

PRACTICE SEVEN

READING THE BIBLE FOR INDIVIDUAL TRANSFORMATION

BEGIN WITH SILENCE AND PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Gather together as a Community in a comfortable setting (around a table, on the couch, the floor of a living room, etc.). Invite the Holy Spirit to lead and guide your time together before spending a brief moment in silence. Hardness of hearing is an unfortunate side effect of the frenetic pace in which many of us conduct our lives. When your community comes together in the hopes of speaking to and hearing from God, even a momentary measure of silence can work to slow and silence the swirling chaos around us, that we might hear what God is saying in and through one another.

GROUP DISCUSSION: (10 MINUTES)

1. Do you enjoy reading the Scriptures, or does it feel like a chore? Why?
2. When you read the Scriptures, do you feel as though you actually meet with and connect with God? Why or why not?

READ THIS OVERVIEW (5 MINUTES)

Our aim for this Fall has been to take part together in the most important component of our apprenticeship to Jesus - being with him. And so each of the practices we have taken part in this Fall have been about setting aside time and space to do just that - being with Jesus.

- *silence and solitude*: slowing down and calling our attention the reality of God's nearness to us and with us
- *abiding*: making space and time to actually call our hearts and minds to learn or relearn how to remain in that reality
- *emotional awareness*: growing in awareness of our own hearts and emotional state and then being honest about it before God and one another
- *casting cares*: taking Jesus up on his invitation to bring him our burdens in exchange for his peace

For practices seven and eight the goal remains the same - the practices are built to facilitate being with Jesus - specifically through time reading and reflecting on the Bible. Most of us are familiar and comfortable with the concept of reading the Bible, however many of us wrestle with being formed by what we are learning. That's why we have opted to take on the practice of lectio divina. Lectio divina has been used as a method of devotional Bible reading in the Christian church since the 6th century. Lectio divina is not meant as a replacement of Bible study or sound biblical hermeneutics, rather it is best used in partnership with Bible study to help us get what we are learning into our hearts and hands. The practice consists of five distinct movements: Preparing to meet with God, Reading, Reflection, Response, Rest. This week we will be practicing this as individuals.

VIDEO PROMPT (3 MINUTES)

THE PRACTICE (15 MINUTES)

Using Psalm 1, read and move slowly through each of the five movements.

1. Prepare to meet with God: Turn your phone off and leave it in another room. Situate yourself comfortably in a quiet, solitary place. Calm your body and quiet your mind before God as you work to prepare your heart to receive what God has spoken, and to respond accordingly. Finally, invite the Holy Spirit to guide your thinking and feeling as you read.

2. **Read:** Read the passage slowly and carefully, read the passage three times. Take your time. As you move through the text, pay close attention to what words and ideas draw your attention in unique ways. When your focus is drawn to a particular word or thought, pause and reflect.
3. **Reflect:** Upon completing the passage, return to the beginning and read one more time. On your fourth journey through the text, allow the text to connect with you personally. Which words or phrases resonate with your heart, your season of life, your person in this moment.
4. **Respond:** Talk to God about your experience. This is a time to connect with God, asking questions that might arise or listening for insight from the Spirit.
5. **Rest:** Pause to sit in God's presence before fleeing from the moment. You might express wonder, awe, gratitude, or praise through words, or you might allow yourself to feel and experience these things quietly before God. This is a step of waiting on God without resistance.

Note: It can be helpful to write your word or phrase somewhere and take it with you as a reminder for the week.

GROUP DISCUSSION: (10-15 MINUTES)

1. What word or phrase did you reflect on in your time?
2. What do I need to know, or be, or do in light of the text?
3. Name one step you can take this week to move from "heart to hand".
4. Make a plan to read Psalm 1 five days this week.

CLOSE IN PRAYER (10 MINUTES)