

Discipleship Class

LECTIO DIVINA

Week 3: Prayer and Presence



Through Lectio Divina, we never run out of things to pray about. It gets the conversation with God going and moving in the right direction.

"We don't sit down, look at each other, and say, 'Let's have a really good talk.' If we did, the result would likely be several minutes of long and uncomfortable silence. Instead, we talk about a particular question, issue, or subject that means a lot to us." — Dr. Tim Gray

Jesus taught us that our prayers or petitions are most effective when the Word of God is in our hearts.

"If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you." (John 15:7)

When we pray, try starting with, *"God, You said in Your Word..."*

That approach will be more effective than just are rambles, our rants, and our opinions, because God honors His Word (see Psalm 138:2).

Asking God questions

"Texts will often refuse to reveal their treasure until you open them with the key of prayer"
— C.H. Spurgeon

Abraham, who is known as a friend of God, asks God questions and even negotiates with God (see Genesis 18:17-33).

Jacob, while wrestling with God, asks *"What is your name?"* (See Genesis 32:34-36).

Gideon, asks the angel who came representing God: *"Oh my lord, if the Lord be with us, why then has all this befallen us? And where are all His miracles which our fathers told us of, saying, 'Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt? 'But now the Lord hath forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites."* (Judges 6:13)

Psalmist, asks honestly from a heart of reverence: *"Lord, where is thy steadfast love of old, which by thy faithfulness though did promise to David...Blessed be the Lord forever, Amen and amen."* (Psalm 89:49&52)

Express your Deepest Desires

"God, be merciful to me a sinner!" (Luke 18:13) — Publican

"Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" (Mark 10:47) — Bartimaeus

"Give me this water, that I may not thirst" (John 4:15) — Samaritan Woman

"I believe that you are the Christ" (John 11:27) — Martha

The prayer doesn't necessarily have to be articulate and eloquent. It can be a heartfelt groan:

"For we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words."

The goal is to go deeper

The Holy Spirit will help you to pray! As we are led by the Spirit in prayer, we will be led into a deeper place with God.

"In every conversation, he is calling us into a deeper relationship with Himself." — Dr. Tim Gray

"The Scripture is a river...you can go as deep as you want." — St. Gregory the Great

What happens in Contemplation?

"Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face, then the things on earth will grow strangely dim, in the light of His glory and grace." — Helen H. Lemmel

While the first three steps will require effort on our end, the fourth step is more effortless. While the first three steps require our mind and will, the last step remains beyond our mind and will.

Dr. Tim Gray talk about how when you persevered and made your way to the summit of the mountain, contemplation is enjoying the view you did not have on the way up!

"Contemplation when it comes rewards the labors of the other three (steps)" — Guigo II

The posture is that of a loving gaze that is lost in awe and wonder. Often, contemplation is beyond description.

David described this as, *"to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord"* (Psalm 27:4). When we come out of contemplation, our faces are radiant (see Psalm 34:5).

"(Contemplation is) the foretaste and beginning of perfect joy" — Josef Pieper

"All that I have written seems to me like straw compared with what has now been revealed to me." — Thomas Aquinas

Two examples:

1. A hummingbird versus an eagle.

A hummingbird is flapping while an eagle is soaring gracefully. Contemplation is soaring, not flapping.

2. A rowboat versus a sail boat.

A rowboat goes forward through effort, while a sail boat is carried by the wind. Contemplation is not rowing, but sailing.

"The point of Lectio Divina is to lead us into an encounter with the most glorious love in the universe, the love that unites Christ the Bridegroom with his bride the Church." — Dr. Tim Gray

"...he rewards those who seek Him." (Hebrews 11:6)

"Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." (James 4:8)

Gift or Accomplishment?

- ◆ We should not boast about entering contemplation. It is the work of the Holy Spirit.
- ◆ However, the decisions we make can set us up to receive this gift.
- ◆ Contemplation is not lucking out. It is the product of those who persistently and consistently do something with their longing for God.

Two examples:

- ◆ We can't make the fish bite, but we can throw a well-prepared line into the water.
- ◆ We can't create a perfect wave, but we can get on our surfboard, paddle out, and wait with anticipation.

Spiritual Masters on Contemplation

"I think no one can know what it is except he who has received it." - Bernard of Clairvaux

"It is as rare as it is delightful, and as short-lived as rare." - Bernard of Clairvaux

"In contemplation...the soul is withdrawn from bodily senses...so completely lost...in the Word."— Hans Boersma

"Man will no longer be capable of saying a single word. Prayer itself will have become impossible. It will become contemplation, a look of love and adoration." — Robert Sarah

"I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows— was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell." — Paul the Apostle (2 Corinthians 12:2-4)

ACTIVATION # 3:

Lectio Divina as a Group



Take a passage of Scripture of your choice (aim for about 5-8 verses), and turn it all into a prayer. Make sure to include some questions. Then after prayer, take time to listen to the Spirit's response.

Passage: _____

Your prayer response to this passage:

Do you hear the Spirit responding to your questions and heartfelt petitions?

How would you now describe this experience?

HOMework # 3



Take a whole chapter of the Bible and write out a prayer. Expect the Lord to speak to you as well. Write down what you receive from the Spirit. If you don't get anything, you don't need to write something. Sometimes, the answers come at a later time. We can keep knocking and that's the goal of this assignment. To practice knocking on the door of revelation until it is opened to us!