

Taste and See

An Invitation to
Deeper Spiritual Practices

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for the Spiritual Formation Initiative

Taste and See – A Retreat in a Box

An Invitation to Deeper Spiritual Practices

9:30 AM – 3:30 PM

Welcome *(5 minutes. Feel free to add your own words of welcome.)*

Today's retreat theme comes from Psalm 34: 8, "**Taste and see how good God is!**"

(If there are Bibles, you may want participants to look up the verse and see the variety of words chosen from different translations.)

Today you are invited to experience the goodness of God and to respond to God's invitation to come close. Welcome to each of you. I am glad that you have come to this retreat; that you are already responding to God's invitation. We will begin with a time of worship and centering, and then explore different prayer ways or spiritual practices that open us to God's goodness and grace.

A Time of Worship and Centering

(10-15 minutes, depending on length of time allowed for silence. See the separate worship sheet handout.)

You will need a candle and matches and a small table or altar.

You may want to have a cloth on the table and some element of food, perhaps some fruit or vegetables that would symbolize the goodness of God.

You will need copies of the worship sheet for each participant. Music is found in [The Faith We Sing](#). Songs can be sung acappella or with accompaniment.

The candle prayer can be spoken in unison as a candle is lit.

The Psalm may be read by two voices or two groups.

For the time of silence, you may suggest that participants choose a word or phrase from the Psalm that they may pray/reflect on in the silence.

God's Invitation *(10 minutes)*

Words of invitation are woven into Psalm 34.

"Join me." "Taste and see." "Come and listen."

In fact, words of invitation are woven throughout the scriptures. When some of John's disciples wanted to know about Jesus, he responded, "Come and see" (John 1:39).

To the fishermen on the shore, the tax collector Matthew, and all the disciples, Jesus said, "Come and follow." Later, to the disciples he said, "Let the children come to me."

Invitation is everywhere in scripture. Come close to God.

And yet, we hold back.

(Tell this story, rather than reading it if you can.)

Doris Donnelly, in *Weavings* magazine, tells a story of how her grandmother in the mid 1900's saved up money, and sent it over to Holland so that her sister Greta could immigrate to America. Thrilled at the prospect of being reunited after 25 years, Greta booked a passage on the first steamer leaving Rotterdam, settling for accommodations in steerage rather than waiting another six months to travel in the grand style that her relatives had planned for her. A thoughtful purser, familiar with this common choice among families anxious for reunions, discreetly offered Doris' great aunt the hospitality of the upper decks of the ship during the day. Greta declined the privilege, however, and remained sequestered in her dark, rancid and noisy quarters for the 14 long days of her journey. Aunt Greta called this "minding one's place." She never presumed that there was anything more to sailing across the menacing Atlantic Ocean than enduring volcanic tosses from her mildewed perch until reaching land safely on the other side.

Only on disembarking in New York Harbor did Greta behold what she had been missing. On those upper decks that she had regarded as off limits were tapestries, chandeliers, silver, gleaming crystal and buffets laden with exotic and plentiful food and drink. Most alarming of all, though, there were people just like Aunt Greta, stranded in 4th class sleeping accommodations, who had accepted the invitation of the steward to enjoy the treasures daily. Later Greta would gasp and say, "Imagine, it could all have been mine too, had I only said, 'Yes!' "

God invites us to draw near. God provides us with spiritual disciplines and practices that take us closer, that help us pay attention to the invitation to taste and see how good God is. God says, "Friend, come on up, experience the joy of life lived in constant companionship."

Today we want to explore some of those spiritual practices that open us to God's invitation, that take us to the heart of God.

Sharing *(15-25 minutes)*

(Have a variety of photos, pictures laid out on several tables. You may use nature pictures, path pictures, bridge pictures. Have more pictures than people in the group. It is ok if more than one person has picked the same picture. They can ask to hold the picture from someone else when it is their time to share.)

Let us take some time to introduce ourselves and share a little about where we are on this journey of faith. The way we are going to do this is by looking at some pictures. I want you to gaze silently at the pictures and choose the one, or maybe two, that say something about your journey of faith, something about how close you are feeling to God. When you have identified your picture, return to your seat, but do not take the picture yet so everyone has an opportunity to gaze at all of them. After everyone is seated, you will be instructed to go back and pick up your picture or pictures.

Introduce yourself and then tell about the picture you have chosen.

Introducing the Prayer Ways

We are now going to explore five different Prayer Ways, spiritual practices that serve to open us to God. Some may be familiar to you. Others may be new. Approach each with openness and with the question, “What does God want to say to me through this practice?”

Prayer Way #1

The Breath Prayer (15-20 minutes)

(See handout on the breath prayer. Familiarize yourself with the content as you will lead the participants in discovering their own breath prayer.)

Prayer is the key to drawing close to God and one of the best ways to deepen our prayer life is to befriend silence. It is not easy as we are quite often talkative people living in a noisy society. We are uncomfortable with silence. In one spiritual growth group, the pastor began each meeting with 5 minutes of silent prayer. At the second meeting, one person broke the silence and said, “What are you doing? I look around and you all look peaceful, but I am not getting it. What are you doing in the silence?”

Thomas Keating wrote, “Silence is God’s first language.” That brave person spoke for others and it occasioned several sessions on befriending silence, learning how to quiet minds and bodies so that one can listen to the still small voice of God. Thomas Carlyle wrote, “In silence, great things fashion themselves.” Learning to listen to God is a key spiritual practice in tasting and seeing that God is good.

Today we are going to learn a way of prayer that helps us stay focused in times of silence. It is called the Breath Prayer. In brief, the breath prayer is a contemporary version of the ancient prayer known as the Jesus prayer: “Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” This ancient prayer echoes verses in scripture – the shout of blind Bartimaeus, in Mark 10:47 and the tax collector’s prayer in Luke 18:13. The short prayer was to be repeated often and such patterns of repetition have a long tradition in the Eastern Orthodox community where short prayers have been used for 15 centuries.

Episcopal priest Ron DelBene developed a contemporary version that focuses on a short prayer of adoration and petition, two elements of the Jesus prayer.

(Ask participants to take a deep breath, relax and close their eyes if they wish. Lead them through the process of discovering their own breath prayer.)

What name, title or image do you use for God? Now imagine God/Jesus either in front of you or within you, asking, “What is your deepest desire, your deepest yearning”? Now shape your name, title or image for God and your petition into a 6-8 syllable sentence that can be prayed as you breathe in and out.

(Invite participants, once they have found their breath prayer, to sit in silence for five minutes. “Whenever your mind wanders, just say inwardly your breath prayer.” Keep track of the time and gently bring them back to the group. Invite feedback.)

How was the experience? Was it hard to be focused for five minutes?

(Suggest some uses for the breath prayer.)

Any good spiritual discipline must be practiced. Find ways to use your breath prayer 30 times a day. You may use the breath prayer to begin a dedicated prayer time, while waiting at a stoplight, before entering an important meeting. Put it on a card and put it on your refrigerator, mirror, and computer. You can teach people in the hospital or nursing home the breath prayer and people can pray one another’s breath prayer whenever they remember the person.

(Another question for the group)

How could you see using the breath prayer in your life or in your church? One church used a corporate breath prayer when the church had a major decision to make. Each person in the church was invited to pray the church breath prayer whenever they remembered the church and the breath prayer was used each Sunday in worship during the discernment process. How might you see yourself or your church using the breath prayer?

(Record your own breath prayer(s) here)

Take a 10-15 minute break

Prayer Way #2

Practicing the Presence of God (15-25 minutes)

(Hand out the article by Flora Wuellner, “Praying through the Day”)

The title for this way of prayer comes from the writings of Brother Lawrence, a 17th century monk and kitchen master, who said that he could be in God’s presence in the kitchen as much as when he was in the sanctuary during prayers. He was mindful of God’s presence wherever he was and he thought that everyone could have this awareness.

A pastor, retreat leader and writer, Flora Wuellner has prepared a guide for reflecting on the ordinary events of one’s day. I would like for us to read each section (*suggest that participants go around the room and take turns reading each section out loud*) and then take a moment to underline or circle a sentence that invites you to a new practice and one that you might want to try.

Invite sharing with a neighbor about one or two things from the sheet that each one would like to incorporate into their day. Share with them this quote from Joan Borysenko: “Do what you honestly can, rather than what you probably won’t”. It is good to voice our choices out loud to another person. It is one step on the way to developing a practice.

Another way to think of practicing the presence of God is by setting up markers in one’s day to serve as reminders to pray or to give thanks to God. Much like roadside crosses along a busy stretch of highway that remind us to slow down and be careful, we can set up markers to remind us of God’s love. Saying mealtime graces is an example of a common marker. What other markers would you set up in your day?

(Invite the individuals to think about markers in their day and then have group sharing.)

Prayer Way #3

Ordering a Daily Practice (15-25 minutes)

(Invite the group to share what they are already doing. You may want to list these on a piece of newsprint or a whiteboard.)

Prayer is better practiced than talked about. Setting intentions involves making a commitment to ordering our day and our lives around what is important. If God is important, we seek to order our day to include time for God. Sometimes the time for God is in the ordinary events of the day as we just explored with Brother Lawrence's help.

Setting aside some time for focused prayer is also important.

What are some of the spiritual practices that you are already doing on a daily basis?

Here is a guide to developing a daily prayer practice. According to Larry Peacock, these are ingredients of a daily practice that people have repeatedly said were key.

(Hand out the sheet on Developing a Daily Prayer Practice. Introduce the areas for consideration and then invite the participants to design their own daily practice.)

Ask participants to describe their daily practice or to envision a daily prayer pattern that fits their schedule and would be meaningful.

Lunch

After lunch give some space for conversation, walking, trying the labyrinth sheet, maybe even an art expression table.

Prayer Way #4

Walking (15-25 minutes)

(A larger picture of a labyrinth and an information sheet is in retreat box and you may want to make copies for people to take home. During the period after lunch they can at least trace the design with their finger.)



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Some people pray best when they are more active. Sitting in silence for twenty minutes, let alone five would be very challenging and uncomfortable. Walking is a good way to move and pray. Some have heard of or experienced walking a labyrinth, a circular path that weaves its way around a circle until it leads you to the center.

Today we are going to experience a prayer walk, simply walking around this room. We are going to walk very slowly, focusing on each step we take, noticing the movement of legs and feet, the placement of the heel and rolling toward the toes. One writer called walking, “continually arrested falling.” Walking is an implicit act of trust, a gracious and moving balance that we often take for granted. Focusing on one thing, the act of walking clears distractions from the mind and brings a sense of peace and openness.

(Invite participants to take their shoes off if they desire. Form a circle around the room or outside and walk slowly and deliberately, focusing on their footsteps and their breathing. If people were observing you, they would say it is like “slow motion.” Walk for 10-15 minutes.)

If it is a beautiful day and you are at a place where walking outside would be a good experience, you could suggest that people walk outside and be mindful of their walk and the sounds and sights of nature that surround them. Similarly, if your retreat location has a labyrinth, indoor or outdoor, you could suggest a labyrinth walk instead of the slow walking prayer. Allow time for people to share about their experience.

Prayer Way #5

Praying with Scripture (30-35 minutes)

(Introduce the practice of Lectio Divina by handing out the guide to the steps of Lectio.)

For most of us, reading is an intellectual activity. We read to gather ideas and information, the “who, what, when, and where” of a story. There is also subtle pressure from our school days to read as much as we can as fast as we can. We often carry these attitudes over to our reading of scripture.

But God’s word is not meant to be gulped down in large quantities or with great speed. Rather, scripture is to be savored, listened to deeply to hear what God was and is saying through the words and stories. The stories of the Bible can shape us, form us and guide us.

One pattern of reading scripture in a prayerful, meditative way comes to us from the monastic tradition of St Benedict in the sixth century. *Lectio Divina* is Latin and literally means holy reading. This way of reading scripture is slower and by reading the passage several times, the listener or reader is invited to discover a word meant for their own situation or circumstance.

Traditionally, there are four steps to Lectio: lectio, meditatio, oratio and contemplatio. Your handout has an additional two steps for a total of six steps – silencio (a prayerful way to begin) and incarnatio (meaning incarnation, an additional ending step that focuses on a word, action or bidding from God that is to be done or lived out).

(Invite participants to an experience of Lectio. Use Mark 6:45-52 or another image-filled passage. The passage will be read four times.)

- ♦ *At the end of the first reading, ask them to focus on a word or phrase that catches their attention. Allow 2-3 minutes for reflection.*
- ♦ *After the second reading, offer them this question, “Lord, what is it you want me to learn from this passage today?” Allow 4-5 minutes for this reflection. They may choose the same word or image from the first reading or another verse may have called to them.*
- ♦ *After the third reading, invite them to use the words or verse that has been the focus of their meditation to become the starting point of prayer. Allow 5-7 minutes for this reflection.*
- ♦ *After the fourth reading, invite them to sit quietly and rest in the silence. Be open to a word or bidding that you are to live out at the completion of the prayer time. Allow at least 5 minutes for this time.*

The time frames are suggested guidelines. At the end of the time you may invite participants to write in a journal or make some notes. In groups of 2 or 3, have participants share their experience of Lectio Divina.

(Invite participants to take a brief stand up stretch break if needed.)

Taste and See Closing

Hand out 3 x 5 cards to all the participants. On newsprint or a board, write the following three statements and invite participants to reflect on them and write a response.

Consider introducing these elements of making good intentions:

Is it compelling, something that excites or challenges you?

Is it specific? Can you describe what it looks like in action, either doing or being?

What time will you give to the commitment? How frequent? When?

Is the commitment doable at the same time as it stretches you?

One blessing I received from today ...

One challenge that lies ahead ...

One commitment I plan to make ...

After everyone has filled out their card, lead a time of worship.

An Act of Receiving and Sharing

Prepare the table or altar with grapes or other small bites of fruit or food.

Invite participants to take several pieces of fruit. In silence or with soft music playing, invite them to savor the food. As they eat, they are experiencing again the goodness of God and accepting the invitation to "Taste and See How Good God is."

After all have eaten, invite participants to speak of their experience of the day, especially the blessings received and the commitment or intention they are making to deepen their spiritual walk with God.

*Conclude with this **Blessing**: The participants' response will be "God is Good."*

You have heard the invitation to Come, Taste and See and you have responded.

R: God is Good.

You have befriended silence and walked gently on the earth.

R: God is Good.

You have opened your eyes to the presence of God everywhere.

R: God is Good.

You have meditated on scripture and journeyed with Jesus in the challenges of life.

R: God is Good.

You have tasted the fruits of the earth, the blessing of the rain and the caress of the sun.

R: God is Good.

You have made promises and signaled intentions.

R: God is Good.

Go with the power of God, the passion of the risen Christ and the vitality of the Holy Spirit.

Amen

Taste and See

Supplies needed

Encourage participants to bring their Bibles and a journal

For Worship

Small table or altar

Cloth and centerpiece

Candle and matches

Copies of Worship Bulletin

The Faith We Sing (Abingdon Press) song book or copies of the songs

Sharing Time

Prepare a collection of pictures. You may cut them from magazines or download from the internet. It often works to paste them on white paper or cardstock.

Prayer #1

Handout - Breath Prayer

Prayer #2

Handout - Praying through the Day

Prayer #3

Handout - Developing a Daily Discipline

Prayer #4

Handout - Picture of a Labyrinth and informational guide for walking

Prayer #5

A Bible

Handout - Lectio Divina

Closing

3x5 cards

Altar with grapes or fruit

“Taste and See – A Retreat in a Box” was written and designed by Larry J. Peacock, with help from Susan MacKenzie, editing by Cheryl Gates and the support of the Spiritual Formation Initiative of the New England Conference, United Methodist Church. 2007

A Suggested Way to Pray Through the Day

Prayer is essentially a *relationship* with God, not a set of rigid rules. Our prayer methods are most effective and fulfilling when they arise from the natural rhythm of our own unique way of relating to God. Some of these suggestions may be helpful, but do not hesitate to adapt them to your own needs and insights.

Waking: Respond gently to the new day. Take a few moments to stretch, greet your body with love. Lightly massage your face, neck, hands, and arms. Listen to signals of bodily tension or discomfort. Take a few intentional deep but gentle breaths, and picture God's renewing light flowing into your body with each breath. Does the memory of a dream seem to be significant? Put it into God's hands for guidance. Picture your body moving out of bed with joyful and elastic vitality. When ready, move into this inner picture of yourself.

Cleansing and Dressing: As you drink water, eliminate, or wash, think of the ancient symbol of water as God's cleansing love. Many people pray best in the shower! These are meant to be holy, healthful, pleasurable actions. While dressing, think of the light of God also enfolding you with each garment you put on. Let this thought become a special blessing to each part of your body that you touch and clothe.

Eating and Drinking: Let each bite of food, and each drink become God's gift of life to you through the fruits, grains, and meat of the earth. Let your eating and drinking bond you more closely with God and the body of this earth. Let it become a sacrament. As with all sacraments, let these acts not only increase your own joy and health, but also increase your compassionate awareness of your sisters and brothers who are needy and hungry. Remember that a sacramental act need not be solemn. Let there be laughter, tender sharing. Let there be delighted awareness of the flavor, fragrance, texture and color of your food.

Facing the Day: Early in the day, or on the way to work, reflect on the tasks and the varied experiences ahead. Claim Jesus' promise that he will go ahead of you, preparing the way for you. Picture the Healer already at your place of work (or wherever you go) filling it with light, so that when you get there you will feel welcomed and strengthened. It is also helpful to picture or just think of your car, bus, bicycle, plane or train also enfolding in God's loving light and protection. Include those who share the ride with you.

Working: Occasionally through the day, give a loving encouraging thought to your bodily parts which are being used: your eyes, hands, feet, arms, legs, brain. They are your good friends who work with you. Occasionally touch them with love. Listen to any signals your body sends you of stress and tension. At these times, take a few minutes (even in the midst of a conference, conversation, or task) to remember God's closeness, "closer than breathing, nearer than hands, and feet," relax your breathing, picture or just think of God's healing breath and light flowing through your body like a warm, renewing river. Picture it flowing through you to include the others who are working or talking with you.

In Relationship: As you encounter other people whether face to face, or by phone or letter, think of the light of God surrounding that person. Try to become aware of the hurt, bewildered or

anxious “child” within the other. Inwardly reach out and greet their inner child. If you feel in any way drained or threatened by the presence of the other, picture or think of Christ, the Healer, standing between you and the other, nurturing the other as well as protecting you. Also, think or picture the radiant “Angel” within the other, his or her own special strength and flight. Inwardly greet and welcome that “Angel.”

Thankful Contemplation: Take a moment to look at the sunbeam, a cloud, a tree, a bird. Deliberately touch something, breathe in the fragrance of something, become aware of a sound, a taste. Greet these as loving mysteries through which God touches you. These are tiny “Sabbaths.”

Preparing for Sleep: Stretch gently. Listen to your body and what it tells you about your day. Give the day’s moments of hurt, distress, like little children into God’s hands. Reflect on the moments of joy with thankfulness. Do you feel guided to pray for a few people at this time? Think of them also held in God’s healing hands. Let each gentle breath become to you the breath of God flowing through you. Trust the strength of the bed and the body of the earth beneath you to hold you. Think of the even deeper strength of the “everlasting arms” that hold you. “My soul clings to Thee. Thy right hand upholds me.” (Psalm 63)

Probably you won’t pray all of these forms of prayer each day. You may find two or three of them especially helpful. Be prepared for new and other ways of prayer unfolding for you.

Flora Slosson Wuellner
Used by permission of the author

A Daily Practice

“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me. Watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.” Matthew 11:28-30
Eugene Peterson, *“The Message”*

The desire for something more, for walking and working with Jesus is evidence of the spirits movement within you.

An Intention

Pay attention to the longing inside, your desire for the “unforced rhythms of grace.” Show up. Be open. Trust that God is already waiting for you.

“I believe that the desire to please you (God) does, in fact, please you. And I hope that I have that desire in all that I am doing.”

Thomas Merton

A Particular Time

When is your best time of the day? God delights in spending time with you. Anytime of the day is good as long as it fits your schedule and circumstances. Can you commit to spending a designated time with God?

“Do what you honestly can, rather than what you probably won’t.”

Joan Borysenko

Creating Sacred Space

Can you make your place a sacred space by adding special pictures, objects, candles, music, fragrances? Can you create an altar with an icon, a cross, a candle, a feather, or a stone? Can you choose special fabrics or colors for the area? Can you place favorite books, a prayer shawl, or a journal for use? What things bring you spiritual comfort? Is there a part of the sacred space that you can carry away with you?

A Posture

Listen to your body. There are so many ways to pray; sitting, kneeling, standing, lying face down, or walking. Your body carries memories of prayer. A particular posture may fit the season of prayer you are in.

A Practice

A spiritual practice makes space for God. What kind of prayer will be part of your daily practice? Will that be a breath prayer, centering prayer, intercessory prayer, meditation or contemplation, liturgical prayer, or prayer walking? Scripture, devotional books, and journaling all invite your use of words and images. Might your practice include silence or music? Spiritual practices keep us open to the mysterious work of God in our heart and in our world.

Larry J. Peacock

A Way of Unceasing Prayer

The Breath Prayer

The breath prayer is a very short prayer of praise and petition. Those who learn to use it feel that it can become as natural as breathing. It is a way to have on our lips what is always in our heart. It is an ancient form of prayer found in writings as early as the second century.

Perhaps the best known breath prayer is called the Jesus Prayer. “Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” From the sixth century, monks and others seeking a deeper relationship with God sought some disciplined form of prayer that they could pray at any time and in any place. The traditional form has often been abbreviated.

To discover your own personal breath prayer, imagine that God is actually asking you, “(insert your name), what do you want?” Give God a simple and direct answer that comes honestly from your heart. Write down the answer. If you have more than one answer, write them all down. Your answer may be one word such as peace or love or help. It may be several words or a phrase such as “understand your love” or “feel your presence in my life.” Whatever your answers, they are the foundation of your breath prayer.

Understand that the breath prayer is one of praise and petition. The praise comes from using one of the divine names such as God, Jesus, Lord, Parent, Master, Christ. The praise is combined with a petition. Remember that “Whatever you ask for in my name I will do.” (John 14:13)

Combine it with your written answer to the question God asked you. This is your prayer. You can work on it so you end up with a prayer of six to eight syllables, which is easily prayed as you inhale and exhale.

Sample breath prayers

Father, lead me into health.
Jesus, guide me in your will.
Let me know your presence, Lord.
Hallelujah, have mercy, Jesus.
Show me your way, oh Lord.
Let me feel your spirit, Jesus.

Repeat it often during the day for several days. If it feels comfortable, use it unchanged for 30 days. Like any good habit, it must be practiced.

Adapted from Ron DelBene

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The Labyrinth

The labyrinth is an archetype, a divine imprint, found in all religious traditions in various forms around the world. By walking a replica of the 11- circuit Chartres Labyrinth, laid in the floor of Chartres Cathedral around 1220, we are rediscovering a long forgotten mystical tradition that is resurfacing in many places. The labyrinth is a powerful symbol of spiritual journey that was introduced into medieval prayer practice when the traditional pilgrimages to the holy land became too dangerous for most travelers. Both in that time, and in our time, people have found it helpful for meditation. This labyrinth has only one path so there are **no tricks to it and no dead ends**. The path winds throughout and becomes a mirror for where we are in our lives; it touches our sorrows and releases our joys. So, walk it with an open mind and an open heart. For more information about the labyrinth check the website: veriditas@gracecathedral.org

There are three stages of the walk:

Purgation - a releasing and letting go of the details of your life. This is an act of shedding thoughts and emotions which quiets and empties the mind.

Illumination - is when you reach the center. Stay there as long as you like. It is a place of meditation and prayer. Receive what is there for you to receive.

Union – is joining God, your Higher Power or the healing forces at work in the world. Each time you walk the labyrinth you become more empowered to find and do the work you feel your soul reaching for.

Guidelines for the walk: (indoor labyrinths may recommend removing your shoes)

- ♦ Clear your mind and become aware of your breath.
- ♦ Allow yourself to find the pace your body wants to go. You may pass people or let others step around you, whichever is easiest at the turns.
- ♦ The path is two ways. Those going in will meet those coming out. Keep your eyes soft and your heart open.
- ♦ Do what feels natural.

Becky Waldrop

A Guide for Walking the Labyrinth

Preparation for the journey

Take time to breathe naturally. Let your body and spirit become still.

Framing an Intention and Question

Intentions:

- ♦ A person or situation
- ♦ The upcoming or past year at a birthday or anniversary
- ♦ Working with the particular the motion or state, such as gratitude, grief, confusion, fear, forgiveness.
- ♦ A relationship issue
- ♦ Vocational issue
- ♦ A creative project
- ♦ A particular event and its meaning for you

Questions:

- ♦ Ask so that more than a yes or no answer is possible
- ♦ An image, a gesture, or one word

On the Way In

Walk with an open heart and mind.

If the issue/question/feeling is uncomfortable, walk with hands open and palms up.

In the Center

The feeling of being in the absolute center holds its own special appeal.

Stand, kneel or sit.

Notice how you are feeling.

Be open to what may greet you.

On the Way Out

Let what you have gained begin to sink in.

Absorb any insights or new perspectives.

On Leaving

Stop and offer a prayer of thanks for whatever has happened on the journey.

Millin



Savoring God's Word The Practice of Lectio Divina

Silencio – inner and outer quiet

Find a suitable place. Take a peaceful, comfortable position. Take several “letting go” breaths. Perhaps say your breath prayer. Ask God to bless this time. Set aside concerns and be open to God.

Lectio – Holy reading

Read a portion of Scripture slowly and attentively. Read gently and reverently, with the ear of your heart listening to the Word of God in the text. Read to hear a word or phrase meant for you. Try putting your name in the story or as the person being addressed.

Meditatio – ruminating on the Word

Think about a word or image that keeps coming to you. Repeat it to yourself. Allow the word or phrase to interact with your inner self, thoughts, hopes, memories, desires. How is this word for you today?

Oratio – praying

Use the word or phrase to be in a conversation with God. Does God mean for the word to be a blessing, challenge or comfort? Listen to what God might be saying to you. Let the word descend from the mind to the heart. Let God touch you through this passage.

Contemplatio – contemplation

In the silence of the heart and mind, let go of all words and images. Rest simply in God's loving presence, whose Word has invited you to this transforming moment. Rest in God.

Incarnatio – living out the Word

Is there a deed or act that you are called to do in this word? Do justice. Love kindness. Walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6:8) Witness to God's love and compassion.

Conclude

Thank God for this time. Even if no great insight happened, be grateful to God for your fidelity for being in God's presence.

“You must enter into God's presence not just to seek information, but just to be there.”

Anthony Bloom

Larry Peacock, with thanks to
Berkeley Poole and Miriam Schmitt

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