

Encountering the Beloved



A spiritual exercise to experience
the presence of Jesus in His Word

*“Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; **meditate** on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.” Joshua 1:8*

Praying the Bible is a practice that goes back to the Jewish tradition of meditation. The word for meditate in Hebrew is “haghah” and means to murmur, mutter or to sigh. This word carries with it the idea of a cow chewing the cud. The picture here is chewing, swallowing and bringing what is eaten up again to chew and swallow it. I know that’s pretty gross, but now you’ve got the idea!

The idea here is to slowly and prayerfully read the Scriptures, and to ruminate on the words. As we do this, we are listening for the whisper of God to our hearts. We then turn what He is speaking into a prayer conversation with Him. This allows God’s Word to change us as He shows us how to apply His Word in our lives.

The ancient Jewish practice of praying the Scriptures would have been practiced by Jesus and His disciples, as well as the early Christians. This spiritual practice was picked up by the desert monks of the third century and has been used in monasteries for centuries. Over time, this way of prayer evolved into what came to be known as *Lectio Divina*, which means “divine reading”.

One of the ways to approach *Lectio Divina* is by reading a passage of Scripture four different times, each time listening to the Holy Spirit with a different emphasis. These four steps are broken down as: *read, reflect, respond and rest*. Here I have included a practice exercise to try Lectio Divina in this way. I have chosen a passage from John 15.

You will want to bring a notebook or your journal to write down your impressions from each of the four prompts. Now find a quiet place where you will not be distracted and get ready to encounter the Beloved!

Prepare

Before beginning, take a moment to quiet your heart from distractions. Ask Jesus to still your heart in His peace. Breathe deeply a few times to still your mind and body. Invite the Holy Spirit to guide you as you meditate on this passage of Scripture: “Lord, please give me eyes to see and ears to hear what You want to speak to me right now.”

John 15:1-8

“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. 3 You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. 4 Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

5 “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. 6 If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. 7 If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. 8 This is to my Father’s glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.”

First Reading: **Read**

Slowly read the passage. Do this out loud so that you can stay focused. As you read, be aware of what is standing out to you. What word or phrase is the Holy Spirit highlighting? Write it down.

Second Reading: **Reflect**

Slowly read the passage out loud again. As you read, how do you sense that this might be connecting to your life right now? Are there any feelings or images coming up for you? Pause and reflect. Write down what you are receiving.

Third Reading: **Respond**

Slowly read the passage out loud again. How do you sense that God might be calling you to respond to what He is showing you? Pause and reflect. Write it down. Talk to God about what He has been revealing. Pray to Him your response. If you would like, write this prayer out to God.

Fourth Reading: **Rest**

Are you sensing God’s presence? Rest in this awareness of the Beloved and enjoy Him. Remain open to anything else He might want to speak to your heart. Be still for a moment before going about your day.