



**COMMUNITY  
GROUPS**  
EXPLORE • BELONG • GROW • SERVE

## Good News In Anxious Times

March 22, 2020  
Rev. Steve Schibsted

### OPEN IN PRAYER

### OPENING QUESTION

What are some positives that have come out of your “sheltering in place experience” thus far?

Together Read Philippians 4:4-7

<sup>4</sup> Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. <sup>5</sup> Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. <sup>6</sup> Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup> And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

### DISCUSSION

1. Why did Paul and the Philippians have just cause for anxiety?
2. How do you interpret verse 5 when Paul says, “The Lord is near.” What does Paul mean?
3. If the “Lord is near”, then what difference should that make to the Philippians’ circumstances? To our circumstances?
4. What makes it possible for Paul to write, “Do not be anxious about anything”?
5. What is it about prayer that makes a difference in how we cope with the anxieties and concerns of our lives? How does gratitude make a difference?

6. How does the peace of God pass all understanding? Have you ever experienced this peace? When? Share your experience.

7. What good news do you find in this passage?

#### REFLECTION/PRAYER

1. What about the crisis we are presently experiencing makes you anxious? How do these verses speak to that anxiety?

2. Spend some significant time in prayer, following the advice of Paul:

- Start by rejoicing in the Lord: name the attributes of God (like, “God, you are holy”, etc.)
- Move to a time of letting God know about your specific anxieties and concerns. Ask God to help you identify those concerns. Then ask for God’s help with those concerns.
- End by thanking God for his faithfulness and the ways he has answered prayers in the past. Allow this to be an encouragement to you, that he has been faithful in the past and will be in the present and future as well.
- Spend a few minutes after your prayer time to talk about how you have experienced the peace of God through your time of prayer.



## Our Refuge and Strength

March 15, 2020  
Rev. Steve Schibsted

### OPEN IN PRAYER

### OPENING QUESTION

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Have Group Members check in with one another. What are some of the emotions you have felt this past week? What are a few words to describe your emotional state at the present time?

### READING

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Together, read Psalm 46 (NRSV)

***To the leader. Of the Korahites. According to Alamo. A Song.***

<sup>1</sup> God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

<sup>2</sup> Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;

<sup>3</sup> though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult. *Selah*

<sup>4</sup> There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High.

<sup>5</sup> God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved; God will help it when the morning dawns.

<sup>6</sup> The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts.

<sup>7</sup> The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. *Selah*

<sup>8</sup> Come, behold the works of the LORD; see what desolations he has brought on the earth.

<sup>9</sup> He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire.

<sup>10</sup> “Be still, and know that I am God!

I am exalted among the nations,

I am exalted in the earth.”

<sup>11</sup>The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. *Selah*

### DISCUSSION

1. After reading the entire psalm, read verses 1–3 aloud, slowly. Spend a minute or so in silence. Share what words or phrases “jumped out” or “spoke to your heart.” Repeat the exercise. Read the verses one more time. What does the Holy Spirit seem to be saying to you through these verses?
2. What are some of the dangers described in this psalm?
3. Read verse 7. In his message, Steve described how the “Lord Almighty” or “Lord of Hosts” gives us an image of vast armies of angels and overwhelming power ready to obey the command of God. This is an image of the all-powerful, warrior God. This God “is with us.” The “God of Jacob” recalls the story of a very personal, intimate God, the God who wrestled with Jacob at the river Jabbok. This is the intimate, personal God who wanted to give Jacob a blessing. This God “is with us.” This is not what we would expect. We expect the warrior God to protect us, to be our refuge and the personal, intimate God to be with us, to be a comforting presence. What does this tell us? How does this encourage us?
4. Read verse 10. What does this verse tell us about how we should respond to danger or tragedy in our lives? How is being still and knowing God related?
5. What is the good news for you from this psalm?

PRAYER Close by praying for each other and our world.

everyday  
SPIRITUALITY

Finding Jesus in the Ordinary

**The Spiritual Practice  
of Solitude**

March 8, 2020  
Rev. Steve Schibsted

OPEN IN PRAYER

INTRODUCTION

*Without solitude it is virtually impossible to live a spiritual life*—Henri Nouwen

In *Making All Things New*, Henri Nouwen writes that our lives can be described as “filled, yet unfulfilled.” What does Nouwen mean by this description? Do you agree or disagree with his description? Why?

READING

Together, read Mark 6:30-32 (NRSV)

<sup>30</sup> The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. <sup>31</sup> He said to them, “Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.” For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat. <sup>32</sup> And they went away in the boat to a deserted place by themselves.

Also read:

Mark 1:21-39

Luke 6:12-16

Matthew 14:6-13

Matthew 26:36-46

DISCUSSION

1. From these passages, what do we learn about the role of the practice of solitude in the life of Jesus? Can you think of any other passages in the bible (Old or New Testament) which are examples of people practicing solitude?

2. Steve said that solitude is one of the most counter cultural of all the spiritual practices. In what ways is practicing solitude counter cultural? What are some reasons why the practice of spiritual discipline is so difficult for most of us? What is challenging about solitude?
  
3. Solitude has often been described as the furnace of transformation. Steve used an example of a good friend of his who has been transformed by his regular practice of transformation. In what ways did Steve say his friend has been transformed?
  
4. What is the difference between being hurried and being busy?
  
5. What were some examples of practice of solitude that Steve mentioned in his sermon? Do you have any regular practice of solitude in your life? If so, share the practice with your group.

#### PRAYER

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Close the group time by praying for each member as they attempt to incorporate the practice of solitude in their life this coming week. Next week have each group share how things went with their new practice.

#### PRACTICING EVERYDAY SPIRITUALITY

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Are you practicing solitude in your life? What are some ways you might practice solitude in the coming week?

#### RESOURCES

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Pray As You Go— This is a wonderful app. Each day you are led through a 10-15 minute prayer exercise (lectio divina) which is based on the lectionary. As the name of the app implies, you can use this app as you go---while driving, riding BART, first thing in the morning while you are drinking your morning coffee. I love this app!

Making All Things New---This book by Henri Nouwen is a close friend of mine! I read it many times over the past 40 or so years. As with many of Nouwen's books, you can read the book in an hour but will find yourself going back to it over and over! This is a great (and classic) introduction to the spiritual life---enjoy!

# everyday SPIRITUALITY

Finding Jesus in the Ordinary

## The Spiritual Practice

### of Being Grounded

March 1, 2020

Rev. Steve Schibsted

#### OPEN IN PRAYER

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#### INTRODUCTION

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Everyday Spirituality: Finding Jesus in the Ordinary

Alarm clock wake-up calls and morning commutes. Homework assignments and committee meetings. Washing dishes and walking the dog. These ordinary things of life fill our days and, despite our best intentions, often seem to crowd out our deeper “spiritual” aspirations.

But what if what’s needed is not more to do in a day but a new vision for seeing what we’re already doing? What if the “spiritual” that we’re searching for is actually all around us? What if God is everywhere present and moving in our mundane activities and encounters—we just haven’t been paying attention? This Lent, join us in worship and conversations in community as we discover that, when we pay attention to the ordinary, we just may be surprised to find God at work in and through us in extraordinary ways.

#### READING

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Together, read John 15:1-17 (NRSV)

15 “I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinegrower. <sup>2</sup> He removes every branch in me that bears no fruit. Every branch that bears fruit he prunes to make it bear more fruit. <sup>3</sup> You have already been cleansed by the word that I have spoken to you. <sup>4</sup> Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. <sup>5</sup> I am the vine, you are the branches. Those who abide in me and I in them bear much fruit, because apart from me you can do nothing. <sup>6</sup> Whoever does not abide in me is thrown away like a branch and withers; such branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. <sup>7</sup> If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask for whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

<sup>8</sup> My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit and become my disciples. <sup>9</sup> As the Father has loved me, so I have loved you; abide in my love. <sup>10</sup> If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. <sup>11</sup> I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

<sup>12</sup> "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends. <sup>14</sup> You are my friends if you do what I command you. <sup>15</sup> I do not call you servants any longer, because the servant does not know what the master is doing; but I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father. <sup>16</sup> You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. <sup>17</sup> I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another.

## DISCUSSION

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1. What are the characteristics of "vine life" that Jesus paints in this passage? Is this life attractive to you? Why?
2. "Abide" appears multiple times in this passage, it is the Greek word *meno* and is very rich. In addition to abide, *meno* can be translated as rest, remain or dwell. It is a relationship word and implies to continue in a relationship, faithful and unchanging. Read verses 4-10. What are the results of abiding in Christ?
3. Spiritual practices are a way of abiding, or staying connected to the Vine, Jesus Christ. Here is the definition of spiritual practice (or spiritual discipline) that we will be using throughout this sermon series:

*A spiritual discipline is an intentional, regular practice which helps focus and shape our attention toward loving relationships with God and others, thereby serving as a means of God's grace for the sanctification of our souls and the blessing of the world. (Susan Phillips)*

What are some spiritual practices, if any, you have used in your life? In what ways have they helped you grow in your relationship with Jesus Christ?

## PRACTICING EVERYDAY SPIRITUALITY

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Think about the rhythms of your daily activities. Which, if any, spontaneously create an awareness of God's presence? With this awareness, take notice of how God might be speaking to you when you are attuned to God's presence and share this with your group next week.

## PRAYER

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## Weekly Schedule & Important Dates for Lent

Date	Theme	Scripture Text
<b>Ash Wednesday</b>		
Wednesday, February 26 Dinner—6 pm, Gym Service—7 pm, Sanctuary	<i>The Spiritual Practice of Knowing Our Mortality</i>	Psalm 90
<b>Week 1</b>		
Beginning Sunday, March 1	<i>The Spiritual Practice of Being Grounded</i>	John 15:1-17
<b>Week 2</b>		
Beginning Sunday, March 8 Sunday, March 8   Middle Hour	<i>The Spiritual Practice of Solitude</i> <i>Spiritual Practices Plenary Gathering   Gym</i>	Mark 6:30-32
Saturday, March 14, 9 am - 1 pm	<i>Contemplative Lent Retreat with New College Berkeley</i>	
<b>Week 3</b>		
Beginning Sunday, March 15	<i>The Spiritual Practice of Celebration</i>	John 2:1-11
Saturday, March 21, 9 am - 12 pm	<i>Do Justice Day of Service</i>	
<b>Week 4</b>		
Beginning Sunday, March 22	<i>The Spiritual Practice of Saying "No"</i>	Exodus 20:8-11, Mark 2:27-28
<b>Week 5</b>		
Beginning Sunday, March 29	<i>The Spiritual Practice of Pronouncing Blessing</i>	Numbers 6:22-26
<b>Week 6 (Holy Week)</b>		

# everyday SPIRITUALITY

Finding Jesus in the Ordinary

Beginning Sunday, April 5	<i>The Spiritual Practice of Feeling Pain</i>	Psalm 22:1-5, Romans 5:1-5
Palm Sunday Concert, April 5, 7 pm		
Maundy Thursday, April 9 Dinner–6 pm, Gym Service–7 pm, Sanctuary	<i>The Spiritual Practice of Servanthood</i>	John 13:1-17
Good Friday, April 10, 7 pm	<i>Tenebrae Service</i>	
Easter Sunday, April 12 6 am, 9 am, 11:30 am	<i>The Spiritual Practice of Starting Over</i>	John 20:1-18

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## Community Group Covenant - Lent 2020

As we begin this Lenten group experience, we do so with the desire to not only grow in our understanding of Scripture but to deepen our life with God and one another.

### Values

We hold the following values as essential to our life together this Lent:

#### Curiosity | try it On

We agree to be open to engaging others' perspectives. We will practice considering ideas from a posture of curiosity before critiquing, defending, etc. Our goal is not to walk away with one "right" answer but to learn with and from each other.

#### PartiCiPation | SteP UP, SteP BaCk

We agree to be mutual stewards of the life of our group, prioritizing our weekly gatherings and inviting every group members' participation, as they feel comfortable. We will be aware of group participation dynamics. If I am someone who tends to be a listener in group settings, I will consider stepping up to share my perspectives or questions. If I am someone who tends to talk a lot, I will consider stepping back to create space for others. (Think "three, then me.")

#### resPeCt | Hold Good Boundaries

We agree to practice respectful listening by not interrupting or talking over others. We agree to practice respectful sharing by speaking from our own experience ("I" statements) and refrain from giving advice, unless it is requested.

#### Care | "ooPs" and "ouCH"

We agree to assume positive intent in others while also acknowledging potentially negative impact. Anyone can say "ouch" if hurt or offended to stop the process from continuing and explore what's happening and why. Anyone can say "oops" to acknowledge their assumptions and/or to respond to another's "ouch."

#### Confidentiality | SHare aBout ideas, Not PeoPle

By all means, we want to process and discuss our learnings with others. However, we agree all sharing should be about concepts and experiences in the group, not specifics about what others have shared. **Norms**

We agree to meet on \_\_\_\_\_ (day of week) from \_\_\_\_\_ (am/pm) to \_\_\_\_\_ (am/pm) for six weeks, beginning March \_\_\_\_ and concluding April \_\_\_\_ .

We agree to discuss how our group will serve together this Lent\* through participation in

- Do Justice Day of Service | Saturday, March 21, 9 am-12 pm\*
- First Pres Street Meal Ministries | Caring Packages for our neighbors in need
- First Pres Holy Week Hospitality

We agree to revisit our group covenant mid-way through our six weeks together to assess how we are doing.

We agree to revisit our group covenant toward the end of our six weeks together to determine if we would like to conclude our covenant or continue on in intentional community together.

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**SPIRITUALITY**

Finding Jesus in the Ordinary

\*Refer to *Do Justice Day of Service* flyer for complete details.

## Understanding Spiritual Practices

A spiritual practice is an intentional, regular practice which helps focus and shape our attention toward loving relationships with God and others, thereby serving as a means of God's grace for the sanctification of our souls and the blessing of the world. (Susan Phillips)

Spiritual practices may be formal (e.g. worship), informal (e.g. praying with a friend), communal (e.g. going to a church retreat), personal (e.g. journaling), traditional (e.g. confessing to God), and idiosyncratic (e.g. praying a prayer of intercession every time one hears an emergency vehicle's siren). **Engaging Spiritual Practices**

While spiritual practices can take on many forms, a number of spiritual practices have been handed down over the years within the Christian tradition. As with the many disciples who have gone before us, these practices invite our intention and direct our attention to the movements of the Spirit in our inner and outer lives together.

In his book, *Celebration of Discipline*, Richard Foster identifies a number of different classical spiritual practices:

The Inward Disciplines:	Meditation, Prayer, Fasting, Study
The Outward Disciplines:	Simplicity, Solitude, Submission, Service
The Corporate Disciplines:	Confession, Worship, Guidance, Celebration

For many of us, following the movements of established spiritual practices can help support our intention and direct our attention. Like rehearsing the steps of a dance, these practices can guide our fumbling feet into a dance with the Divine. The following spiritual practice guidelines provide basic choreography to get us on the dance floor, where we can be swept up by the leading of the Spirit.

## For Further Exploration:

### Books

*An Altar in the World* by Barbara Brown Taylor

*Celebration of Discipline* by Richard J. Foster

*Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals* by Shane Claiborne, Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove, and Enuma Okoro

*The Cultivated Life* by Susan Phillips

*Daily Office* by Peter Scazzero

*The Divine Hours* by Phyllis Tickle

*The Ignatian Adventure* by Kevin O'Brien, SJ

*Liturgy of the Ordinary* by Tish Harrison Warren  
*The Ministry of Ordinary Places* by Shannan Martin

*The Practice of the Presence of God* by Brother Lawrence

*The Rule of Benedict: A Spirituality for the 21st Century*  
by Joan Chittister

*Sacred Rhythms* by Ruth Haley Barton

*Spirit of the Disciplines* by Dallas Willard

### Apps

Pray as You Go

Book of Common Prayer

## *Spiritual Practice of Prayer of Examen*

“Prayer is the inner bath of love into which the soul plunges itself.”  
—St. John Vianney

*Examen* comes from the Latin referring to the tongue or weight indicator on a balance of scale, hence conveying the idea of an accurate assessment of the true situation.

### **1. Prepare Yourself**

- Find a quiet spot, void of distractions.
- Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths. Begin your prayer by acknowledging God’s presence within you. Offer yourself and this time to God.
- Bid the Holy Spirit to enliven this discipline.

### **2. Review an Event or Period of Time**

- Choose an event or period of time for examination. Reviewing the past 24 hours is a great place to begin.
- Whatever your time period, let each hour of the past day gently pass through you memory. Linger as you remember the experiences.
- With generous pauses between questions, notice:
  - ✓ What have you taken for granted during this experience?
  - ✓ What feeling and thoughts are emerging as you look back over the past 24 hours?
- Look back again over this period of time and reflect on the ways in which God was present to you.
  - ✓ Where do you see God at work? In joy, fears, suffering, work, play? In acts of service, study? In an event, person, sound, nature, music, action?
  - ✓ When or where in the past 24 hours did you feel you were cooperating most fully with God’s action in your life?
  - ✓ When or where in the past 24 hours did you feel you were resisting God’s presence and action? Are there actions or thoughts that require God’s pardon? The pardon of others?
  - ✓ In what ways do you believe God may be calling you to a new awareness, a change of heart, a different action?
- Notice a sense of gratitude for one or two particular ways the God was present to you during this period. Express these feelings through journaling, moving, words, creating in some artist medium, singing, etc.

### 3. Rest and Offer Thanks

- Take a moment to rest in the embrace of the Spirit.
- Thank God for whatever you have received.

## *Spiritual Practice of Centering Prayer - Silent Meditation*

Centering Prayer is simply the prayer practice of "centering" one's whole self on the person of God.

It is a discipline of silent prayer - a quieting of thoughts, words, and physical movement. The idea is to let go of all competing distractions and focus all of who we are within the presence of God. It is fundamentally a prayer of active surrender and letting go.

"Be still and know that I am God" Ps 46:10

### 1. Preparation

- Set aside 20 minutes for this prayer practice. It is recommended to practice this prayer daily and best if practiced twice a day, once in the morning and then in the evening.
- Find a quiet spot, void of distractions. Close your eyes.
- Let yourself settle down. Let go of any and all the thoughts, tensions, and sensations you are feeling and begin to rest in love and presence of God
- Acknowledge God's presence with you. Offer yourself and this time to God. Bid the Holy Spirit to enliven this discipline.

### 2. Select a word or image

- This kind of prayer is often difficult because the minute we are quiet, our minds are flooded with images and thoughts. To quiet such thoughts and images and to help return the focus back to being fully present to the presence of God, the prayerful selection of a word or image is recommended to gently "brush" the distractions away and refocus concentration back on God.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to give you a word or image that will serve as the concrete expression of your intention to surrender all of your concerns as you focus on entering God's presence.

### 3. Be in the Presence of God

- When you become aware of thoughts, or as internal sensations arise, just take this as your signal to gently return to the word or image.

- If thoughts subside and you find yourself restfully aware of God's love and presence, simply let go of the word. Just be in that still presence of God. When thoughts or images begin to stir again, gently return to the Spirit-led image or word.

#### **4. Close with Contemplative Resting and Thankfulness.**

- At the end of your prayer, you might want to recite the Lord's Prayer.
- Take a couple of minutes to come out of the silence -- even if you don't feel you need it.
- Express to God your thankfulness and pray for others in need of God's grace.

## *Spiritual Practice of Lectio Divina*

### **Lectio Divina**

#### **An Ancient Way of Praying the Scriptures**

"Seek in reading, and you will find in meditation, knock in prayer, and it will be opened to you in contemplation."

—St. John of the Cross

#### **1. Prepare Yourself**

- Find a quiet spot, void of distractions.
- Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths. Begin your prayer by acknowledging God's presence within you. Offer yourself and this time to God.
- Bid the Holy Spirit to enliven your understanding of God's Word.

#### **2. Read the passage**

- Read the passage slowly twice. The second time, become aware of a particular word or phrase that catches your attention, stirs, beckons, or addresses you.
- For about two minutes just sit with the word or phrase. Let it echo through your mind, your inner self. If you are comfortable, speak that word aloud several times, with generous moments of silence in between.
- Record in your journal the word or phrase that caught your attention.

#### **3. Read the passage again, slowly**

- Notice the selected word or phrase.
- Again, sit silently for about two minutes. Pay attention to any thoughts, feelings, or associations connected to the word or phrase.
- Jot these down in your journal.

#### **4. Read the passage a final time**

- Return to your word or phrase, revisit your experience.

- Let this quiet time be longer, perhaps 5-10 minutes. Notice the way this word or phrase, feeling or image connects with the context and circumstances of your life right now. Explore what God might be saying to you through these words, feelings, or experience. Notice how God is present to you in this word or phrase. How is God nudging you to respond? Stay with your explorations until you feel ready to move on.
- At the end of the time, record in your journal your experience and insights.

### 5. Rest and Offer Thanks

- Take a moment to contemplatively rest in the embrace of the Spirit.
- Thank God for whatever you have received.

## *Spiritual Practice of Spiritual Reading*

“We should read the words not in agitation, but in calm;  
not hurriedly, but slowly, a few at a time, pausing in attentive reflection . . .  
Then the reader will experience their ability to enkindle the ardor of prayer.”

—Jerome

### 1. Prepare Yourself

- Choose a place you associate with prayer rather than study or work
- Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths. Begin your prayer by acknowledging God’s presence within you. Offer yourself and this time to God.
- Bid the Holy Spirit to enliven the reading.

### 2. Read Slowly

- Read slowly, ruminating as you read.
- Notice any words, phrases, or images that catch your attention; stirs or beckons you; shimmers or bubbles up. Be attentive to what you find both positive and negative.

### 3. Explore

- When you touch on a word, phrase or image that captures your attention, stop and explore it.
- Approach the reading with humility. Don't demand that the text meet your expectations for what an "enlightened" author should write. Accept the author as another imperfect human, a product of his or her own time and situation. Allow the text to be a gift from both God and the author.
- As you read the passage, you might keep asking yourself some of these questions:
  - ✓ How is what I'm reading true of my own life? Where does it reflect my own *experience*?
  - ✓ How does this text challenge me? What new *direction* does it offer me?
  - ✓ What must I change to put what I am reading into practice?
- You might also devote special attention to sections that upset you.

- ✓ What is the source of the disturbance? Do you want to argue theology? Are you turned off by cultural differences?
- ✓ How might this insight turn your life upside down if you took it seriously? **4. Journal**
- Write down significant movements, insights, struggles. Note lingering questions.
- Ask for God's help in living out any new insights or direction you have perceived.

#### **5. Rest and Offer Thanks**

- Take a moment to contemplatively rest in the embrace of the Spirit.
- Thank God for whatever you have received.

## *Spiritual Practice of Spiritual Journaling*

“Even though I might know everything about God,  
God is not a person for me until I speak to God and God speaks to me.  
At that precise moment authentic personal relationship begins.”

—Mariano Magrassi

#### **1. Preparation**

- You might want to focus on a Psalm, passage of Scripture, hymn, or a sacred symbol.
- Find a quiet spot, void of distractions.
- Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths. Begin your prayer by acknowledging God's presence within you. Offer yourself and this time to God.
- Bid the Holy Spirit to be present during your journaling.

#### **2. Journal**

- Using pen, pencil, crayons, charcoals, etc., write, sketch, paint, or draw your thoughts. Allow God to speak through this creative process.
- Speak directly to God in light of the fruit of this process.
- You may want use the dialog formula to capture your conversation with God. Write your name and proceed to write out your feelings and thoughts to God. Then write God's name down, wait for a response and then write it down.

#### **3. Intentional Attentiveness**

- After this creative process, take a moment to re-center.
- You may want to ponder:

- ✓ What feelings were experienced, both feelings that invite and feelings that shut down? What were the points of resistance, points of opening?
  - ✓ Explore what God might be saying to you through these words, drawings, feelings or experience.
  - ✓ How is God calling me? What response did I make to God during this time?
  - ✓ Notice anything that captures your attention; stirs, beckons or addresses you, shimmers or bubbles up, or invites further reflection.
- Stay with your explorations until you feel ready to move on.
  - Record in your journal your experience and insights.

#### 4. Rest and Offer Thanks

- Take a moment to contemplatively rest in the embrace of the Spirit.
- Thank God for whatever you have received.

## *Spiritual Practice of Personal Bible Study*

“ . . . any attempt on our part to hear God’s voice concerns the relationship of our personal experience to the contents of the Bible. . . if we are ready to understand the biblical record, we must enter into our study of it on the assumption that the experiences recorded there are basically of the same type as ours would have been if we had been there.” –  
*Dallas Willard*

#### 1. Prepare Yourself

- Find a quiet spot, void of distractions.
- Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths. Begin your prayer by acknowledging God’s presence within you. Offer yourself and this time to God.
- Bid the Holy Spirit to enliven your understanding of God’s Word.

#### 2. Preview

- Read through the text without stopping.
- What verse or verses catch your attention most? Make note of them.
- Some people find it helpful to copy the text into their study journal.

#### 3. Read

- Go back through the text. List any questions the text raises for you. What additional information would be helpful for you to have?

- Make sure you understand the text before interpreting it.

#### **4. Observe and Interpret the Text**

- What do you think the text is saying? What does it mean?
- Consult with biblical resource tools like a Bible dictionary or atlas.
- Consult and compare what others have observed using a variety of commentaries. **5.**

#### **Apply**

- Based on what the passage says, what changes is the Holy Spirit prompting you to make?
- Spend time sitting quietly listening to what God is saying to you.
- How do you intend to respond to what God is teaching you through the text?

#### **6. Pray**

- Pray about other issues and concerns, family and friends, in light of this passage.
- Thank God for what you have received.