

FACILITATOR INSTRUCTIONS

- Facilitator arrives 5-10 minutes early
- Bibles or printouts of scripture passage. Can use passage from last week's sermon or some other selection (perhaps a gospel reading).
- Place the candle/matches on a table in the center of the group.
- Name tags if group newly forming
- Facilitators remember you are responsible for beginning and ending the group on time. Accept this role with authority and grace. Remember to speak with a full voice from the diaphragm. Please check with the group to learn if everyone can hear you (someone may be hard of hearing.)
- As people are getting seated, insist that everyone be in the circle in a seat that is comfortable for them. This is a circle of trust in which each person has an equal place. If necessary, invite the host/s into the circle.

Sharing Introductions: (Each person speaks one or two sentences; the facilitator is responsible to limit the remarks so there is time for the complete hour's lesson.)

- Begin with introducing yourself and share what led you to serve as a facilitator.
- Ask each person to introduce herself/himself and share what led them to participate in the group. (Second through fifth meeting: If helpful, ask participants to share their names. Then ask each person, in a phrase or sentence, to name what they need to let go of/leave at the door to be fully present for the praying with Scripture.

Facilitators Introductory Remarks:

- This practice of praying with Scripture, or Lectio Divina, may be new for some of us and, therefore uncomfortable. However, the practice is grounded in the Christian tradition from about the 5th century, as well as in the Reformed tradition beginning with Calvin. I (the facilitator) will accompany you through this practice of praying with Scriptures. I encourage you to relax (forgetting about time, the need to know, being in control) and trust me to facilitate the practice. The Holy Spirit is our guide, as symbolized by the lighting of the candle. We will read our Scripture passage 4

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times. I will read the passage the first and second times; we need two readers, one for the third time and one for the fourth time. (Hand copies of the text to be prayed to the readers.)

Distractions:

- Distractions are a common experience for everyone, beginners and longtime practitioners. When you become aware that you are distracted, be kind to yourself. Simply note that you are distracted and return your attention to the invitation given by your facilitator.
- It is often helpful to focus on the word/phrase/image that was given at the first reading of the Scripture. At home, you may want to have paper/pencil with you and simply record the distractions that you feel are important to remember, then return to prayer.

Silence:

We live in a world of sound and noise. Silence, for many of us, is a new experience that requires practice. We practice silence for two primary reasons:

- In order to place ourselves intentionally before God so that God may work in us, leading us to grow in the mind of Christ. In the silence, we learn to tell God what we most desire and to listen to God's response. God's response is often beyond words, emotions and feelings. We may not realize God's response until days/weeks/months later when we have a new understanding, a new behavior. Silence encourages a conversation between God and us, where we listen to God more than we speak.
- In order to allow a place of silence to grow inside us. A place that we are able to carry into our busy and demanding worlds. A place to center in the midst of difficult conversations, hard decision-making, times of anxiety/uncertainty/joy. While engaged in any of these situations, we can respond from a place of peace and calm that has been cultivated in the practice of silence before God.

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Time for Discussion:

Reassure participants that a short time for discussion will follow at the end of praying with the Scriptures. This will be a time to explore their questions.

Light the Candle:

This candle reminds us of the presence of the Holy Spirit with us.

Relaxation/Bringing the Body into Prayer:

- I invite you to put whatever you have in your hands on the floor and to make yourself comfortable in your seat. (Someone may need a sofa pillow.)
- You may close your eyes or focus gently on the lit candle.
- Place both feet on the floor, if it is comfortable for you... Let your hips be supported at the back of your seat; let your shoulders be over your hips; and your head resting comfortably on your shoulders. Let your hands be palms up/palms down as they lay easily in your lap. Take a moment to see if you need to shift position to get comfortable.
- I invite you to notice your breathing...are you breathing fast? are you breathing slowly? are you holding your breath? Simply notice without judging. ...
- Now take a deep breath...filling your lungs....letting your diaphragm expand....take a deep breath and hold it....then exhale through your throat and out your nostrils.
- Take three or four deep breaths in your own rhythm...inhaling, holding, then exhaling....(give time for participants to do this)

While they are breathing, facilitator may say: As you breathe in let the Spirit of God fill you. God's Spirit is as intimate as our breathing (for the word for Spirit in the Old Testament is the same word as breath RUAH)...as you breathe out, offer to God all that claims your attention, trusting God will give back to you what is necessary.

- Say: noticing our breath is one way to calm our minds and focus our attention....whenever you are distracted, you may choose to simply focus on your breathing for a few seconds.
- As we close our centering, I invite you to offer a silent prayer of thanksgiving for your body.

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GROUP LECTIO DIVINA

Group Facilitator:

- If you have not earlier in the meeting, recruit two readers to read the Bible passage at question #2 and #3 respectively.
- As you begin, you will have led your group in the Relaxation/Bringing Your Body into Prayer exercise.
- Instruct members to respond spontaneously, without going around the circle.

1. HEAR THE WORD

Prepare participants for the first reading by asking them to listen silently as though hearing the passage for the first time.

Ask:

- A. What parts of the passage catch your attention?
- B. What words, phrases, or images do you hear as though for the first time? As you listen, repeat the word, phrase or image that stays with you over to yourself and wait in silence for time to share.

First Reading: Read the passage aloud, slowly.

Second Reading: Pause a few seconds, and then read the passage aloud again.

After two minutes of silence, invite participants to share word, phrase, or image only. (Meanings and interpretations will come later.)

2. HEAR THIS WORD

Ask participants to prepare for the third reading and, as they listen, to focus on any particular phrase or image to which they feel drawn.

Use these questions :

- A. For what reasons do you feel drawn to this phrase or image?
- B. What does it remind you of?
- C. What meaning does it hold for you?

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D. What might God be saying to you?

Third reading: read the passage aloud slowly.

After two or three minutes, invite participants to share 1-2 sentences in response to the questions.

3. THE INVITATION

Ask participants to prepare for the fourth and final reading. This time, as they listen, invite them to shift from conversing with themselves about the text to conversing with God. Encourage them to tell God what the passage evokes in them, then to listen and respond to what God has to say.

Fourth Reading: read the passage aloud, slowly

After three minutes of silence, invite participants to a time of prayer (about two minutes). Ask them to lift to God the thanksgiving, concerns, and intercessions that meditation on the text has called forth.

4. REST

Invite participants into a time of silence to rest deeply in God's loving presence. Ask them to release themselves and their prayers to God in childlike trust.

Allow 5-7 minutes of quiet, or longer if comfortable. Invite participants to offer a silent prayer of thanksgiving for this time. Direct them to gently refocus on the group.

5. REFLECTION

Suggested questions:

- A. What did you receive?
- B. What did you find most helpful about the process?
- C. What did you find obtrusive or unnatural?
- D. Do you see how the same approach can be used in times of personal reflection as well as with a group?

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Notes: You may find the previous thoughts on distractions and silence helpful in responding to comments made in this final discussion.

Closing of the Group:

Ask each person to simply share one word that describes/expresses his/her experience in the group at the end of this hour. Remind members to respond spontaneously, without going around the circle. Responses may include words, such as restful, surprised, grateful, uncomfortable, anxiety provoking. Let each person's choice of a word stand without comment.

Say at the end of the sharing: May the Word of God dwell richly in your heart this day, and every day. (Extinguish the Candle)