

# Everyday Spirituality

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Prayer, Contemplation, and Meditation for Busy Lives

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Some of the material found in this packet has been adapted from the following sources:

*Spiritual Exercises* by St. Ignatius of Loyola  
*Praying with the Scriptures* by Armand Nigro, S.J.  
*Just As If I Were There: On Gospel Contemplation* by Jesuit Authors  
*Awareness Examen* by Jesuit Authors  
*Rummaging for God: Praying Backward Through Your Day* by Dennis Hamm, S.J.  
*Celebration of Disciplines* by Richard Foster  
*Renovation of the Heart* by Dallas Willard  
*Heroic Leadership* by Chris Lowney

# Everyday Spirituality

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## Prayer, Contemplation, and Meditation for Busy Lives

### The Goal

Those who drink of the water that I will give them will never again be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.

*Jesus of Nazareth* (John 4:14, PAR)

When we open ourselves to the writings of the New Testament, when we absorb our minds and hearts in one of the Gospels, for example, or in letters such as Ephesians or 1 Peter, the overwhelming impression that comes upon us is that we are looking into another world and another life. It is a divine world and a divine life. It is life in the “kingdom of the heavens.” Yet it is a world and a life that ordinary people have entered and are entering even now. It is a world that seems open to us and beckons us to enter. We feel its call.

(From *Renovation of the Heart* by Dallas Willard)

### The Reason

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind” and, “Love your neighbor as yourself.”

*Jesus of Nazareth* (Luke 10:27)

***Why are you here today? What do you hope to get out of this class?***

## The Barriers

- The Trap of Busyness
  - I just don't have time to pray!
- The Lure of Success and the Loss of Focus on What is Really Important
  - I am working 16 hours a day to start my own company. I'll make time for God once the business is up and running. I promise!
- The Fear of Being Still and Silent
  - Silence is NOT golden!
  - I need constant "white noise" in my life!
- The Fear of Failure
  - It will be too hard!
  - I'm just not spiritually mature enough to do this!
  - What if it doesn't work?
- Bad Habits Built Over Many Years
  - I like to watch TV when I have free time.
  - I need to be "do something" all the time.
  - Life is so stressful that when I have time, I just need to "escape" by surfing the internet, reading the newspaper, or just sleeping.

***What are the barriers in your life?***

## The Model ~ Jesus

We must make “space” in our day to be with God. Period. There is simply no getting around the fact that building a loving, healthy relationship takes time and effort. What did Jesus do?

- Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. (Mark 1:35)
- The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest." So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. (Mark 6:30-32)
- But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed. (Luke 5:16)
- One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. (Luke 6:12)
- When the apostles returned, they reported to Jesus what they had done. Then he took them with him and they withdrew by themselves to a town called Bethsaida. (Luke 9:10)
- Once when Jesus was praying in private and his disciples were with him... (Luke 9:18)

If Jesus did this, why in the world do we think that we can have a deep, meaningful, abundant life, without making “space” for God?

***When and where in my day can I make “space” to be with God? Be as specific as possible.***

## The Method – “Finding God in All Things”

There are many ways to grow in intimacy with Jesus. You may already have found some things that work well for you. If so, stick with those. What we want to do is simply equip you with more “tools” to help you grow in your walk with Jesus.

### **St. Ignatius of Loyola and the Jesuits**

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Before he was to be founder of the Jesuits, St. Ignatius of Loyola was a war-wounded soldier. The year 1521 found him recovering at his home in northern Spain from grave injuries suffered during the battle of Pamplona. Those many months of convalescence proved to be a journey of healing not just for his body but also his soul. Ignatius documented his conversion experience in letters, an autobiography and the *Spiritual Exercises*. They would become the foundations of Ignatian spirituality.

This spirituality is deeply rooted in becoming more aware of what is happening in your daily experience – finding God in all things. You can then begin to discern where the spirits of light or darkness may be trying to lead you. We become more aware of God’s presence in our lives and more attentive to His desire’s rather than our own.

St. Ignatius had mystical experiences that gave him an understanding of the importance of the Trinity—Three Persons in One God—Father, Son and Spirit. He was also committed to laboring with Jesus Christ carrying the Cross. Ignatius understood that God is an active God, ever at work in people’s lives. We are called to be attentive to this active God and promptly respond.

### **Principle and Foundation**

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Man is created to praise, reverence, and serve God our Lord, and by this means to save his soul. And the other things on the face of the earth are created for man and that they may help him in prosecuting the end for which he is created. From this it follows that man is to use them as much as they help him on to his end, and ought to rid himself of them so far as they hinder him as to it. For this it is necessary to make ourselves indifferent to all created things in all that is allowed to the choice of our free will and is not prohibited to it; so that, on our part, we want not health rather than sickness, riches rather than poverty, honor rather than dishonor, long rather than short life, and so in all the rest; desiring and choosing only what is most conducive for us to the end for which we are created.

(From *The Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius of Loyola)

Simply put, you and I were created to glorify God, and everything else in life is there to help us to do just that. But it also means that there must be a conscious decision and effort on our part to use everything in our life towards that endeavor. Learning everyday spirituality is one of the ways that we are making that conscious decision.

## Lectio Divina

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Lectio Divina is an ancient spiritual practice from the Christian monastic tradition. Its title derives from the Latin words meaning “reading” and “divine/holy.” In Lectio Divina, we seek to experience the presence of God through reading and listening, meditation, prayer, and contemplation.

### **1. Select a short passage.**

Begin by choosing a section of Scripture that you would like to read and pray. You can choose the text randomly or use a liturgical book, such as *The Book of Common Prayer*. Try not to set a goal for how much content you will cover; the goal is to listen for God and to experience his presence.

### **2. Prepare yourself to hear from God.**

Do what you must to quiet and prepare yourself to hear from God. If you need to find a quiet room, sit in silence for several minutes, or sit in a comfortable chair, take whatever posture will help you prepare to receive and experience God’s presence.

### **3. The reading & listening.**

When you sense that your heart is prepared, begin by slowly reading the passage of Scripture that you have selected. Move slowly through sentences and phrases. As you read, pay attention to what word, phrase, or idea catches your attention.

### **4. The meditation.**

Next, begin to meditate on the word, phrase, or idea that has captured your attention. Repeat it again and again. Consider: What thoughts come to mind as you meditate on this word, phrase, or idea? What are you reminded of in your life? What does it make you hope for? Meditation is no easy task—as you try to concentrate don’t be disappointed if random thoughts enter your head. As they do, offer them to God.

### **5. The prayer.**

Now begin to speak to God. Tell God what word, phrase, or idea captured your attention and what came to mind as you meditated upon it. How is God using this word, phrase, or idea to bless and transform you? Tell God what you have been thinking and feeling as you’ve listened and meditated. Tell God how you hope this word, phrase, or idea will change your heart to be more like His.

### **6. The contemplation.**

Finish by focusing your attention on the fact that God’s presence is with you. If as you try to focus on God’s presence you sense a need to read the text again, to continue meditating, or to simply continue talking with God, allow yourself to do so. As you do, know that you are in the presence of God.

## **Gospel Contemplation**

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Gospel Contemplation (also known as Method of Contemplation and Ignatian Contemplation) makes use of guided imagery and active imagination within the framework of a gospel passage of Jesus' life.

### **1. Select a short passage.**

Select a passage from one of the Gospels, preferably a passage that is fast-moving and colorful in detail (e.g., stories from the last week of Jesus before he was crucified, etc.).

### **2. Relax and settle into God's presence.**

Ask for a particular grace that you are seeking or the particular gift you need at this time – perhaps to know Jesus more intimately, or to become more compassionate, or to be healed in a particular area of your heart.

### **3. Read the passage several times pausing for 30 seconds between each reading**

Slowly read the passage once – aloud, if circumstances allow. Then for 30 seconds or so look up from the page and let the scene sink into your imagination. Continue repeating this step until your mind is saturated with the details of the passage.

### **4. Now place the Bible aside and let the scene happen.**

Do nothing to promote it except to stay alert to its developments. As you let yourself sink into the scene, you will tend to lose the sense of yourself and to identify with the situation. Suppose, for example, that you have read about Jesus quieting the storm on the lake. You may imagine the wind howling, the boat pitching, the apostles struggling at the oars. If this identification deepens, you will find yourself in the boat, (e.g., at the oars) or you may find yourself to be interacting with Peter or Philip.

### **5. Allow yourself to take part in the scene which is now presented to you**

Be passive as possible while being as alert as possible. In fact, let everyone else control the event. You merely interact with the persons, listen, and reply to their words, take part in their activity – conversing with them, accompanying them, helping them, in whatever ways you find yourself as part of the event that is present to you.

### **6. Do not moralize or try to make applications.**

Don't moralize (e.g., "I should be more spontaneous like Peter when I am with my friends...") or draw theological conclusions (e.g., "Notice how the three temptations of Jesus parallel the temptations of the Israelites...").

### **7. After your period of prayer comes to an end make a review for a few minutes by reflecting upon what took place during the prayer.**

What happened in you during this prayer exercise? What did you notice as standing out even slightly? Is there something you should return to in a later period of prayer? Give thanks to the Lord for being with you during this time.

## The Examen

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The general examination of conscience is a simple form of prayer directed toward developing a spiritual sensitivity to the special ways God approaches, invites and calls. It may be done at the end of each day, though it can be done more frequently as you feel led. The more frequently performed, however, the more natural it becomes and more a way of growing into an ever-closer relationship with God. It can take anywhere between five and fifteen minutes. The important thing is to open yourself to recognizing and responding to God's movement in your heart.

### **1. Pray for light and invite the Holy Spirit.**

Since we are not simply daydreaming or reminiscing, but rather looking for some sense of how the Spirit of God is leading us, it only makes sense to pray for some illumination. The goal is not simply memory but graced understanding.

### **2. Review the day in thanksgiving.**

Note how different this is from looking immediately for your sins. Gratitude is the foundation of our whole relationship with God. Walk through the past 24 hours, from hour to hour, from place to place, from task to task, person to person, thanking the Lord for every gift you encounter.

### **3. Review the feelings that surfaced in the replay of the day.**

Our feelings, positive and negative, the painful and the pleasing, are clear signals of where the action was during the day. Simply pay attention to any and all of those feelings as they surface (e.g., delight, boredom, fear, anticipation, resentment, anger, etc.).

### **4. Choose one of those feelings (positive or negative) and pray from it.**

Choose the feeling that most caught your attention. The feeling is a sign that something important is going on. Now simply express spontaneously the prayer that surfaces as you attend to the source of the feeling.

### **5. Look toward tomorrow.**

Think about tomorrow and the next few days, using your appointment calendar if that helps. What kind of feelings surface as you examine the tasks, meetings, and appointments? Are you fearful? Are you excited? Do you feel anxious? As you did in step 3 and 4 above, take those feelings and pray.

## The Confessional Prayer

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Prayer of confession is a model prayer that we can use to humbly confess our sins before God. Slowly read the prayer. Pause after each line to meditate on the words and make the confession your own.

Most holy and merciful Father, I confess to you and to and to the whole communion of saints in heaven and on earth:

I have not loved you with my whole heart and mind and strength. I have not loved my neighbor as myself. I have not forgiven others as I have been forgiven. Have mercy on me, Lord.

I confess to you all my past unfaithfulness:

The pride, hypocrisy and unfaithfulness of my life, I confess to you, Lord.

My self indulgent appetites and ways, and my exploitation of other people, I confess to you, Lord.

My anger at my own frustration, and my envy of those more fortunate than I, I confess to you, Lord.

My intemperate love of worldly goods and comforts, and my dishonesty in daily life and work, I confess to you, Lord.

My negligence in prayer and worship, and my failure to commend the faith that is in me, I confess to you, Lord.

Accept my repentance, Lord, for the wrongs I have done:

For my blindness to human need and suffering, and my indifference to injustice and cruelty, accept my repentance, Lord.

For all false judgments, for uncharitable thoughts toward my neighbors, and for my prejudice and contempt toward those who differ from me, accept my repentance, Lord.

For my waste and pollution of your creation, and my lack of concern for those who come after us, accept my repentance, Lord.

Restore me, good Lord, and let your anger depart from me. Favorably hear me for your mercy is great. Accomplish in me and all of your church the work of your salvation, that I may reflect your glory in this world.

By the cross and passion of your Son our Lord, bring me with all the saints to the joy of his resurrection. Amen.

## The Prize

Yes, all the things I once thought were so important are gone from my life. Compared to the high privilege of knowing Christ Jesus as my Master, firsthand, everything I once thought I had going for me is insignificant—dog dung. I've dumped it all in the trash so that I could embrace Christ and be embraced by him. I didn't want some petty, inferior brand of righteousness that comes from keeping a list of rules when I could get the robust kind that comes from trusting Christ—God's righteousness.

I gave up all that inferior stuff so I could know Christ personally, experience his resurrection power, be a partner in his suffering, and go all the way with him to death itself. If there was any way to get in on the resurrection from the dead, I wanted to do it. Focused on the Goal.

I'm not saying that I have this all together, that I have it made. But I am well on my way, reaching out for Christ, who has so wondrously reached out for me. Friends, don't get me wrong: By no means do I count myself an expert in all of this, but I've got my eye on the goal, where God is beckoning us onward—to Jesus. I'm off and running, and I'm not turning back.

So let's keep focused on that goal, those of us who want everything God has for us. If any of you have something else in mind, something less than total commitment, God will clear your blurred vision—you'll see it yet! Now that we're on the right track, let's stay on it.

Stick with me, friends. Keep track of those you see running this same course, headed for this same goal. There are many out there taking other paths, choosing other goals, and trying to get you to go along with them. I've warned you of them many times; sadly, I'm having to do it again. All they want is easy street. They hate Christ's Cross. But easy street is a dead-end street. Those who live there make their bellies their gods; belches are their praise; all they can think of is their appetites.

But there's far more to life for us. We're citizens of high heaven! We're waiting the arrival of the Savior, the Master, Jesus Christ, who will transform our earthy bodies into glorious bodies like his own. He'll make us beautiful and whole with the same powerful skill by which he is putting everything as it should be, under and around him.

(Apostle Paul, Philippians 3:7-21, *The Message*)

## Some Tips

Here are a few tips that may help.

- Give the best part of your day.
  - Think of time like money. It is a limited resource that needs to be stewarded well. God should get the best time of your day.
  - If you are a morning person, make “space” for God in the mornings. If you are a night person, make “space” for God in the evenings. Whenever you are most alert, use those times for God.
  - If you want to make 3 smaller “spaces” for God in your day, set an alarm for specific times (e.g., 8am, 1pm, 5pm, etc.). If you don’t have an alarm watch or clock, let your physical hunger to be a trigger. So whenever you get hungry, let that be a sign that you need to be with God.
  - Can you get to a point where you can give a “tithe” of your time to God?
- Start small, but be diligent.
  - When starting out, don’t bite off more than you can chew. Make small goals but make sure you accomplish them.
  - Let it build over time.
- Do it together with your spouse, a friend, or even a small group of people.
  - Share the joy of growing in intimacy with God.
  - There is accountability when doing it in a group.
  - Can you imagine what would happen as more and more people grow in intimacy with Jesus?

Try the following TOGETHER with the exercises listed above.

- Daily Bible Reading (use a reading plan)
  - Read the Bible in a Year.
  - Read through the Bible in 90 Days.
  - Stay in One Book of the Bible for a Year.
- Scripture Memorization
  - Memorize one verse every week or every month
  - Memorize an entire book of the Bible. Start with a small book like Philippians.
- Silent Time
  - Try setting aside 10 minutes in your day to be with God in complete silence.
- Journal
  - Write down your thoughts about the day or impressions from God.
  - Start a prayer journal where you write out your prayers to God.
- Worship
- Prayer Walks
- Fasting
- Personal Retreat Weekend

## Resources for Further Study

### Books

- *The Practice of the Presence of God* by Brother Lawrence
- *Celebration of Disciplines* by Richard Foster
- *Ordering Your Private World* by Gordon MacDonald
- *The Life God Blesses* by Gordon MacDonald
- *Divine Conspiracy* by Dallas Willard
- *Renovation of the Heart* by Dallas Willard
- *Devotional Classics* by Richard Foster and Emilie Griffin
- *Too Busy Not to Pray* by Bill Hybels
- *The Divine Hours* by Phyllis Tickle
- *Jesus Brand Spirituality* by Ken Wilson
- *Mere Christianity* by C.S. Lewis

### Websites

- [www.Jesuit.org](http://www.Jesuit.org) (The official website of the Jesuits.)
- [www.SacredSpace.ie](http://www.SacredSpace.ie) (An online resource for daily prayer.)
- [www.BibleGateway.com](http://www.BibleGateway.com) (An online Bible with great resources for Bible study.)
- [www.YouVersion.com](http://www.YouVersion.com) (Another online Bible where you can journal.)

### Life in Community

A Christian without a church family is a contradiction. God created each and every one of us with a longing for healthy relationships – relationship with Him and relationship with others. Vineyard Columbus is a large church, but if you look closer, it is actually a beautiful mosaic of hundreds of small groups that meet in homes all over Columbus. These small groups of 10-12 people are where you will experience the community of faith lived out on a daily basis. Please try the following:

- Join a co-ed small group, women's group, men's group, or support and recovery group. To find a group near you, visit the small group wall in the atrium of the church where you will see brochures with a listing of the groups, or visit our website at [www.vineyardcolumbus.org](http://www.vineyardcolumbus.org).
- Attend "New Communities" where you can find out about the small groups and meet other people from the church.
- Share a meal with a group of friends once a week.