women's Spirituality: Resources for Christian Spirituality.* Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1986.

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[1] John Wesley, "The Means of Grace," in *John Wesley's Sermons: An Anthology*, eds. Albert Outler and Richard Heitzenrater (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1991), 160.
[2] Thelma Hall, *Too Deep for Words: Rediscovering Lectio Divina* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 9.
[3] Ibid, 4-5.
[4] Harvey Egan, *An Anthology of Christian Mysticism* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1996), 29.
[5] Peter Feldmeier, Christian Spirituality: Lived Expressions in the Life of the Church (Winona, MN: Anselm Academic, 2015), 110-114.
[6] See John of Damascus, *Apologia of St John of Damascus Against Those who Decry Holy Images* (Grand Rapids, MI: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2001).
[7] John Dillenberger, ed., *Martin Luther: Sections from His Writings* (New York: Anchor Books, 1962), 215ff.
[8] Lewis Baldwin, ed., "*Thou, Dear God*": *Prayers That Open Hearts and Spirits* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2011) Loc 70-72, Kindle Edition.
[9] Stephen Covey, http://www.sacredlistening.com/tlc_quotes.htm , accessed November 29, 2015.

[10] Leonardo Boff, *The Lord's Prayer: The Prayer of Integral Liberation* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985), 6.

Week 2: Mental Prayer—Morning Offering & The Examen

"Like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to *offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ*."

−1 Peter 2.5

Background

There are two complementary prayers that we examine here. The first is a short but powerful commitment to start the day. Known historically as the *morning offering*, this prayer is a way of offering our entire lives as a prayer to God on a daily basis. While this prayer has no known "origin," many continue to practice this method at the outset of every day.[1]

The second method we explore is known as the *Examen prayer*. The Examen is a process of introspection promoted by and credited to Ignatius Loyola, a sixteenth century nobleman-turned-religious who founded the Roman Catholic order known as the Society of Jesus, more commonly referred to as the Jesuits. In Ignatius' worldview, humanity was created for one singular purpose: "to praise, reverence, and serve God."[2] To that end, he created the now classic *Spiritual Exercises*, a treatise that outlines a strict regimen for refining the spiritual self. The Examen prayer is intrinsic to that methodology.

Ignatius believed that we encounter God not "out there" somewhere, but rather in our day-to-day goings on. To truly attain this spiritual state of being requires a discipline of awareness; and that awareness begins with a mindfulness of our own selves. As the name implies, the Examen prayer serves as a daily means of exploring our inner and outer lives, and then holding ourselves accountable for what we encounter. Used in combination, the morning meditation and the Examen (if said in the evening) serve as prayerful "bookends" to the day.

Methodology

The morning offering. The morning offering is a brief, simplistic start to the day. It consists of the practitioner taking time out to offer up their very *lives* as a prayer upon awakening every morning. If we dare make such a bold claim, we are compelled to "check in" over the course of the day to see if we are in fact upholding our commitment.

The variations on this theme mainly involve the posture we take during the prayer. We may be prone on our knees, prostrate on the ground, standing with arms outstretched, or still curled beneath the covers. Regardless the positioning, the idea is to offer our thoughts, words and deeds as a total prayer to God.

The Examen. The Examen involves a review of the day, with gratitude being the cornerstone of the approach. The "traditional" five steps that Ignatius promoted include 1) inviting God's illumination of the prayer, 2) giving thanks for the day just lived, 3) reviewing the day, both ups and downs, 4) confessing the shortcomings that were reviewed, and 5) asking for guidance in the day to come.[3] The entirety of the prayer is meant as an utter release in God's presence.

Several modifications are possible, and many tailor the Examen to something that is uniquely personal. One such variation is an "emotional inventory" and reflection; this is the method employed for this week's practice.[4]

Practice

While both the morning offering and the Examen are discussed above, we will restrict the practice session to the Examen prayer. Participants may be seated, with feet flat on the floor and backs as vertical as possible. As the leader speaks through each step, it may be useful for the participants to close their eyes as they are able. The leader will also act as the time keeper.

- *Pray for illumination (1 min).* We are praying to breathe God's Spirit during the session.
- *Review the day in thanksgiving (5 mins).* We review the day that has come before, making a mental checklist of all the things that we are grateful for, regardless of how small or large. We let our minds flow in and out of memories, all in a spirit of thanksgiving.
- *Review the day again (5 mins).* We re-run the day again. We are now being mindful of the feelings that may have emerged with events as we recalled them. Whether

positive or negative, we don't judge them; we simply allow them to surface, and we take note of their presence.

- *God counsel (10 mins).* Now we make a mental note of the feeling that was the strongest, and pray on it. This is like a "counseling session" with God around this emotion. Again, positive or negative, we review it, discuss it, and understand it as something we would like to welcome or avoid in the future.
- *Look forward to the coming day (4 mins).* Finally, we are looking forward to the day to come. If there are anxieties associated with tasks, we pray on them. If there is positive excitement, we pray on it. We pray that our day will be a day in which we reflect the Kingdom that God has willed for all of us.

Reflections

Possible questions for group reflection:

- Which segment of the Examen resonated most strongly with you? Why might that be the case?
- Did you find the timing of the segments adequate? If not, what changes would you make in your private prayer time?
- Did you come to a "resolution" during your "God counseling" time? If comfortable sharing, what did that outcome look like?
- Did you find this exercise useful? If so, will you pursue it further? If not, what changes would you make to tailor it to yourself?

Supplemental Resources

http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/22505/a-morning-offering

http://www.faithandworship.com/Morning_Prayers.htm

http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-examen/

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Thibideaux, Mark. *Reimagining the Ignatian Examen: Fresh Ways to Pray from Your Day.* Chicago: Loyala Press, 2015.

Collins, Christopher. *3 Moments of the Day*. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2014.

Harter, Michael. *Hearts on Fire: Praying with the Jesuits.* Chicago: Loyola Press, 2005.

Loyola, Ignatius. *The Spiritual Exercises.* New York: Magisterium Press, 2015.

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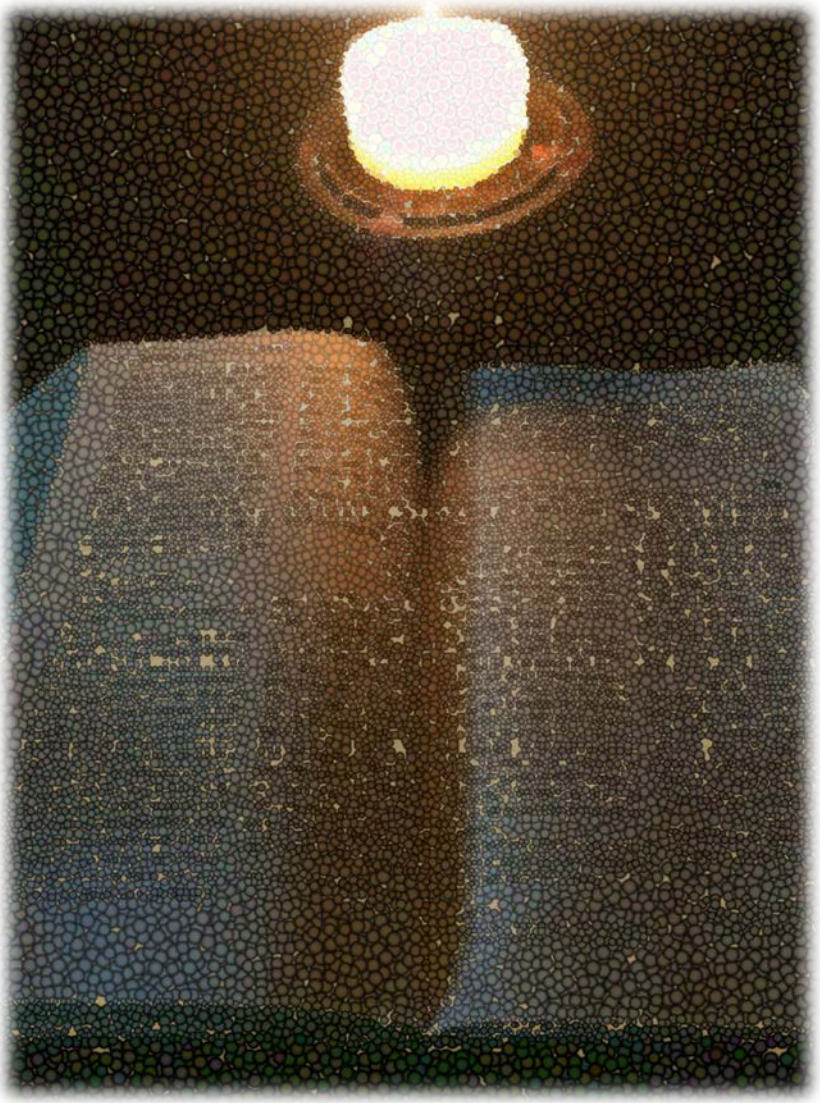
[1] Donald Wuerl, *Ways to Pray: Growing Closer to God* (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, 2015), Chapt 7.
[2] Ruben Habito, *Zen and Spiritual Exercises* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2013), 41.
[3] "The Examen Prayer Card." http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/19076/examen-prayer-card/, accessed March 10, 2016.
[4] Borrowed from Dennis Hamm, "Rummaging for God: Praying Backwards through Your Day," http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-examen/rummaging-for-god-praying-backward-through-your-day, accessed March 10, 2016.

Week 3: Scriptural Prayer—*Lectio Divina*



"I revere your commandments, which I love, and *I will meditate on your statutes*."

−Psalm 119.48

Background

Lectio divina ("divine reading") is an ancient practice of "praying" the scriptures. Hints of this form of prayer spring up as early as the third century in the writings of Origen of Alexandria. In his "Letter to Gregory," he admonishes that we not only "knock and seek" the mysteries of the text, but that we also pray, for it is in "seeking" and "asking" that God allows us to find.[1] Later in history, we see a similar allusion to Jesus' words from Matthew 7.7. In his "Sayings of Light and Love," the sixteenth century mystic John of the Cross alludes to the four-part structure of *lectio* still in use today: "Seek in *reading* and you will find in *meditation*; knock in *prayer* and it will be opened to you in *contemplation*" (emphasis added).[2] For some time this methodology faded from the mainstream of Christian practice, yet it was kept alive by various monastics and other devout believers.

In the first week of this study we defined the notions of Christian meditation and contemplation. In review, meditation is a practice that directly applies the intellect to ponder the object of consideration. Separately, contemplation implies a state of being, relying less on brainpower and more on the unmediated experience of God. The practice of *lectio* encapsulates both, moving from the mindfulness of meditation to the centered "being-ness" of contemplation.

Lectio is traditionally composed of four parts: reading, meditation, prayer and contemplation. In this practice, a passage of Scripture is read and meditated upon for some time. Unlike typical biblical study, however, we are not looking to "dissect" the text for theological insight or knowledge. We don't apply interpretive tools such as historical, literary, or formal analysis to draw meaning from the passage. Instead, we enter into the passage and simultaneously let it enter us, experiencing the connection to divine presence. We allow ourselves to experience the sensual world of the text—sights, sounds, smells, and sensations. We encounter the characters of the stories, and we wander in the world that the biblical writers have constructed for us. We participate in the very inspiration that guided those authors.

Methodology

The typical steps of individual *lectio* practice include reading (*lectio*), reflection or meditation (*meditatio*), prayer (*oratio*), and finally a contemplative "being" in the Word (*contemplatio*). For the *reading* portion, we select a relatively short passage, and begin to read slowly and intently. We are reading with our whole selves, meaning we bring a proper reverence to the activity (posture, mindset, intent, etc.). As we survey the words, we allow ourselves to be open to what they have to say to us.

After the text is consumed visually, we pass into the *meditation* phase. In this stage of reflection, we "enter" into the text with our imaginations. We relate to characters; we sense the environment; we are privy to conversations. We fully experience what is happening in the scene in a participatory way. We also listen and repeat various words that seem to call to us in our own context. We consume the passage one delicious word at a time, and then let it digest in our minds and hearts.

The third step is *prayer.* At this point, we continue to open ourselves to God in direct dialogue around our meditations. We pray that God would open us, diminish us, and come to us so that our desires begin to align with God's will for us. We are content to wait; we still our souls. And as we do so, we pass from active "speaking" to a passive "listening."

The last stage of the *lectio* process is *contemplation*—a complete and utter stillness in God. It is here where our active imagination and reasoning faculties begin to shut down . We no longer "seek" to find God; we are still and quiet in the very presence of the One who seeks us. This is the place that is "too deep for words," where faith truly becomes "the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen" (Heb 11.1).[3]

One variation of the prayer is designed for group practice. It maintains the essential elements of this structure, albeit in abbreviated form. In this version, the text is read aloud on three separate occasions, preferably by three different participants. Each iterative reading has a different intention associated with the listening. The first reading involves listening for a word or phrase that resonates strongly with the hearer. There then follows a period of silence for 1) meditation on that word or phrase, 2) prayer centered on that meditation, and 3) peaceful contemplation. Once the five minutes is up, members are encouraged to share their experiences around their selected word or phrase. The second reading invites the members to "hear" or "see" Christ in the text, while the third iteration asks what Christ calls us to do or be in the world based on our

interaction with the text. Both the second and third readings follow the same pattern of silence and sharing as the first.[4] This methodology is used for our practice below.

Practice

All participants are seated with feet flat on the floor, shoulders relaxed, and spine duly straight. A scriptural passage is selected prior to beginning, such as Mark 1.9-11. If available, three readers are identified before the start of the exercise, and they all should be equipped with the focal text at the outset. It is desirable to have genders alternate the readings if possible; this diversity helps the group "hear" the Word in nuanced ways. Before each reading, the leader will remind the group of that iteration's intention for listening.

- *1st Reading (1 min).* One person reads a particular passage of Scripture aloud.
- *Silent reflection (5 mins).* All participants savor the read text in silence, mulling the words and determining *what word or phrase is most prominent for them*. All take time for prayer, and ultimately contemplation.
- *Verbal reflection (3 mins).* If desired, one or two in the group can share personal reflections. All should be mindful of the time so the group can complete all three iterations of the practice. (This is also a lesson on being present, as there is *no discussion of the reflections*, only intentional listening. Abbreviated feedback on the entirety of *lectio divina* can happen at the end.)
- *2nd Reading (1 min).* The passage is re-read aloud.
- *Silent reflection (5 mins).* All participants again reflect on what was read, but for this second iteration the *members are invited to "hear" or "see" Christ in the text*. Whatever is "heard" or "seen" is prayed over and contemplated.
- *Verbal reflection (3 mins).* The group can take time for a short reflection again.
- *3rd Reading (1 min).* Someone reads the passage aloud for a third time.
- *Silent reflection (5 mins).* In this final pass, the group is encouraged to *ask what Christ calls us to do or be in the world* based on their interaction with the scripture. Prayer and contemplation are still in order.
- *Verbal reflection (3 mins).* Repeat the short reflections if desired.

- End the prayer time with the Lord's Prayer (or some other) spoken aloud as a group.

Reflections

Possible questions for group reflection:

- Before this encounter, had you considered reading the text as part of your *prayer* life?
- How does this method of reading/praying Scripture impact you? Were you able to enter the text from your individual situation?
- In what ways did you find this exercise useful? How would you change it for yourself/others?

Supplemental Resources

"How to Practice Lectio Divina," http://www.beliefnet.com/faiths/catholic/2000/08/how-to-practice-lectio-divina.aspx (accessed April 2, 2016).

Dysinger, Luke. "Accepting the Embrace of God: The Ancient Art of Lectio Divina."

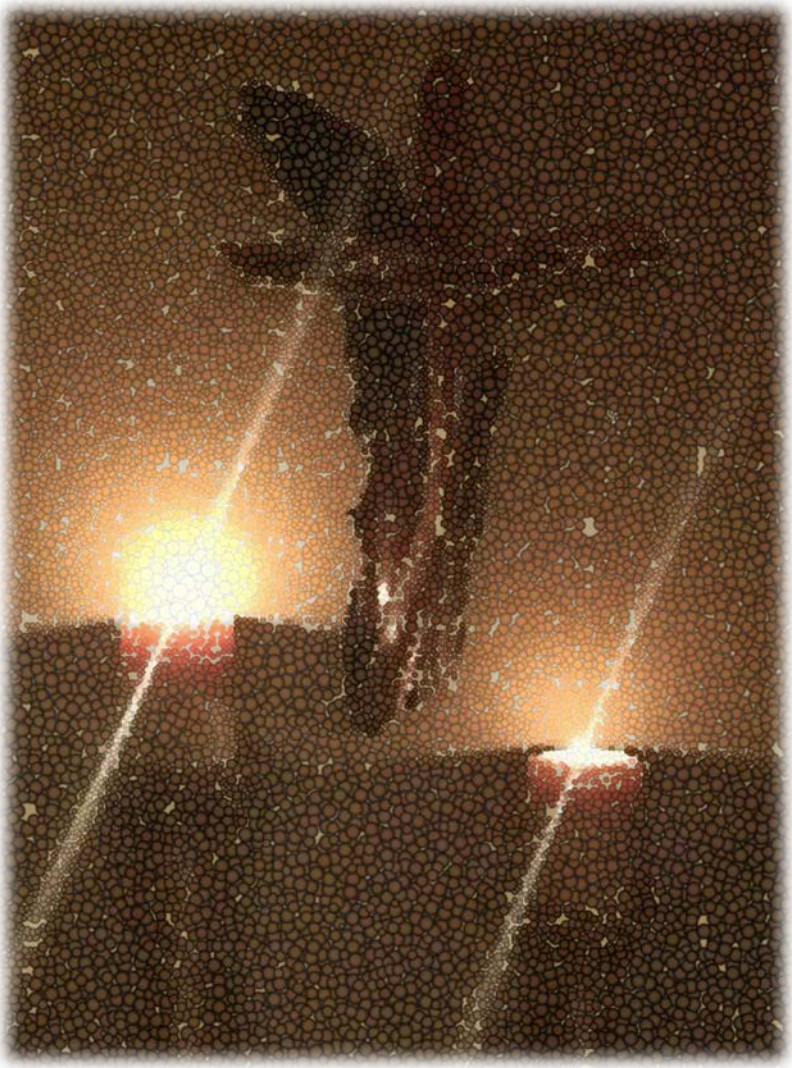
Hall, Thelma. *Too Deep for Words: Rediscovering Lectio Divina.* New York: Paulist Press, 1988.

Douglas-Klotz, Neil. *Prayers of the Cosmos: Reflections on the Original Meaning of Jesus's Words.* New York: HarperCollins, 1990.

Boff, Leonard. *The Lord's Prayer: The Prayer of Integral Liberation.* Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 198

[1] Benedict XVI, *Church Fathers: From Clement of Rome to Augustine* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2014), 23.
[2] John of the Cross, *The Collected Works of Saint John of the Cross* (Washington, DC: ICS Publications, 1991), 97.
[3] Thelma Hall, *Too Deep for Words: Rediscovering Lectio Divina* (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 49.
[4] "How to Practice Lectio Divina," http://www.beliefnet.com/faiths/catholic/2000/08/how-to-practice-lectio-divina.aspx (accessed April 2, 2016).

Week 4: Iconic Prayer—*Visio Divina*



"He is *the image of the invisible God*, the firstborn of all creation."

−Colossians 1.15

Background

While the Western church was developing and refining its versions of *lectio divina*, the Orthodox (or Eastern) tradition was simultaneously concerned with sacred *images* as a means of mediating God's presence. These icons (Greek *eikon*) were the visual counterparts to the Holy Text, telling the story of salvation history as worshippers pondered the messaging they conveyed. In fact, for many the visual representations of figures from the faith tradition conveyed the very presence of God, not unlike the sacramental elements of water and oil or bread and wine. The Orthodox considered these revelations as no less inspired than the written text itself. As such, these religious icons were not said to be *drawn* (or painted), but *written*.[1]

As we might imagine, seeking God through iconic media has encountered its naysayers in Christian history. To some, this practice amounts to nothing short of idolatry, strictly forbidden by the second Commandment. But others have argued a counter-position for centuries. John of Damascus was one such apologist from the eighth century. He saw the worship of God as something to be done with the whole self (Matt 22.37), and so he boldly claimed that "just as words encourage *hearing*, so do images stimulate the *eyes*" (emphasis added). For John, letters and words themselves were nothing more than "images" (icons) of verbal expression.[2] Directly to the question of idolatry, John and others argued that in the Incarnation, Jesus himself represented the perfect "image" of God, "the firstborn of all creation" (Col 1.15). Thus to "see" God through images is parallel to contemplating the living Christ—the ultimate icon.[3]

Visio divina ("divine seeing") is a practice closely related to *lectio divina*. However, instead of contemplating God through Scripture, here we look to encounter the divine through imagery. Unlike the structured and regulated icons of Orthodox worship, any form of media may be used, including paintings, drawings, photographs, sculpture, digital images, etc.

While usually associated with meditating on "religious" imagery, we can also extend *visio divina* to the natural canvas of creation. The natural world represents the most primordial expression of God's love, and experiencing that creation in all its

wonder encourages the sense of awe that is appropriate in prayer. Likewise, being in nature reminds us of our integral connection to the created world—and its Creator.

Methodology

Given its similarity to *lectio divina*, divine reading comprises the same fundamental steps. The exception, of course, would be the first stage. Instead of reading a biblical passage, we now encounter a visual image (*visio*). The remaining steps are identical: meditation (*meditatio*), prayer (*oratio*), and contemplation (*contemplatio*). Like the sacred reading, we view the image slowly and intently with a reverential approach. We allow the icon to speak to us, and we open ourselves to what it has to say.

After a careful viewing, we move towards meditation. Using the imagination, we enter into the icon, taking care to notice expressions, colors, scenes, proximity of characters, or anything that draws our attention into the piece. If something in particular calls to us, we pause and reflect on that element. We unite our heart and mind in meaningful connection with the icon.

Like *lectio divina*, the third iteration of the process is prayer. Whatever has drawn us into the image becomes a gateway between us and the Divine will. We pray that we be shaped by that will, desiring insight into God's way of seeing. We are careful, however, to be silent in our pursuits. We await God's presence and are content to be still. From this stillness, we ebb into contemplation.

Again, the contemplative state has no active "thinking" or analysis. We no longer need to "process" what we see; we have moved into the place where that which God would reveal is shown to us. This purity of union requires no human faculties or aid; we simply accept what is given.

A variation on this overall process involves using multiple images as the source of focus. The same steps are taken as above, but in a more iterative approach. As the different icons appear, different aspects of the images emerge into our consciousness, which in turn evokes various thoughts, emotions, memories, etc.

Practice

As with previous practices, participants are seated with feet flat on the floor, shoulders relaxed, and backs straight. The leader selects an icon and places it in plain view of all present.

- *Pray for God's perception (1 min).* As we prepare to view the icon, we take a brief moment to invite God into the exercise.
- *Take in the whole image (3 mins).* All slowly scan the icon, letting the eyes survey the entirety of the image. We are examining the whole of the item, careful to inventory both what's presented and our emotional response to it.
- *Secondary scan (10 mins).* Now we scan the image again, but this time we pause on details. We notice nuance in the icon. We linger. If an attachment is particularly strong, we should stay with that detail and converse with God around its significance.
- *Closing prayer (1 min).* As we bring the exercise to a close, we remain silent and open our inner selves to God and the experience.
- *Group reflection (10 mins).* If the participants are open to it, we listen to two or three personal reflections on the exercise. These are sacred moments where we are designated *listeners*, careful not to critique or dialogue with the ones who are reflecting.

Reflections

After the personal experiences are shared, the group enters into an overall discussion of *visio divina*. Possible questions for group reflection:

- Before this encounter, what were your perceptions on icons in worship? Has this experience changed that perception? Enhanced it?
- How did it feel to *visually* experience prayer?
- Would you have the same experience with "secular" images? Could that be extended to see God in the "mundane" scenes of our daily lives?
- What variations on this type of prayer might be useful for you?

Supplemental Resources

http://www.patheos.com/Resources/Additional-Resources/Praying-with-Art-Visio-Divina

http://alivenow.upperroom.org/2012/08/15/visio-divina/

Binz, Stephen J. *Transformed by God's Word: Discovering the Power of Lectio and Visio Divina*. Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2016.

Paintner, Christine and Lucy Wynkop. *Lectio Divina: Contemplative Awakening and Awareness*. New York, Paulist Press, 2008.

Nes, Solrunn. *The Mystical Language of Icons.* Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2004.

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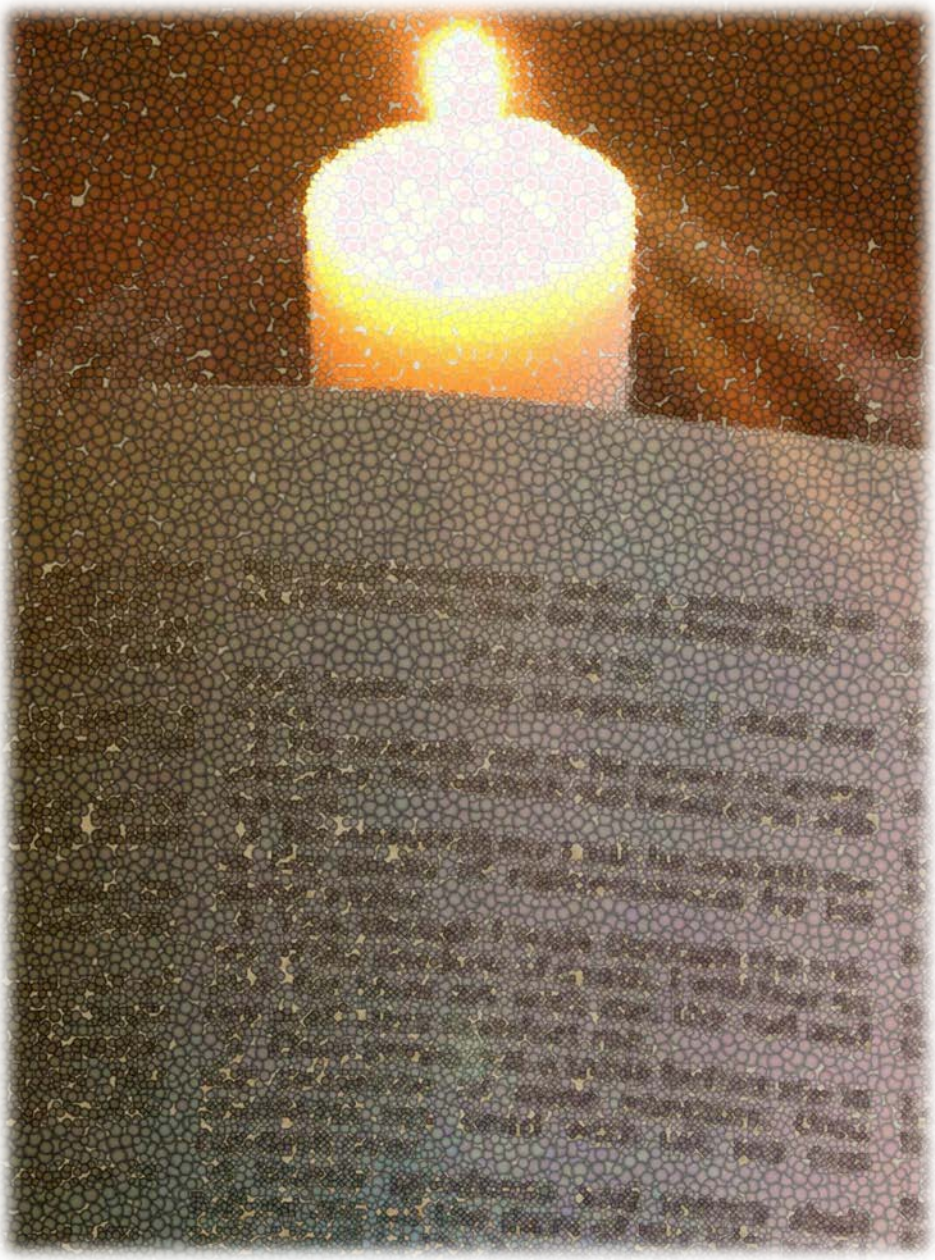
[1] Christine Paintner and Lucy Wynkop, *Lectio Divina: Contemplative Awakening and Awareness* (New York, Paulist Press, 2008), 121. Cf. Alfredo Tradigo, *Icons and Saints of the Eastern Orthodox Church* (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2006), 6.

[2] Solrunn Nes. *The Mystical Language of Icons* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2004), Kindle Locations 147-148.

[3] Stephen Tomkins, "John of Damascus for Icons." https://www.christianhistoryinstitute.org/study/module/john-of-damascus/ (accessed January 30, 2017).

Week 5: Hymnody—Praying the Psalms



"Let the word of Christ dwell in your richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and *with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms*, hymns, and spiritual songs to God."

−Colossians 3.16

Background

For over twenty-five hundred years people have engaged the Psalter. They've done this through singing, reading, recitation and interpretation. But regardless of how these sacred songs are used, all of these worship forms can be counted as prayer.

The English word "psalm" originates from the Greek *psalmos*, which in ancient times meant a song or chant accompanied by a stringed instrument.[1] The collection of 150 "praises" (from the Hebrew *Tehillim*—"praises"—the traditional Jewish term for the Psalter) that we know is actually a "collection of collections," a group of hymns composed by multiple authors over the course of time. The ancients attributed these compositions solely to David, but even the headings of the psalms themselves make that a somewhat dubious claim. Regardless, the Psalter is a body of work that has lasted and proved its worth for countless generations. The rationale for that longevity is shown in the accessibility of the poetry itself.

Regardless of the audience, the sentiments of the Psalter speak to the human condition. They transcend time and space, revealing the core of the human experience—in the Davidic courts, or the homes of suburban America. There are psalms of worship, praise, thanksgiving, and lament. There are words of wisdom, and songs of war. There are even curses and vengeance. And while some of these categories may make us "uncomfortable," they nevertheless give voice to the breadth and depth of our emotional, psychological, and spiritual realities. The Psalms represent a time-tested tome to which we can turn to "hear" our inner-most selves expressed by "human" voices just like our own.

Old Testament theologian Walter Brueggemann speaks of three locations in which we might find ourselves at any given time in our spiritual walk: securely oriented; painfully disoriented; and surprisingly reoriented.[2] While the Psalms speak to all of these "places," they are notably concerned with the latter two ideas of being lost and finding a new way—they lend expression where *real life happens*.

The twentieth century mystic Thomas Merton says that "nowhere can we be more certain that we are praying with the Holy Spirit than when we pray the Psalms."[3]

The Psalter represents God's words given back to us to express the totality of our experience. Praying the Psalms allows the Spirit to intercede when "we do not know how to pray as we ought" (Rom 8.26), supplying the substance of symbols and concepts to voice our reality. But that prayer is not merely for our own catharsis; it links us to the very oneness of God. Merton adequately summarizes this notion of union and our overall purposes for this study:

> God has taught us to praise Him, in the Psalms, not in order that He may get something out of this praise, but in order that we may be made better by it. Praising God in the words of the Psalms, we can come to know Him better. Knowing Him better we love Him better, loving Him better we find our happiness in Him.[4]

As we venture into the Psalms, let's allow them to "free" us into the Spirit of God.

Methodology

There are no set ways of praying the Psalms. Each of us has the ability to use them in our own particular way, meditating and praying in and for the situations that suit us. For example, if we feel the need for security, we may pray Psalm 57. Likewise, if we feel sorrow or persecution, we might seek out Psalm 5. Or we may simply need to give God the praise, and so we turn to Psalm 100, 105, or 150. Whatever our circumstance, we can find something in the Psalter that matches our station, and there are resources that aid in that search (see Appendix A). However, we might choose to pray the Psalms *systematically*, and for that there is some precedence.

In the sixth century, Benedict of Nursia formed a religious order that still remains, commonly known as the Benedictines. Their motto is "Pray and Work," and, true to that tag line, they dedicate a tremendous amount of time and energy to prayer. Their vehicle of choice is the Psalter. While the original monks chose to move through almost the entire Book of Psalms in one week, a more "relaxed" approach is taken in modern times. Now they have the "luxury" of moving through the text in four weeks! The Psalms are sectioned out in a methodical way, the monks praying them at three hour increments throughout the day (see Appendix B).

A less "monastic" way of approaching the Psalms is by dividing all 150 chapters into groups of five, which produces thirty sets of five. Each day (there are about thirty days in each month) we scan that day's grouping, selecting one of the five that speaks

most loudly to us. At that point, we read the prayer, simultaneously meditating and praying on the words. The process is not unlike *lectio divina*, except we consume the entirety of the Psalm. If we mark off each Psalm that we've read, we will have prayed the entire Psalter in five months. If we allow for duplicates, we can stretch it out over the course of the year.

Practice

Many hymnals and books of worship provide the Psalter in musical and lyrical form. The practice below borrows from the *United Methodist Hymnal*, although any Psalter could be substituted. The leader distributes a copy of Psalms 51 and 67 from Appendix C, or as shown on pages 785 and 791 of the *Hymnal*, respectively. The group is seated in a circle if possible, with adequate lighting for reading. The format for this communal prayer will be responsorial.

- *Opening prayer (1 min).* The leader invites one of the participants to open with a brief prayer. We should be mindful of why we're here, and open to the insights God may provide us.
- *Read Psalm 51 (3 mins).* The leader speaks the lines that are in plain text; the remaining participants respond with the bolded lines. We read the text slowly and with intention. Since this is a *penitential* Psalm (of lament), we come humbly and with contrite hearts.
- *Recite the Gloria Patri* aloud (1 min).* This prayer closes out the reading of the Psalm.
- *Silence (1 min).* We allow the solemnity of the moment to overtake us.
- *Read Psalm 67 (1 min).* The leader speaks the lines that are in plain text; the remaining participants respond with the bolded lines. This is an example of a *praise* Psalm, so we speak boldly and with zest.
- *Recite the Gloria Patri aloud (1 min).*
- *Silence (1 min).* Once again we take in the magnitude of the moment.

  *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.

Reflections

Possible questions for group reflection:

- What mood did you take going into the reading of Psalm 51? Psalm 67? Did the reading of the Psalms alter your mood or exacerbate it?
- If you were feeling contrite prior to Psalm 51, what portions of the Psalm resonated most strongly with you? For Psalm 67, if you were elevated to praise, what resonated here?
- In what ways did the communal reading of the Psalms impact your experience?
- Does the reading of the Psalms seem to be a good practice for you? What would you do to enhance the practice?
- Read the first few verses of Psalm 51 from a different translation (the examples given here are from the New Revised Standard Version). Does this language change how you experience the Psalm? If so, make a note to try praying the Psalms from a translation that resonates with you.

Supplemental Resources

http://www.redeemer.com/learn/resources_by_topic/prayer/prayer_and_fasting/praying_the_psalms/

http://unlockingthebible.org/eight-ways-to-use-the-psalms/

Peterson, Eugene. *Praying with the Psalms.* New York: HarperOne, 1993.

Endres, John and Elizabeth Liebert. *A Retreat with the Psalms: Resources for Personal and Communal Prayer.* New York: Paulist Press, 2001.

Keller, Timothy and Kathy Keller. *The Songs of Jesus: A Year of Daily Devotions in the Psalms.* New York: Viking Press, 2015.

Sire, James. *Learning to Pray Through the Psalms.* Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006.

Brueggemann, Walter. *Praying the Psalms: Engaging Scripture and the Life of the Spirit*. Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2007.

[1] Samuel Terrien, *The Psalms: Strophic Structure and Theological Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2003), 10.
[2] Walter Brueggemann, *Praying the Psalms: Engaging Scripture and the Life of the Spirit* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, 2007), 2ff.
[3] Thomas Merton, *Praying the Psalms* (Ravenio Books), Loc 97. Kindle Edition.
[4] Ibid., Loc 51.

Week 6: Silence—Sitting

"Now there was a great wind…but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire *a sound of sheer silence*….*Then there came a voice to him* that said, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?'"

–1 Kings 19.11b-13

Background

We often consider prayer to be a conversation between God and ourselves. But before we can listen to others—especially God—we must learn to cultivate the discipline of silence. In a 2014 study at the University of Virginia, psychologists determined that their experimentation subjects "preferred to administer electric shocks to themselves instead of being left alone with their thoughts."[1] It is no wonder that silence is often deemed one of the best negotiation tactics; since we cannot bear it, we are compelled to speak. But when we understand quiet as a means of discovery, it provides us with a contrast by which we can evaluate the "sounds" of our lives in a more spiritual way.

Some have called this type of introspection a "gestational silence." In Luke's gospel, Zechariah's silencing by the angel Gabriel can be seen as an "opportunity for reflection" and "renewal" during his externally imposed period of muteness.[2] Intense introspection of this type not only affords us the time to evaluate ourselves more thoroughly—our shortcomings, our insecurities, our fears—but it also permits us to observe our perceived realities with fewer preconceptions and judgments. Because we are silent, our responses are muted. In turn, our hearts and minds are liberated to simply receive. Like Elijah at Mount Horeb, the sound we await doesn't accompany the winds of whispering voices, raucous musical booms that rattle our eardrums like an earthquake, or even seemingly soothing tones that crackle like flames in a winter fireplace. The sound that brings us face to face with our ultimate reality is that of silence. Mother Teresa gets to the heart of it:

> In the silence of the heart God speaks. If you face God in prayer and silence, God will speak to you. Then you will know that you are nothing. It is only when you realize your nothingness, your emptiness, that God can fill you with Himself. *Souls of prayer are souls of great silence* (emphasis added).[3]

We are obliged to take the lessons of Zechariah, Elijah, and Teresa to heart—to hear God's voice, we must "allow God to speak to [us] in the mystery of silence and quiet presence."[4]

Methodology

There are numerous ways of being silent. We can practice silence at home alone, or we can maintain a spirit of quietness while navigating rush hour traffic. The options are open, but sometimes the discipline and consistency of rigor is often necessary. The approach we use here focuses on the breath.

Contemplative breathing has been a part of Christian practice for some time, although not specifically noted in ancient writings. Exceptions include the *Philokalia*, a collection of writings from the fourth to sixteenth centuries, and also excerpts from John of the Cross and Ignatius of Loyola.[5] The method below is an amalgamation of several disciplines.

The first rule of thumb is to sit still. Some may choose to sit in a chair with the feet flat on the ground. Others may prefer a seated kneeling position, while still others opt to sit on the floor with the legs crossed. Whichever posture we choose, the key is to be *still*. That stillness literally embodies the unity we seek with God.

The second guideline is to sit with the back straight. Beyond being optimal for the core structure and function of the organs, this posture speaks of "relaxed alertness." This state of being is fundamental for an intentional entering into the interior life.

Next are the eyes. We may close the eyes if comfortable, but this position often invites sleepiness or wandering. It is preferable to keep the eyes open, fixed on a location on the floor at approximately a forty-five degree angle. Maintaining open eyes keeps us mindful of the present where God meets us.

Finally, we focus on our breathing. These are natural breaths, intended to slow us down and center us into the present. Breathing *literally* keeps us alive, and focusing on the breath reminds us of the breath of life that God breathes into us (and creation).

There are two items to be mindful of during this exercise. First, as we sit in silence, oftentimes are minds will tend to wander. This process is natural, and we can manage these thoughts as part of the discipline. As they arrive, we don't resist; instead, we welcome and observe, without judgment or critique. As they leave, we bid them

farewell, and we bring our attention back to the breath. The second item is related to the first: to keep ourselves centered on the breathing, it is often useful to either count the breaths on the exhalation (e.g. a standing count of one to five), or to repeat a "mantra" in rhythm with the breathing. For example, Psalm 46.10a—"Be still and know that I am God!—could be abbreviated to "Be" on the inhalation, and "still" for the exhale. There are no limits as to the details; the goal is to keep silent and allow ourselves to be in the Divine Presence.

Variations abound. One way to change up the breathing portion is to move from natural breaths to measured breathing. In this practice, the breath is inhaled, held, and released in a metered way. For example, the practitioner counts to eight while inhaling, holds it for eight beats, and then exhales for that same eight count. That cycle is repeated for the duration of the term. (This practice is known to regulate the limbic system which activates when we want to "over-react.") Another deviation would be to have a soft chime or bell intermittently sound. The sound (while breaking the silence!) serves to help bring the mind back to the present when it inevitably begins to wander.

Practice

Again, participants are seated with feet flat on the floor, shoulders relaxed, and backs straight. Hands may be positioned on the lap with palms up, cupped together, or clasped in prayer form. While the head is straight, the gaze is downward at forty-five degrees. (Note: It is not recommended to stare at a flame or other "animated" object; these have a hypnotic effect.) The tongue is placed in the roof of the mouth, and the participants breathe fully through the nose. The leader will serve as timekeeper.

- *Invite God into the midst (1 min).* Be mindful that we sit not for "self-improvement," but to prepare ourselves for God's presence.
- *Recite the Lord's Prayer aloud (2 mins).* The collective recital of the Lord's Prayer serves as a centering mechanism, and reminds us why we sit.
- *Breathe (15 mins).* We are mindful of the breath and the present. If our minds wander, we are free to use a "mantra" or count the breaths. We aren't anxious about the exercise; it isn't about us. It's about God.
- *Recite the Gloria Patri* aloud (1 min).* This prayer serves as a bookend to the Lord's Prayer, closing out the prayer portion of the session in community.

*Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit; as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be: world without end. Amen.

Reflections

Possible questions for group reflection:

- What were some of the challenges you had during the silence?
- If you tried it, did the mantra or counting help?
- If you enjoyed the practice, did you find that you didn't want to end it? (Caution: Silent sitting should always be for a set time. Allowing ourselves to go on and on is a sign that we are doing it purely for self-gratification.)
- Have you previously associated this type of prayer with other faith traditions?
- Does this seem like a discipline you might incorporate on a regular basis?

Supplemental Resources

Finley, James. *Christian Meditation: Experiencing the Presence of God.* New York: HarperOne, 2005.

Habito, Ruben. *Healing Breath: Zen for Christians and Buddhists in a Wounded World.* Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2006.

MacCulloch, Diarmaid. *Silence: A Christian History*. London, ENG: Penguin Publishing Group, 2014.

Birx, Ellen. *Selfless Love: Beyond the Boundaries of Self and Other*. Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2014.

Rittelmeyer, Friedrich. *Meditation: Guidance of the Inner Life*. Edinburgh, GB: Floris Books, 1936.

http://www.clarityseminars.com/mp3.html

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[1] Timothy Wilson, David Reinhard, et al, "Just think: The challenges of the disengaged mind," *Science* 345, no. 6192 (2014), 75.
[2] Timothy Clayton, *Exploring Advent with Luke: Four Questions for Spiritual Growth* (Notre Dame, IN: Ave Maria Press, 2012), 22.
[3]Mother Teresa, *In the Heart of the World: Thoughts, Stories and Prayers* (Novato, CA: New World Library, 1997), 7.

[4] Thomas Keating, Thomas Ward et al. "Lectio Divina as a Tool for Discernment" by Sarah Butler, *The Divine Indwelling: Centering Prayer and Its Development* (New York: Lantern Books, 2001), 26.
[5] Ruben Habito, *Healing Breath: Zen for Christians and Buddhists in a Wounded World* (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 2006), 41-42.

Appendix A: Categories of Psalms[1]

Lament Psalms	
Community	12, 44, 58, 60, 74, 79, 80, 83, 85, 89*, 90, 94, 123, 126, 129
Individual	3, 4, 5, 7, 9-10, 13, 14, 17, 22, 25, 26, 27*, 28, 31, 36*, 39, 40:12-17, 41, 42-43, 52*, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 59, 61, 64, 70, 71, 77, 86, 89*, 120, 139, 141, 142
Specialized Lament Psalms	
Penitential	6, 32*, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143
Judgment/Curses	35, 69, 83, 88, 109, 137, 140
Thanksgiving Psalms	
Community	65*, 67*, 75, 107, 124, 136*
Individual	18, 21, 30, 32*, 34, 40:1-11, 66:13-20, 92, 108*, 116, 118, 138
Salvation History	8*, 105-106, 135, 136
Songs of Trust	11, 16, 23, 27*, 62, 63, 91, 121, 125, 131
Hymns	
Hymn & Doxology	8*, 19:1-6, 33, 66:1-12, 67*, 95, 100, 103, 104, 111, 113, 114, 117, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 150
Worship Psalms	
Covenant Songs	50, 78, 81, 89*, 132
Royal	2, 18, 20, 21, 29, 45, 47, 72, 93, 95*, 96, 97, 98, 99, 101, 110, 144
Songs of Zion	46, 48, 76, 84, 87, 122
Temple Liturgies	15, 24, 68*, 82, 95*, 115, 134
Community Psalms	
Wisdom Psalms	1*, 36*, 37, 49, 73, 112, 127, 128, 133
Torah Poems	1*, 19:7-14, 119

[1] Modified from Dennis Bratcher, "Types of Psalms: Classifying the Psalms by Genre," http://www.crivoice.org/psalmtypes.html, last modified: April 23, 2014, accessed February 2, 2017.

Appendix B: Divine Office Psalm Chart[1]

		SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
I	OR	1 2 3	6 9	10 12	18:1-30	18:31-51	35	105 (131, 132)
	MP	63 149	5 29	24 33	36 47	57 48	51 100	119:145-152 117
	DP	118	19 7	119:1-8 13 14	119:9-16 17	119:17-24 25	119:25-32 26 28	119:33-40 34
	EP	110 114	11 15	20 21	27	30 32	41 46	• 119:105-112 • 16
II	OR	104	31	37	39 52	44	38	106 (136)
	MP	118 150	42 19	43 65	77 97	80 81	51 147	92 8
	DP	23 76	119:41-48 40	119:49-56 53 54	119:57-64 55	119:65-72 56 57	119:73-80 59 60	119:81-88 61 64
	EP	110 115	45	49	62 67	72	116:1-9 121	• 113 • 116:10-19
III	OR	145	50	68	89:1-38	89:39-53 90	69	107
	MP	93 148	84 96	85 67	86 98	87 99	51 100	119:145-152 117
	DP	118	119:89-96 71	119:97-104 74	119:105-112 70 75	119:113-120 79 80	22	119:121-128 34
	EP	110 111	123 124	125 131	126 127	132	135	• 122 • 130
IV	OR	24 66	73	102	103	44	78:1-39 (55)	78:40-72 (50)
	MP	118 150	90 135:1-12	101 144:1-10	108 146	143 147:1-11	51 147:12-20	92 8
	DP	23 76	119:129-136 82 120	119:137-144 88	119:145-152 94	119:153-160 128 129	119:161-168 133 140	119:169-176 45
	EP	110 112	136	137 138	139	144	145	• 141 • 142
	NP	91	86	143	31:1-6 130	16	88	• 4 • 134

[1] Modified from "Liturgy of the Hours/Divine Office Psalm Chart," http://www.stutler.cc/russ/LOTH_CHART_vert.html, accessed February 1, 2017.

Appendix C: Psalms 51 & 67

Psalm 51

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions.
Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.

For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me.
Against you, you only, have I sinned, and done that which is evil in your sight, so that you are justified in your sentence and blameless in your judgment.
Behold, I was born into iniquity, and I have been sinful since my mother conceived me.

Behold, you desire truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart.
Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
Make me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice.
Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me.
Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your holy Spirit from me.
Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and sustain in me a willing spirit.

Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you.
Deliver me from death, O God, God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your deliverance.

O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall show forth your praise.
For you have no delight in sacrifice; were I to give a burnt-offering, you would not be pleased.
The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

Psalm 67

O God, be gracious to us and bless us and make your face to shine upon us,
that your way may be known upon earth, your saving power among all nations.
Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you.
Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth.

Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you.
The earth has yielded its increase; God, our God, has blessed us.
God has blessed us;
let all the ends of the earth fear God!