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|  | The Practice of Reading the Bible*Experiences of Bible Reading*Reproducible Activities |

## Reading the Bible Activities

The 18 Bible activities include a teaching plan and the activity. All of the activities are included on separate MS Word document so that you can create handouts for sessions, a booklet, online playlists and activities, social media posts, etc. Each Activity can be done in 20 minutes (approximately).

Activity 1. What’s Your Experience of the Bible?

Activity 2. The Bible in Our Lives

Activity 3. Reading the Bible with Heart and Mind

Activity 4. Reading the Bible by Hearing and Obeying

Activity 5. Reading the Bible by Hearing with Hopefulness

Activity 6. Reading the Bible and Acting on What We Hear

Activity 7. Playing the Bible Name Game

Activity 8. Bible Search Game

Activity 9. Reading a Biblical Text

Activity 10. A Bible Reading Method

Activity 11. 100 Essential Bible Readings in 100 Days

Activity 12. Studying a Bible Text

Activity 13. Reading the Bible with Heart

Activity 14. Reflective Bible Reading

Activity 15. Praying with the Psalms

Activity 16. Lectio Divina

Activity 17. Visio Divina

Activity 18. Visual Faith Bible Activity (separate PDF file)

###### Children Activities

There are 5 pages of reading the Bible activities designed for children that can be combined with other Bible activities or used as part of a children’s program and home activities. (They are available online as a separate PDF file.)

1. Reading the Bible in My Family
2. Jesus Reads the Bible
3. Reading the Bible
4. Try It – Reading the Bible
5. Try It – Reading Gospel Stories

## What’s Your Experience of the Bible?

1. Stand if you’ve read from the Bible at least once in the past year.
2. Remain standing if you read from, or hear a reading from, the Bible at least once a month.
3. Remain standing if you read from, or hear a reading from, the Bible at least once a day.
4. Please stand if you can name the two main divisions (main parts) of the Bible.
5. Please stand if you know at least one key difference between the Old Testament and the New Testament.
6. Please stand if you can name three characters from the Old Testament.
7. Please stand if you can name three characters from the New Testament.
8. Please stand if you know how many books there are in the Bible.
9. Please stand if you can name the four gospels in the New Testament.
10. Please stand if you can name the first and last books in the Bible.

## The Bible in Our Lives Reflection Activity

Consider the following questions as a guide to help you get in touch with your own hunger for the Word of God:

* What kinds of feelings do I experience when I see a Bible? Am I curious? Do I feel a sense of anticipation? Am I intimidated? Am I angry?
* Where do I keep my Bible in my home? Does its location help or hinder my Bible-reading habits?
* How often do I read the Bible?
* How often did my family of origin read the Bible together?
* Have I ever participated in a Bible study? If so, when and where? If not, why?
* If I wanted to study the Bible, where would I go to find a reputable Bible study?
* Do I get discouraged from Bible reading when I meet other people who seem to know a lot about the Bible? Why?
* Do I experience the Word of God in places other than the Bible? If so, where? If not, why?

## 

## The Bible in Our Lives Questionnaire

**1. What memories do you have about reading or not reading the Bible? (Check all that apply.)**

* I remember a parent or grandparent reading the Bible for himself or herself.
* I experienced a parent or grandparent reading the Bible to or with me.
* I heard the Bible in Sunday school, religious education classes, and/or vacation Bible school.
* I began reading it for myself when I received a Bible of my own.
* I participated in a Bible study group.
* I took a course in Scripture in college or in an adult religious education program.
* I received a background in Bible through hearing sermons.
* There was a Bible in our home, but I do not recall people reading it.
* I really don’t have any memory of reading the Bible when I was growing up.

**2. How do you remember reading and studying the Bible? (Check all that apply)**

* I remember listening to Bible stories at church.
* I remember lectures about the Bible at church.
* I remember discussions about the Bible at church.
* I memorized verses from the Bible.
* I remember singing biblical verses in songs and hymns.
* I remember doing dramatic readings and acting out Bible stories.
* I remember studying the Bible when taught Sunday school or religious education classes.
* I have no memories of studying the Bible in a church community.

**3. What is your experience of reading the Bible today? (Check all that apply)**

* I enjoy reading the Bible and am strengthened by it.
* I take time for a daily Bible reading or use a daily devotional book that has Bible passages.
* I am inspired and guided by the Bible to help me practice my faith in daily life.
* I turn to the Bible as a source of help in time of trouble.
* We have family devotions and conversations using the Bible.
* I have discussions/conversations with my friends about the Bible.
* I participate in a Bible study group in my church community.
* I study the Bible on the Internet.
* I consult the Bible in order to make good decisions in life.
* I do not read the Bible very often.
* I turn to the Bible as a guide for my moral living.
* I believe that reading and studying the Bible leads us to Christ and a deeper faith.
* I do not know where to start reading the Bible.
* I feel intimidated by reading and studying the Bible.
* I am not sure the Bible has much relevance for my life today.
* I just don’t have time to read the Bible regularly.

## Reading the Bible with Mind and Heart

*Jesus answered, “’Love the Lord you God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest and the most important commandment. The second most important commandment is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as you love yourself.’”* (Matthew 22:37-40)

Some people study the Bible. They can tell you all about its literary structure. They can tell you when each book was written. They can tell you the historical circumstances that influenced the author. They can even pronounce all of those lengthy foreign names. But, they can’t seem to understand that God deeply desires a relationship with them. Some people read with the mind but not with the heart.

Some people become deeply infatuated with the Bible. They savor every word that they read, although they may only read certain sections of certain books. They read the ones that feel good. They take these readings to heart and build their lives around them, and they try to build others’ lives around them too. They desperately want everyone to feel the way that they feel. Some people read with the heart but not with the mind.

The Christian practice of reading the Bible calls us to read with both mind and heart. We need to open our minds to the wisdom of those who have given their lives to studying the biblical texts. It’s important to get beyond private reading and allow the community of faith to guide our reading. Joining a reputable Bible study can help us read with an open mind. A good Bible study will challenge us to hear God’s Word with someone else’s ear. We can become more Christ-like when we welcome the perspectives of others who share the body of Christ with us.

We also need to open our hearts. We can be surprised by joy when we discover a deep and personal relationship with the person who lies behind the text. Our intention as we read the Bible is to deepen our relationship with Jesus Christ and his followers. Increasing our love for God and neighbor is the primary goal of Bible reading. All of the learning that we do about the Bible should be at the service of these loving relationships. Robert Mulholland puts it this way:

Yes, we must love God with all of our mind. We must seek to utilize our cognitive, intellectual, rational dynamics to the best of our ability. We cannot shirk this at all. However, we must remember that the injunction to love God with all of our mind comes a little bit farther down the road in Jesus’ list; loving God with all of our heart and all of our soul precedes loving God with all of our mind. (M. Robert Mulholland, *Shaped by the Word: The Power of Scripture in Spiritual Formation*, p 23.)

A heartfelt reading of scripture is of primary importance. Our academic study of the Bible helps keep our hearts in balance, but it is not the goal of Bible reading. Study serves the loving relationships we have with God and others; love should never take a back seat to study.

## Reading the Bible by Hearing and Obeying

*When Jesus had said this, a woman spoke up from the crowd and said to him, “How happy is the woman who bore you and nursed you!”*

*But Jesus answered, “Rather, how happy are those who hear the Word of God and obey it!”* (Luke 11:27-28)

Hearing the Word of God and obeying it is the secret to living well and living a Christian life. It is even more important than blood relationship with Jesus. Mary’s holiness is not based upon her physical relationship with Jesus; rather, it is based upon her openness to hearing God’s Word and obeying it. Jesus is not contradicting the woman’s assertion in Luke 11:27; he is redirecting it.

Reading Scripture with human “eyes” alone is like mentally registering the words of the text without recognizing who is speaking through them. (Richard Foster, *Life with God: Reading the Bible for Spiritual Transformation*, p. 58)

It’s one thing to read the Bible; it’s quite another thing to hear the Word of God. Are you really listening to the Word of God when you read the Bible or are you simply looking at black ink on white pages?

*“Listen, then, if you have ears!”* (Matthew 11:15)

Jesus frequently exhorts his followers to listen, but it is not simply listening to sound waves from another voice. The listening that Jesus wants us to do is listening with our hearts. It is a listening that changes us, like Elizabeth listening to Mary’s greeting in Luke’s gospel.

*Soon afterward Mary got ready and hurried off to a town in the hill country of Judea. She went into Zechariah’s house and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby moved within her. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and said in a loud voice, “You are the most blessed of all women, and blessed is the child you will bear! Why should this great thing happen to me, that my Lord’s mother comes to visit me? For as soon as I heard your greeting, the baby within me jumped with gladness. How happy you are to believe that the Lord’s message to you will come true!”* (Luke 1:39-45)

Mary heard the Word of God when the angel appeared to her earlier in Luke’s gospel. She believed it and obeyed it. Elizabeth likewise was a woman who heard God’s Word and obeyed it. She had ears that were connected to her heart, and when she heard the greeting from the woman who was filled with the living Word of God, she heard it and it caused a stirring deep within her body. And then she could not help herself. She had to proclaim in a loud voice what she had heard.

## Reading the Bible by Hearing with Hopefulness

When we listen to the Word of God in the Bible, listen through the lens of hopefulness. The text calls us to an obedient response. The words of the Bible are not empty promises; they are promises full of power to change our lives and power to change the world. We should expect that power to be released in us every time we open the Bible.

*Listen! I stand at the door and knock; if any hear my voice and open the door, I will come into their house and eat with them, and they will eat with me.* (Revelation 3:20)

Opening the Bible is like opening a door to a world filled with hope because Jesus is on the other side of the door waiting for us to let him in. His promise is that if we open the door, he will come in and share nourishment with us, and his nourishment will strengthen us for our life’s journey. It is important for us to obediently hope for this power to be unleashed when Jesus speaks. Jesus rewards those who listen to him with hopeful obedience.

*When Jesus entered Capernaum, a Roman officer met him and begged for help: “Sir, my servant is sick in bed at home, unable to move and suffering terribly.”*

*“I will go and make him well,” Jesus said.*

*“Oh no, sir,” answered to officer. “I do not deserve to have you come into my house. Just give the order, and my servant will get well. I, too, am a man under the authority of superior officers, and I have soldiers under me. I order this one, ‘Go!’ and he goes; and I order that one, ‘Come!’ and he comes; and I order my slave, ‘Do this!’ and he does it.”*

*When Jesus heard this, he was surprised and said to the people following him, “I tell you, I have never found anyone in Israel with faith like this. I assure you that many will come from the east and the west and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob at the feast in the Kingdom of heaven. But those who should be in the Kingdom will be thrown out into the darkness, where they will cry and gnash their teeth.” Then Jesus said to the officer, “Go home, and what you believe will be done for you.”*

*And the officer’s servant was healed that very moment*. (Matthew 8:5-13)

The Roman officer believed in the power of Jesus’ word. He hoped obediently for that power to change things in his life. But notice that his obedience was not forced. He freely approached Jesus and Jesus freely gave him that for which he hoped. Jesus does not drag us into obedience. We are invited to open the door, hear the word and obey it freely.

## Reading the Bible and Acting on What We Hear

When Jesus calls, will you go?

*As Jesus walked along the shore of Lake Galilee, he was two fishermen, Simon and his brother Andrew, catching fish with a net. Jesus said to them, “Come with me, and I will teach you to catch people.” At once they left their nets and went with him.* (Mark 1:16-18)

And so the lives of two true disciples began. They heard the Word of God and they acted on it. They gave up everything for Jesus who loves them and saves them.

The true test of whether or not we are hearing God’s Word is how we are living. Living well in response to God’s Word means that we allow what we hear in the scriptures to guide every dimension of our lives. We all know and believe that Jesus came to save us, but we often forget that he saves every part of us: heart, soul, mind and body. We won’t experience the true depth of God’s love for us until we surrender every part of our lives to the guidance of God’s Word. Our jobs, our pastimes, our households, our finances, our friendships, our battles, our thoughts and our words must all be guided by God’s Word.

After Jesus rose from the dead, he appeared to two of his disciples on the road to Emmaus. He spoke the Word of God to them, explaining how all the Scriptures point to him. They heard the Word of God, they took it to heart, and they were prepared to encounter him personally in the breaking of the bread. Their response was action:

*They said to each other, “Wasn’t it like a fire burning in us when he talked to us on the road and explained the Scriptures to us?”*

*They got up at once and went back to Jerusalem, where they found the eleven disciples gathered together with the others and saying, “The Lord is risen indeed! He has appeared to Simon!”* (Luke 24:32-34)

What makes this action more compelling is that they raced back to Jerusalem at night, a dangerous adventure in those times. The fear of the night could not overpower the fire burning in their hearts, a fire burning for love of Jesus and for love of their neighbors who needed to hear the good news.

Hearing the Word of God set their hearts on fire. Does your heart burn when you hear God’s Word in the Bible? Do you allow the fire to motivate you into action? How do you live well through the Christian practice of reading the Bible?

## The Bible Name Game

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Mary | Joseph |
| Adam | Eve |
| Samson | Delilah |
| Herod | Herodias |
| Eli | Samuel |
| Esau | Jacob |
| Elizabeth | Zechariah |
| David | Jonathan |
| Martha | Mary |
| Ruth | Naomi |
| Rebecca | Isaac |
| Cain | Abel |
| Paul | Barnabas |
| Sarah | Abraham |
| Jacob | Rachel |
| Moses | Aaron |
| Simeon | Anna |
| Elijah | Elisha |

## Bible Search Game

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Good News Translation** | **New American Bible** | **New Revised Standard Version** |
| Romans 6:3  13th Word  Write the word below: | Romans 6:3  11th Word  Write the word below: | Romans 6:3  14th Word  Write the word below: |
| 1 Chronicles 11:10  2nd Word  Write the word below: | 1 Chronicles 11:11  2nd Word  Write the word below: | 1 Chronicles 11:11  2nd Word  Write the word below: |
| Luke 4:1  1st Word  Write the word below: | Luke 4:1  6th Word  Write the word below: | Luke 4:1  1st Word  Write the word below: |
| 1 John 1:1  7th Word  Write the word below: | 1 John 1:1  28th Word  Write the word below: | 1 John 1:1  33rd Word  Write the word below: |
| Deuteronomy 5:6  6th Word  Write the word below: | Deuteronomy 5:6  6th Word  Write the word below: | Deuteronomy 5:6  6th Word  Write the word below: |
| Exodus 12:29  7th Word  Write the word below: | Exodus 12:29  3rd Word  Write the word below: | Exodus 12:29  8th Word  Write the word below: |
| Isaiah 19:18  25th Word  Write the word below: | Isaiah 19:17  4th Word  Write the word below: | Isaiah 19:17  4th Word  Write the word below: |
| John 6:57  2nd Word  Write the word below: | John 6:57  4th Word  Write the word below: | John 6:57  4th Word  Write the word below: |

## Reading a Biblical Text

### Bible Readings

* Genesis 2:4-25 (Creation)
* Genesis 7:1-19 (The Flood)
* Genesis 11:1-9 (Tower of Babel)
* Genesis 22:1-20 (Sacrifice of Isaac)
* Exodus 14:1-30 (Crossing the Red Sea)
* Exodus 16:1-36 (Manna and Quail)
* Exodus 20:1-17 (Ten Commandments)
* Exodus 21:1-11 (Treatment of Slaves)
* Leviticus 25:8-17 (Year of Restoration)
* Leviticus 25:35-38 (Loans to the Poor)

### Reflect

Reflect on the Bible story using these three questions:

* How did you understand this story when you were a child?
* As you read the story today, what do you now think the author intended to say?
* What application, if any, does the story have to contemporary life?

## A Bible Reading Method

### Pray

Pray before reading, asking God to help you understand and receive his Word. Through Christ you are in the Father’s holy presence. Approach him boldly, humbly and expectantly.

### Read

Next, read slowly and carefully through the Bible passage. Sometimes, you’ll want to read the pas- sage more than once. You may also find it helpful to read the preceding or following passages to get the context. Take the time to read it as thoroughly as you can, expecting God to answer your prayer for understanding of his Word.

### Reflect

Reflect on what you have read, waiting in openness, ready to obey God’s Word to you. Think through the passage, asking yourself such questions as:

* What does this passage say? What is its main point?
* What does it reveal about God, or about me?
* What insight am I given into myself and into my life situation?
* What does God require of me now, in thought, word or action?

These questions will help you “dig deeper” into the meaning of the passage as you study and reflect. Many people find it helpful to write their answers in a journal or notebook. You may find it helpful to use a Study Bible to help you probe the deeper meaning.

### Apply

The Bible’s purpose is not only to give us information about God, but also to help us live in the proper relationship to God and others. Apply what God has taught you from today’s reading to the circumstances of life – situations at work, home school, or church. Use what you have learned in order to become more like Jesus.

* How can God’s Word apply to my life today: my situations at home, at work, school or church?

### Pray

End your time as you began, in prayer. This time turn the things you have learned into prayers. Make your discoveries from the Bible the basis of your prayer time. Ask God to help you live out and apply what you learned that day.

#### Resource

Check out Scripture Union’s daily guide for finding practical help from the Bible at: <https://scriptureunion.org/discovery>. Each day's reading covers 10-15 verses.

## 100 Essential Bible Readings

This Bible reading program, developed by Scripture Union, is built around 100 carefully selected short Bible passages—50 from the Old Testament and 50 from the New Testament. The passages are usually one to two chapters in length and can easily be read in 10 minutes or less. The 100 readings take you through all of the major types of biblical writing including Historical books, Poetry and Wisdom Literature, the Prophets, the Gospels, Acts, the Epistles and Revelation. The Bible passages are organized into 20 sets of five readings each. This 100 Essential Bible Readings program enables you to get the big picture of God’s Word and in the process develop a daily Bible reading habit.

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## Studying a Biblical Text

#### Bible Reading: Matthew 18:1-5

*At that time the disciples came to Jesus, asking, “Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of heaven?” So Jesus called a child to come and stand in front of them, and said, “I assure you that unless you change and become like children, you will never enter the Kingdom of heaven. The greatest in the Kingdom of heaven is the one who humbles himself and becomes like this child. And whoever welcomes in my name one such child as this, welcomes me”*

#### 1. What is happening in the reading? Try this:

* Identify the characters by name.
* Identify the words and phrases that seem significant to you.
* Identify the emotions or feelings that are expressed by the characters.
* Identify the plot and theme of the reading.
* Consult a commentary that will help you discover if there are any important details that a 21st century reader would likely miss. For example, the word that Jesus would have used for child is synonymous with the word slave. Jesus is not instructing his followers to become childish; he is telling them to become humble, powerless and dependent. This childlike or slave-like disposition, not arrogance or selfish ambition, is the path to Christian greatness.

#### 2. How is the happening in the reading present in today’s world? Think about:

* Newspaper stories about murders that are committed for personal or financial gain
* Corrupt politicians who are more concerned about selfish desires than service
* Television programs that glorify selfish ambition at the expense of harmonious relationships
* An unbalanced competitive spirit that compels some people to cheat to get to the top

#### 3. How is the happening in the reading present in my life? Examine this:

* What characters do I like/dislike in the reading?
* Why do I like particular characters?
* Why do I dislike particular characters?
* How do I see what I like and dislike in my own personality?
* How do I compete with others in my life?
* What is my definition of greatness?
* Am I willing to be dependent upon others? Why or why not?
* Am I willing to hand my life over to God in the way that a young child must be dependent upon a parent? Why or why not?

The critical task here is to discern how the Word of God that you discover in the Bible is also calling you and guiding you outside of the Bible in your daily life. When we develop an understanding of the Word of God in the Bible, we are then in a privileged position to seek out and follow Jesus, the living Word, with more confidence in our daily experiences. The Bible helps us to clarify in our minds the identity of Jesus so that we will recognize him when he presents himself to us in every moment of every day.

## Reading the Bible with Heart

Select a Gospel story with lots of action (e.g., a parable or healing story) to “read with heart.” A few examples of Gospel stories are listed below. You can use your own Bible or access these passages online from Bible Gateway by typing the verse into the search. Go to <https://www.biblegateway.com>. Select the NRSV translation.

* The Young Jesus (Luke 2:41-50)
* Temptation in the Desert (Matthew 4:1-11)
* Calling of the First Disciples (Luke 5:1-11)
* Calming of the Storm (Mark 4:35-41)
* The Woman in Simon’s House (Luke 7:36-50)
* Jesus Instructs the Disciples (Mark 6:7-13)
* The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7)
* Miracle of Cana (John 2:1-12)
* “Who Do People Say I Am?” (Matthew 16:13-17)
* Curing of the Blind Man of Jericho (Luke 18:35-43)
* The Miracle of the Loaves (John 6:1-13)
* Woman Caught in Adultery (John 8:1-11)
* Jesus and Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10)
* The Woman at the Well (John 4:5-42)
* The Man Born Blind (John 9:1-41)
* Raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-44)
* The Rich Young Man (Matthew 19:16-22)
* Driving Out the Money Changers (Mark 11:15-17)
* Washing the Apostles’ Feet (John 13:1-20)
* The Mount of Olives (Luke 22:39-46)
* The Crucifixion (Luke 23:33-49)
* The Disciples on the Way to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35)

#### Reflection

1. Read the Bible passage slowly.
2. Read it again and pay attention to any verses that draw their attention.
3. Identify an attention-grabbing verse that really settles in your heart.
4. Write that verse down on a piece of paper or file card or note, and carry it with you through the day or week.

Reflective Bible Reading

1. Choose a passage from Scripture, about five to ten verses in length. (See the list of “Scripture Passages by Topics” list if you need help.)
2. Choose a comfortable place where you will not be uninterrupted.
3. Light a candle, if possible. Take a few moments to get your body in harmony with your spirit.
4. Sometimes it helps to take a few deep breaths or stretch your body, then relax.
5. Acknowledge God’s presence with you. Ask God to send the Spirit to be with you and guide you in this time of reflection.
6. Read the passage you have chosen slowly, out loud, listening carefully to it. You might want to pause after a sentence or phrase.
7. Say the words or phrases that struck you.
8. Read the passage a second time, slowly and prayerfully.
9. Consider the message the passage might have for you: a challenge, an affirmation, or an insight. If you are doing this with others, you could invite them to share what comes to mind.
10. Read the passage a third time, slowly and prayerfully.
11. Pause for about ten minutes of silence and allow the Spirit to speak to you. If no words or thoughts come, just sit in the silence. Sometimes God touches us in ways we cannot know.
12. Following your quiet time, consider how the passage calls you to action. Is there something you need to do to make the Scripture alive for you here and now?
13. Close with a brief prayer of thanksgiving or praise to God for the gift of the Spirit.

Scripture Passages by Topic

(You can use your own Bible or access these passages online from Bible Gateway by typing the verse into the search. Go to <https://www.biblegateway.com>. Select NRSV version.)

**Affliction**: Romans 8:18–25, 35–39; Sirach 2:1–18; John 14:1–3; Matthew 11:28–30; Philippians 4:12 13; 2 Corinthians 1:3–7.

**Anger**: James 1:19–21; Ephesians 4:26; Proverbs 12:16; Sirach 30:24; Colossians 3:12–13; Psalm 37:7–8

**Charity**/**Love**: John 13:1–15, 15:9–13; Romans 12:9–21, 13:8–10; 1 Corinthians 13:1–13; 1 Peter 4:8–10; 1 John 3:11–20; 1 John 4:7–12, 18–21.

**Confusion about God**: Isaiah 55:8–9; James 1:13–14; 1 Peter 4:12–13; James 1:2–3; Luke 6:22–23; 2 Corinthians 12:7–10

**Death**: 1 Corinthians 15:19–22; John 11:1– 44; Romans 5:12–15; Colossians 3:1–4.

**Discouragement**: Philippians 4:6–8; Psalm 138:7–8; John 14:1; John 14:27; Philippians 1:6; Psalm 94:18–19

**Fear**: John 4:18; 2 Timothy 1:6–7; Romans 8:15; Psalm 91:1–5; Proverbs 3:25–26; Isaiah 43:2; Sirach 34:14; Matthew 10:28

**Forgiveness**: Ezekiel 36:25–36; Matthew 18:15–18, 21–35; Luke 15:11–32.

**Friendship**: Sirach 6:5–17, 9:10–16, 13:1–13; Luke 10:25–37, 11:5–13; John 15:14–17, 20:11–18.

**Happiness** or **Joyfulness**: Psalm 4:8–9; Psalm 16:11; Psalm 34:6; Psalm 71:23; Isaiah 29:19; Acts 2:28; 3 John 1:4

**Impatience**: Romans 8:24–25; Psalm 37:7–8; Proverbs 25:15; Ephesians 4:1–3; James 5:8–10

**Life**: Isaiah 65:17–25; Genesis 1:1—2:4; John 15:4–7; Romans 6:3–11, Romans 20—23; Matthew 7:13–14; 1 John 5:9–13.

**Loneliness**: Psalm 25:16–17; Isaiah 41:10; Isaiah 41:13; John 14:18; Psalm 46:1; Psalm 73:23–24; Revelation 3:20

**Marriage**: Genesis 2:18–24; Deuteronomy 24:5; Isaiah 62:3–5; Matthew 19:3–11; 1 Corinthians 7:3–5; Ephesians 5:22–33.

**Peace**: Ezekiel 34:25–31; Isaiah 2:2–5; John 20:19–26; Luke 24:36–43; Philippians 4:4–7; 2 Timothy 2:20–26.

**Physical Illness**: Psalm 103:2–3; Jeremiah 30:17; James 5:14–15; Exodus 23:25; Sirach 31:22; Matthew 10:1

**Sadness**: Sirach 30:21–23; Matthew 5:4; 2 Corinthians 4:8–10; Ecclesiastes 7:3; Matthew 19:21–22; Isaiah 41:10; Proverbs 15:30

**Temptation**: Corinthians 10:13; Hebrews 4:15–16; 1 Timothy 6:9; Psalm 119:9–11; James 1:13–14; Ephesians 6:10–11

**Thankfulness**: Tobit 12:6; Psalm 107; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; 1 Chronicles 16:34; Psalm 30:13; Psalm 105:1; Psalm 118; Daniel 3:89; 1 Corinthians 15:57; 1 Thessalonians 5:18; Exodus 18:8–12; Psalm 111; John 11:41–42; Ephesians 1:3–6; Philippians 1:3–6.

**Worry**: Matthew 6:25; Matthew 6:34; 1 Peter 5:6–7; Philippians 4:18–19; Mark 13:11; Philippians 4:6

## Activity 15. Praying with the Psalms

The Psalms are the Bible’s book of prayer. The Psalms have been used in worship for thousands of years. We often go to the Psalms today for prayer, personal devotion, and for communal worship. Select one of the Psalm passages below that you feel most comfortable with as the focus of this prayer experience. (You can use your own Bible or access these passages online from Bible Gateway by typing the verse into the search. Go to <https://www.biblegateway.com>. Select the NRSV translation.)

* Psalm 8:1-7 “What is man, that you think of him?”
* Psalm 11:1-7 “I trust in the Lord for safety.”
* Psalm 16:1-11 “I am always aware of the Lord’s presence.”
* Psalm 23:1-6 “The Lord is my shepherd.”
* Psalm 25:1-14 “Keep your promise, Lord, and forgive my sins.”
* Psalm 30:1-12 “Lord…I will give you thanks forever.”
* Psalm 32:1-11 “Happy are those whose sins are forgiven.”
* Psalm 62:1-12 “God alone protects and saves me.”
* Psalm 63:1-8 “O God….My whole being desires you.”
* Psalm 86:1-13a “Teach me, Lord what you want me to do.”
* Psalm 103:1-14 “Praise the Lord, my soul!”
* Psalm 121:1-8 “Teach me, Lord, what you want me to do.”
* Psalm 139:1-12 “Lord, you have examined me and you know me.”
  1. Read the Psalm passage you selected in quiet. Read every word, pausing when necessary, in order

to let every word present itself to you. Read the words as if you had never read or heard them

before. Be open to new insights that may come. Read the words as if they were the words of your

own prayer. Whenever you read “I,” “my,” “me,” etc., read it as if that meant you.

* 1. From the passage you have read, select a phrase, a verse or two verses to be the words you will use to begin your own prayer.
  2. Write those words down and then continue writing an additional sentence or two of your own continuing the thoughts and feelings begun by the words of the Psalmist.
  3. Here are a few ways you can incorporate praying with the Psalms in their daily life:

* Read a psalm as you rise each day.
* Read a psalm as part of your evening prayer.
* Read a psalm or part of a psalm as part of your meal blessing.
* When you are experiencing strong emotion, like joy or grief or frustration, flip through the psalms and see which one reflects your own feelings then pray it.

## Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina is a contemplative way of reading the Bible. It dates back to the early centuries of the

Christian Church and was established as a monastic practice by Benedict in the 6th century. It is a way

of praying the Scriptures that leads us deeper into God’s word. We slow down. We read a short

passage more than once. We chew it over slowly and carefully. We savor it. Scripture begins to speak

to us in a new way. It speaks to us personally, and aids that union we have with God through Christ.

Use the Lectio Divina experience to guide you into a prayer reflection on a Bible passage and

imagining how you will live the passage in your daily life.

Select a Scripture passage that you would like to reflect upon and pray with. This may be a story from

the Old Testament, a Psalm, a passage from the Prophets, a Gospel story or parable, or a passage from

one of Paul’s letters. You can also select the Gospel reading from Sunday worship.

1. **Read**: Read the Scripture passage slowly and purposefully. Reflect on it silently for a few minutes

to pray with it and to ponder what it might be saying.

1. **Meditate**: Read it a second time followed by a few minutes of silence. Discover a word or two from the passage that is echoing in your heart or stands out for you in any way.
2. **Pray**: What do you want to communicate to God? What emotions do you want to express to God?
3. **Act**: Reflect on how God is challenging you through this Scripture passage. What is God calling me to do? What is the next step you need to take?

## Scripture Passages for Lectio Divina

(You can use your own Bible or access these passages online from Bible Gateway by typing the verse into the search. Go to <https://www.biblegateway.com>. Select NRSV version.)

* The Young Jesus (Luke 2:41-50)
* Temptation in the Desert (Matthew 4:1-11)
* Calling of the First Disciples (Luke 5:1-11)
* Calming of the Storm (Mark 4:35-41)
* The Woman in Simon’s House (Luke 7:36-50)
* Jesus Instructs the Disciples (Mark 6:7-13)
* The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7)
* Miracle of Cana (John 2:1-12)
* “Who Do People Say I Am?” (Matthew 16:13-17)
* Curing of the Blind Man of Jericho (Luke 18:35-43)
* The Miracle of the Loaves (John 6:1-13)
* Woman Caught in Adultery (John 8:1-11)
* Jesus and Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10)
* The Woman at the Well (John 4:5-42)
* The Man Born Blind (John 9:1-41)
* Raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-44)
* The Rich Young Man (Matthew 19:16-22)
* Driving Out the Money Changers (Mark 11:15-17)
* Washing the Apostles’ Feet (John 13:1-20)
* The Mount of Olives (Luke 22:39-46)
* The Crucifixion (Luke 23:33-49)
* The Disciples on the Way to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35)

## Visio Divina

The practice of praying with visual images is called *visio divina* or divine seeing. It is adapted from the sixth-century Benedictine practice of Bible reading called lectio divina, using both the text and art to help the reader encounter the living Word of God. The rhythm of visio divina ignites the senses to “hear and see” the Word of God as one listens, meditates, and prays with the sacred text. Studying a text of Scripture and the illustration involves uncovering layers of meaning. When we have discovered the “voice” of the text, we can bring its images and lessons into the present and discern its significance for our life situations.

1. **Read:** Read the following Scripture passage from the Gospel of Mark. Listen with the “ear of you heart” for a word or short phrase that God has for you this day.

*The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how.* *The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head.**But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come.* (Mark 4:26-29)

1. **Meditate**: What does the word or phrase you have chosen mean to you today?
2. **See**: Look at the image and let your eyes stay with the very first thing that you see. Keep your attention on that one part of the image that first catches your eye.



Photo by [Melissa Askew](https://unsplash.com/@melissaaskew?utm_source=unsplash&utm_medium=referral&utm_content=creditCopyText) on [Unsplash](file:////s/photos/wheat%3futm_source=unsplash&utm_medium=referral&utm_content=creditCopyText)

1. **Contemplate**: Breathe deeply and let yourself gaze at that part of the image for a minute or so. Now, let your eyes gaze at the whole image. Take your time and look at every part of it. See it all.

Reflect on the image for a minute or so.

1. **Reflect**: What emotions does this image evoke in you? What does the image stir up in you, bring forth in you?
2. **Pray**: What do you want to pray for today?