

LECTIO DIVINA

Series: Where's Jesus?
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Edgar King
Spiritual formation
Psalms 100

So we have been on the series of talks labelled, "Where's Jesus?". The aim was to have conversations about places that Jesus went and people Jesus was with to give us a sense of where we could find life in our lives today. And also probably as a church where we are called to be too.

To complete the series, I want to introduce a practice. This can be very helpful for our spiritual formation. One thing Jesus did, that we too as his disciples must do, is meditating on scripture.

Jesus always quoted from the Psalms and other old testament scripture: it shaped his worldview and spirituality. It gave him life. We too have to let our worldview and life be formed by the word of God.

Sadly, nowadays, people seldom spend time with scripture. Partly it is because of just how the world and our lives are ordered. Work pressure, social media pressure, everything is competing for our 24 hour day. Yet I do not think it was any easier in the centuries before. That is why it is called a spiritual discipline, you had to find a way to get to do it.

The other reason for this, I think, is lack of skill. As we engage with ancient writings it can sometimes be hard to understand or relate too, yet God's word is living and relevant. So we need a few skills to do this right.

So what people then resort to is not reading the bible. Then every other force in the world, but the word of God forms them. And even many believers fall into the habit of only encountering Scripture on Sunday morning and only during the talk or sermon.

The primary function of the church was to make disciples of all nations. Teach the things Jesus taught and their obedience and to do the works Jesus did. This must and should include the study of scripture and training people to study scripture.

It is in the study of scripture that we learn of the things Jesus said and did. It is the study of scripture that invites into the bigger story that we are all stepping into.

Paul talks about the communion of all believers and being surrounded by a crowd of witnesses. You see, what we are about is not just about Trinity Vineyard and the 100 or so many of us. It is about the church that surrounds us. It is about the church in Kenya and the world. It is about the generations of believers that have gone before us. It is about the Story God has invited us into since the beginning of time. And we get that as we get into scripture.

Beyond that, there is real power in God's word. If we want: our lives transformed, to heal, to be set free, to be restored and even to create, we find true power in God's word. This is why it is so so important.

So I want to introduce us to a simple skill to do as a church community. Instead of listening to a talk from me, we will all read scripture together. Then you will all ask what the Holy Spirit is saying to you through that word.

So how do you listen to the Holy Spirit? It is not left for the spiritual ninjas or people on stage. No, it is for all of us. As we go through this, there will be images and words and ideas or even feelings that will come to you. Pay attention to all of that. Some of it might just be God communicating something or drawing your attention to something.

Write those down. No matter what they are and pray through them. Ask God why they came to your mind and keep writing down what else comes.

Just remember, the Spirit of God will always honour Jesus, will not bring fear and will never make you feel unloved and will always line up with scripture.

So how are we going to do it?

Lectio Divina Steps

1. I will read a portion of scripture gently over you 5 times.
2. The first time I just want you to listen
3. Second time, I want you to pay attention to pictures, phrases or words that will catch your attention.
4. Take out your journal or on your phone where you take notes and just write those down. I would also ask that you go to the live stream if you can and share some of those with us. That way we are sharing with those watching at home too. We are in communion with each other and we are encouraging each other.

Don't be shy. It can be anything.

5. I will read it a 3rd time. This time prayerfully ask God why the words, pictures or phrases caught your attention. What could God be saying to you today? Not your wife, not your kids, you? The others can come later.

It could be an encouragement. It could be comforting. It could be a promise. It could be being called out of sin. It could be a reminder. Whatever it is, journey with it with the Holy Spirit. Write it down in your journals or notes on the phone.

If some of it is for the church, you can share it on the live-stream

6. I will read a 4th time, this time I want you to prayerfully determine what your response should be. Now that God has brought specific things to your mind and heart, how are you supposed to respond to them?

We are called to be doers of God's word, not just hearers. If God's word is not changing us, then what is the point.

It could be praise, it could be gratitude. It could be reaching out to someone who offended you or you offended them. It could be sharing it with someone. It could be a behavioural change or an attitude change. It could also be an honest prayer to God saying that you are struggling with the truth he has revealed to you. What will your response to God's word be?

7. I will read a 5th and last time and this time we will pray that the Holy Spirit settles his word in our hearts in a way that only He can.

After this, I will ask you to consider some questions that may be useful in just reading and interpretation of the scriptures for ourselves.

Lift up a great shout of joy to the Lord!

Go ahead and do it—everyone, everywhere!

As you serve him, be glad and worship him.

Sing your way into his presence with joy!

And realise what this really means—

we have the privilege of worshipping the Lord our God.

For he is our Creator and we belong to him.

We are the people of his pleasure.

You can pass through his open gates with the password of praise.

Come right into his presence with thanksgiving.

Come bring your thank offering to him

and affectionately bless his beautiful name!

For the Lord is always good and ready to receive you.

He's so loving that it will amaze you—

so kind that it will astound you!

And he is famous for his faithfulness toward all.

*Everyone knows our God can be trusted,
for he keeps his promises to every generation!*

Psalm 100

This is a psalm that would be sung by the nation of Israel during their times of thank-offerings. While making sacrifices of praise. There were celebrations held during the worship times of Israel that included making sacrifices. Sacrifices made, specifically, to praise God and be grateful to him.

This is the context in which this Psalm was sung. A reminder that just even the fact that it is God's pleasure that we are alive is reason enough to praise him. A reminder that all of them were welcome: That God is always waiting to receive them into His presence. That God's love and kindness are more than anything they imagined.

1. What does the scripture we just read say about God?
2. What does the scripture we just read say about you?
3. What does this scripture we just read say about others?
4. What will you do with what it says?

Out of the Psalm we read, where does your heart lie today?

- Do you feel far or excluded from God's invited ones? Or do you hear the invitation?
- Are you filled with praise and thanksgiving? Or are you filled with disappointment and lament?
- Are you finding it difficult to praise today?
- Are you finding it hard to believe that God is good? Or are you basking in his goodness?
- What are you bringing to God as a sacrifice of praise? What is thanksgiving costing you today? Your comfort? Your time? Your possessions? Your pride?
- Are you struggling to see God's faithfulness? How can you confess that and bring your heart and soul to trust God again?
- Are you celebrating his faithfulness towards you?
- How can you pray over these things bringing them to God in prayer?



Let's Pray