



PSALM

119:37

Turn My Eyes

A W A K E N I N G

2024

SUNDAY NIGHT

Introduction & Orientation

8 P.M. Dimnent Chapel

Welcome to the Awakening 2024!

This is your prayer and meditation guide for your spiritual formation this week. Make sure you keep a journal, a bible, and this prayer guide available throughout the week especially for our time together in the morning. Our theme for the Awakening 2024 is “Turn My Eyes Upon Jesus.”

We will approach this theme by praying the Psalms. In fact, our focus verse is from Psalm 119, “Turn my eyes away from worthless things; preserve my life according to your word.”

Can this become your prayer this week?

There are so many things that steal our attention. Our intention during the Awakening is to find ways to focus our attention on our relationship with God.

Questions are good!

The Awakening is full of opportunities for you to learn new things about God, worship, and prayer. How ready are you to be stretched? Learning new ways of prayer can easily seem strange and even uncomfortable. But consider that before God, there are always new things to learn!

If you feel frustrated or confused by the ways we worship, pray, or study the Bible this week, don't be afraid to ask questions in your small group. You can also bring your questions to your college interns or me (Josh).

Your questions are necessary. They are the only way you can grow. Questions can even become a vital part of your prayer.

Praying the Psalms with Lectio Divina

One of the primary ways we will focus our attention on God this week is by praying the Psalms through an ancient practice called lectio divina, or “sacred reading.” Lectio divina is practiced by careful, slow, repetitive readings of the Bible. As we read with this intentionality, we are trying to notice God’s voice, love, and presence in the reading. See Appendix A at the back of this prayer guide to learn more about lectio divina.

Many of our hymns and worship choruses are full of Scripture, and much of the Scripture we sing is from the Psalms. Christians throughout the history of the church understand that the Psalms are placed in the middle of the Bible because they are the primary prayer book of people who follow Jesus.

With the first reading, we are just trying to settle our hearts and minds and to become acquainted with the Bible. This means we are turning our attention away from distractions to focus on God.

After the second, third, or even fourth reading, you will be invited to share out loud with the group a word or phrase from the Bible passage that especially draws you closer to God. The practice will proceed like this:

Begin with silence to turn away from distractions and open your heart to God

1st careful, slow, patient reading...

Return to silence. Continue to open your heart to God

2nd careful, slow, patient reading...

Each person is invited to share out loud with the group which word or short phrase is helpful for their prayer

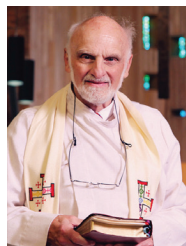
3rd careful, slow, patient reading.

Each person responds again with a word or a phrase

Once we finish with the readings and responses, you are invited to write out a one sentence prayer. After spending this time considering God’s voice, love, and presence, what would you like to say to God?

"The Psalms are a centerpiece of Christian liturgy, piety, and spirituality. They have been so from the beginning of the Christian movement for good reason. They have been found poignant in expression, able to empower believing imagination in remarkable ways. This is evident in the rich use made of the Psalms through the New Testament, most especially in the passion of Jesus."

from *Praying the Psalms*, Second Edition: Engaging Scripture and the Life of the Spirit by Walter Brueggemann



Walter Brueggemann is an American Protestant Old Testament scholar and theologian who is widely considered one of the most influential Old Testament scholars of the last several decades. His work often focuses on the Hebrew prophetic tradition and sociopolitical imagination of the Church.

Lectio Divina

Let's use this passage with our week's theme verse for lectio divina tonight.

PSALM 119:33-37 NIV

- ³³ *Teach me, Lord, the way of your decrees,
that I may follow it to the end.*
- ³⁴ *Give me understanding, so that I may keep your law
and obey it with all my heart.*
- ³⁵ *Direct me in the path of your commands,
for there I find delight.*
- ³⁶ *Turn my heart toward your statutes
and not toward selfish gain.*
- ³⁷ *Turn my eyes away from worthless things;
preserve my life according to your word.*

If you could say anything to God right now, what would you say? This could be a response to the psalm you just spent time with, or it could be anything at all. Is there something you want to say to God about the beginning of this week? Write out a once-sentence prayer below:

The Purpose of the Awakening

The Awakening is a prayer and worship retreat. We are retreating from our regular rhythms of busyness to quiet our hearts in worship, prayer, and spiritual conversation so we can more easily tune into God's love.

We will meet each morning and most evenings to return to this prayer guide for your personal prayer in solitude, and then for discussion in your small group. I explained above that questions are good and essential. We want you to be free to find God in your own ways this week. We hope you ask questions, identify your gifts, and deepen your desire for God in worship and prayer.

Your prayer, the way you choose to worship is unique to your vocation, to who God has called you to be.

Have you considered that God does not make mistakes? You were intentionally designed by God to become you. There is no one like you, and there will never be anyone just like you. Your vocation is to become you!

What is vocation?

The Awakening is an experience designed to help you consider your vocation. The word vocation comes from the Latin, *vocare*, "to call, to name, to summon, to invoke." When we consider vocation, we are asking the big questions: *Who am I? What am I made for? What is the meaning of my life? What am I called to do?* At the Awakening, we are considering that this question about our vocation is a question we answer with God.

It is helpful to understand the difference between vocation and career. A career is an occupation you do for seasons of your life. You will likely have several careers, but in Christ there is one vocation: to stay in relationship with Jesus.

Your fundamental calling, the purpose of your life is to give and receive love with God. However, the way you give and receive this love is unique to you. We could say this is a vocation of worship and prayer, but we need to imagine how to love Jesus in and through everything we do throughout the day whether eating, sleeping, working, or playing.

Our focus this week is simply: what helps me live into my vocation? What helps me turn my eyes toward Jesus? Asking this question can help you become more freely yourself. But there is a deeper challenge for you to consider: what are the worthless things that are distracting you from Jesus?

It is difficult to be honest with ourselves. To see how we are and are not open to giving and receiving God's love. So, it is very important to be patient

with ourselves and each other. It's also important to consider how we will be together this week.

Permissions

This week is for you to become more fully who God designed you to be. At the Awakening, you have permission to be you. Let's review what this permission means for you.

This week you have permission to:

- ...ask questions*
- ...be confused*
- ...be skeptical (but not cynical...there's a difference)*
- ...be restless and impatient*
- ...be stubborn*
- ...say "no"*
- ...disagree with each other*
- ...make this week your own (we get out of things what we put into them)*
- ...risk and fail*
- ...be foolish*
- ...be weak*
- ...be angry*
- ...stay the same*
- ...be different, to pray, think, feel, love, act in a way that is all your own*
- ...speak on behalf of yourself and not your friends, family, church (This is your week.*
- Focus on your story, your journey)*

You also have permission to:

- ...trust*
- ...love*
- ...give your leaders honest feedback. Let us know how we can serve and love you better*
- ...wait for trust and love, to be patient and not to force or fake love and trust*
- ...say "yes"*
- ...listen to the Spirit on behalf of yourself, to pray for your own growth.*
- ...listen to the Spirit on behalf of others, to pray for other's growth*
- ...be gentle with yourself*
- ...be gentle with others*
- ...be wise*
- ...be careful*
- ...dream*
- ...hope*
- ...be transformed, to change, and grow*
- ...fall in love*

What is a Psalm?

The Hebrew and Greek words for “Psalm” invoke the concept of a sacred poem or song. A psalm is literally something that could be sung to the pluck of a harp. Martin Luther is known for saying that when we sing, we pray twice. To say our prayer with words helps us intend a prayer with our minds. When we join those words with melody, the intention of our prayer can more easily be expressed through our hearts and bodies.

Note that some poets engage the musicality of language without adding instruments with rhythm or a sung melody. There is a way to write and read that has its own meter and a rise and fall of pitch.

The most important question when engaging psalmistry is how to worship with our whole beings, all our heart, mind, soul, and strength. The apostle Paul encourages the church to speak to each other is psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit because this how we live in the fullness of our being (Eph 5:19).

We also need to review how we will help and learn from each other. Below is a covenant for you to consider carefully.

Covenant of Presence

#1 FULLY PRESENT: I choose to be fully present to myself and welcoming to others. I will do my best to not leave anyone out.

#2 LISTEN GENEROUSLY: I choose to listen generously and to create space for others to speak before I make an effort to be heard myself.

#3 SHARE MY STORY: I choose to believe that I have valuable, important things to share with others.

#4 WE COME AS EQUALS: I choose to not compare myself with others. I will do my best to not allow envy and jealousy to hinder me from loving freely.

#5 NO “SHARE OR DIE” PRESSURE: I choose to share when I am ready, and I choose to determine the extent to which I want to participate.

#6 NO FIXING: I choose to be a safe listener and to only offer advice when asked for it.

#7 AVOID JUDGMENT: I choose not to judge others with my words, actions or even in my heart.

#8 RETURN TO GRATITUDE & WONDER: I choose to give thanks for the gift of hearing and being heard. If I notice I am becoming judgmental, I choose to wonder: "why did she share that story or make those choices?" "I wonder what my reaction to his story teaches me about myself?" "I wonder how she is feeling right now?"

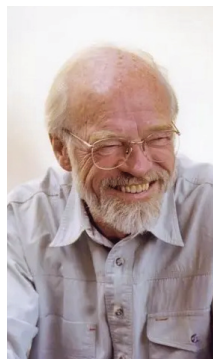
Is there any way you would like to edit the covenant? What would you like to add to this? What would you like to take away? Write out a response to these reflection questions below.

If you believe you can agree to this covenant, sign your name here:

The human, in a classic definition, is the tool-making creature, *homo faber*. We are not animals, living by sheer instinct, in immediate touch with our environment. We are not angels, living by sheer intelligence, with unmediated access to God. We are creatures, heavily involved with tools. Unlike animals, we use knife and fork to get food to our mouths, and hammer and saw to build a home for ourselves. Unlike the angels, we use the scriptures to hear what God says to us, and the sacraments to receive his life among us.

The human, in another definition, is the creature that prays, *homo peccator*. The two definitions are the same. Prayer is technology. Prayers are tools.

- Eugene Peterson, *Answering God: The Psalms as Tools for Prayer*



Eugene Peterson (1932-2018) was one of the most important pastors, theologians, and poets of the twentieth century. He translated the entire bible by himself, a translation called *The Message* that is a remarkably delightful, creative way to read the Bible. Western Theological Seminary, adjacent to Hope College is home to the Eugene Peterson Center that hosts all of Peterson's letters and original manuscripts.

Themes within the Psalter

Adoration

Exaltation

Devotion/Dedication

Celebration/Thanksgiving

Confession

Lamentation

Meditation/Remembrance

Supplication

Intercession

MONDAY MORNING

Turning Eyes Upon Jesus

Meditation & Devotion

Begin praying together Psalm 119:37

“Turn our eyes away from worthless things; preserve our lives according to your word.”

Lectio Divina: Psalm 1 NIV

¹*Blessed is the one*

*who does not walk in step with the wicked
or stand in the way that sinners take
or sit in the company of mockers,*

²*but whose delight is in the law of the Lord,
and who meditates on his law day and night.*

³*That person is like a tree planted by streams of water,
which yields its fruit in season
and whose leaf does not wither—
whatever they do prospers.*

⁴*Not so the wicked!
They are like chaff
that the wind blows away.*

⁵*Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.*

⁶*For the Lord watches over the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked leads to destruction.*

Solitude:

How do you pray? What is the most helpful way you can pay attention to Jesus?

What do you find difficult or confusing about prayer?

How do you hope this week can help you turn your eyes to Jesus?

If you could say anything to God this morning, what would you say? Write a one-sentence prayer.

Community:

Return to your small group and discuss anything you discovered in Psalm 1 that helped you pray. Then share responses to your reflection questions.

Bonus group question: How does Psalm 1 help you better understand our theme verse, Psalm 119:37?

What is Spiritual Formation?

When we consider spiritual formation, we are considering how every part of our lives—how we eat, sleep, play, and work somehow to form the way we think and love. The question is which of these things will help us follow Jesus? Every detail, big or small has spiritual implications: how you dress, speak, the people you spend time with, the places you go, the things you fill your mind with—all of these shape the ways you think, feel, desire, and behave.

MONDAY NIGHT

Turning Our Eyes to Jesus

Exultation with the Poetry of the Psalms

Begin praying together Psalm 119:37

“Turn our eyes away from worthless things; preserve our lives according to your word.”

Psalm 19 Message Translation

⁴⁻⁵ *God makes a huge dome
for the sun—a superdome!
The morning sun’s a new husband
leaping from his honeymoon bed,
The daybreaking sun an athlete
racing to the tape.*

⁶ *That’s how God’s Word vaults across the skies
from sunrise to sunset,
Melting ice, scorching deserts,
warming hearts to faith.*

Solitude:

How have you been able to “turn your eyes upon Jesus” today? What has helped you pay attention to Jesus?

What has distracted you and kept you from staying attentive to Jesus' love?

If you could say anything to God as you bring this day to a close, what would you say? Write a one-sentence prayer.

Community:

Allow time for each person in your small group to report on how their first day of the Awakening has been.

What have you learned?

What is new?

What have you enjoyed?

What is frustrating or confusing?

Bonus question: The Psalms are poems. Psalm 19 is especially rich in image and metaphor. Does the poetry help you worship and pray? If yes, how is it helpful?

Poetry & Prayer

Poetry is language used with personal intensity. It is not, as so many suppose, decorative speech. Poets tell us what our eyes, blurred with too much gawking, and our ears, dulled with too much chatter, miss around and within us. Poets use words to drag us into the depth of reality itself. They do it not by reporting on how life is, but by pushing-pulling us into the middle of it. Poetry grabs for the jugular. Far from being cosmetic language, it is intestinal. It is root language. Poetry doesn't so much tell us something we never knew as bring into recognition what is latent, forgotten, overlooked, or suppressed. The Psalms text is almost entirely in this kind of language. Knowing this, we will not be looking here primarily for ideas about God, or for direction in moral conduct. We will expect, rather, to find the experience of being human before God exposed and sharpened.

Prayer is language used in personal relation to God. It gives utterance to what we sense or want or respond to before God. God speaks to us; our answers are our prayers. The answers are not always articulate: silence, sighs, groaning—these also constitute responses. The answers are not always positive: anger, skepticism, curses - these also are responses. But always God is involved, whether in darkness or light, whether in faith or despair. This is hard to get used to. Our habit is to talk about God, not to him. We love discussing God. The Psalms resist these discussions. They are not provided to teach us about God but to train us in responding to him. We don't learn the Psalms until we are praying them.

This texture, the poetry and the prayer, accounts for both the excitement and difficulty in dealing with this text. The poetry requires that we deal with our actual humanity—these words dive beneath the surfaces of prose and pretense, straight into the depths. We are more comfortable with prose, the laid-back language of our arms-length discourse. The prayer requires that we deal with God—this God who is determined on nothing less than the total renovation of our lives. We would rather have a religious bull session.

--Eugene Peterson, Answering God: The Psalms as Tools for Prayer

Our questions of calling tend to be more aspirational than introspective. We spend a jarring amount of time asking young people what jobs they might have one day, compared to how often we ask them what is true of them right now. Both questions are worth asking, but I do wonder what I would've found true about myself earlier if someone had asked. The question of calling is not primarily a question of what we might become, but a question of what is already true—not least of which is what is true about the self. Ask me what I want to be, but not before you ask me who I want to be. Ask me who I want to be, but not before you ask me the more searing question of who I am. Many of us will go to great lengths trying to answer this question without awareness of it. From horoscopes and the Enneagram to the social archetypes of the high school cafeteria, we are desperate for ways to make sense of who we are in relation to the world. It's troubling that the answer would not be immediately clear to us. But there are parts of us we've managed to hide even from ourselves.



....I've accepted that the whole of my life will be a pilgrimage toward the sound of the genuine in me. This may sound troubling to those who've been conditioned to believe that our journey is to God and God alone, but I say the two paths are one. My journey to the truth of God cannot be parsed from my journey to the truth of who I am. A fidelity to the true self is a fidelity to truth. I won't apologize for this.

—Cole Arthur Riley, *This Here Flesh*

Cole Arthur Riley is a writer and poet. She is the NYT bestselling author of *This Here Flesh* and *Black Liturgies*.

TUESDAY MORNING

Turning Our Eyes to Jesus

Thanksgiving & Adoration

Begin praying together Psalm 119:37

“Turn our eyes away from worthless things; preserve our lives according to your word.”

Psalm 95 NIV

¹ Come, let us sing for joy to the Lord;
let us shout aloud to the Rock of our salvation.

² Let us come before him with thanksgiving
and extol him with music and song.

³ For the Lord is the great God,
the great King above all gods.

⁴ In his hand are the depths of the earth,
and the mountain peaks belong to him.

⁵ *The sea is his, for he made it,
and his hands formed the dry land.*
⁶ *Come, let us bow down in worship,
let us kneel before the Lord our Maker;*
⁷ *for he is our God
and we are the people of his pasture,
the flock under his care.*

Solitude:

Which images especially help your prayer and worship this morning?

Why do these images matter to you?

How do they help you pray?

Community:

Return to your small group and discuss anything you discovered in Psalm 95 that helped you pray. Share responses to your reflection questions as time allows.

Bonus group question: why is thanksgiving/gratitude so important?

There is something in every one of you that waits, listens for the sound of the genuine in yourself and if you cannot hear it, you will never find whatever it is for which you are searching and if you hear it and then do not follow it, it was better that you had never been born...

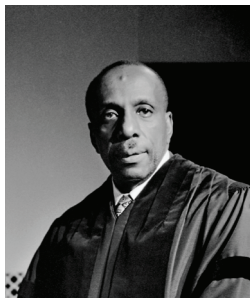
You are the only you that has ever lived; your idiom is the only idiom of its kind in all of existence and if you cannot hear the sound of the genuine in you, you will all of your life spend your days on the ends of strings that somebody else pulls...

There is in you something that waits and listens for the sound of the genuine in yourself and sometimes there is so much traffic going on in your minds, so many different kinds of signals, so many vast impulses floating through your organism that go back thousands of generations, long before you were even a thought in the mind of creation, and you are buffeted by these, and in the midst of all of this you have got to find out what your name is. Who are you? How does the sound of the genuine come through to you...

The sound of the genuine is flowing through you. Don't be deceived and thrown off by all the noises that are a part even of your dreams, your ambitions, so that you don't hear the sound of the genuine in you, because that is the only true guide that you will ever have, and if you don't have that you don't have a thing.

--From Howard Thurman's 1980 commencement address at Spellman College

Howard Thurman (1899-1981) was an American author, pastor, philosopher, theologian, educator, and civil rights leader.



TUESDAY NIGHT

Turning Our Eyes to Jesus

Confession

Attempt at least one reading of our theme verse and Psalm 51 for worship at the beach.

"Turn our eyes away from worthless things; preserve our lives according to your word."

Psalm 51 Message translation

¹⁻³ Generous in love—God, give grace!
Huge in mercy—wipe out my bad record.
Scrub away my guilt,
soak out my sins in your laundry.
I know how bad I've been;
my sins are staring me down.

⁴⁻⁶ You're the One I've violated, and you've seen
it all, seen the full extent of my evil.
You have all the facts before you;
whatever you decide about me is fair.
I've been out of step with you for a long time,
in the wrong since before I was born.
What you're after is truth from the inside out.
Enter me, then; conceive a new, true life.

⁷⁻¹⁵ Soak me in your laundry and I'll come out clean,
scrub me and I'll have a snow-white life.
Tune me in to foot-tapping songs,
set these once-broken bones to dancing.
Don't look too close for blemishes,
give me a clean bill of health.
God, make a fresh start in me,
shape a Genesis week from the chaos of my life.
Don't throw me out with the trash,
or fail to breathe holiness in me.
Bring me back from gray exile,
put a fresh wind in my sails!
Give me a job teaching rebels your ways
so the lost can find their way home.
Commute my death sentence, God, my salvation God,
and I'll sing anthems to your life-giving ways.
Unbutton my lips, dear God;
I'll let loose with your praise.

¹⁶⁻¹⁷ Going through the motions doesn't please you,
a flawless performance is nothing to you.
I learned God-worship
when my pride was shattered.
Heart-shattered lives ready for love
don't for a moment escape God's notice.

¹⁸⁻¹⁹ Make Zion the place you delight in,
repair Jerusalem's broken-down walls.
Then you'll get real worship from us,
acts of worship small and large,
Including all the bulls
they can heave onto your altar!

Solitude & Community:

Time and circumstance allowing, a leader might read the following prompts for you to have some time alone. Before you end the day, you might find time to share even briefly with your small group.

Allow 3-5 minutes to find a quiet place or to take a walk alone on the beach. Read back through Psalm 51 above slowly and carefully. You've been at the Awakening over two days learning, praying, worshipping, discussing, playing, and being creative. Do you have a greater capacity to turn your eyes to Jesus now than when you first arrived?

Are there specific obstacles in your life that are especially keeping you from keeping your eyes focused on Jesus? Do you have anything you especially want to confess to God?

These may be confessions for the privacy of your heart, or you may find help offering a confession out loud to another student, an intern, or your small group. Be sure to offer words of affirmation of the forgiveness of sin.

If you confess your sins, He who is faithful will forgive you of all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). As far as the East is from the West, so is the great distance He has separated us from our sin (Psalm 103:12)

Tools for Being and Becoming

Prayers are tools, but with this clarification: prayers are not tools for doing or getting, but for being and becoming. In our largely externalized culture, we are urgently presented with tools that enable us to do things (a machine, for instance, to clean the carpet), and to get things (a computer, for instance, to get information). We are also well trained in their use. We are not so readily offered tools that enable our being and becoming human. We are accustomed to think of our age as conspicuously technological. But the largest area of the human continent is impoverished technologically. The vaunted technologies of our day are used only along the shoreline of the human condition; the vast interiors are bereft. The consequence is that, lacking adequate tools (a technology), most people don't venture into these interiors, at least not very far. Life is constricted on the boundary, between ocean and wilderness, where a narrow competence in doing and getting is exercised.

At the center of the whole enterprise of being human, prayers are the primary technology. Prayers are tools that God uses to work his will in our bodies and souls. Prayers are tools that we use to collaborate in his work with us.

For the tool-making, tool-using creatures who venture into the ocean depths of being and journey into the wilderness frontiers of becoming, making and being made into eternal habitations, the Psalms are the requisite toolbox. The Psalms are the best tools available for working the faith - one hundred and fifty carefully crafted prayers that deal with the great variety of operations that God carries on in us and attend to all the parts of our lives that are, at various times and in different ways, rebelling and trusting, hurting and praising. People of faith take possession of the Psalms with the same attitude and for the same reason that gardeners gather up rake and hoe on their way to the vegetable patch, and students carry paper and pencil as they enter a lecture hall. It is a simple matter of practicality—acquiring the tools for carrying out the human work at hand.

--Eugene Peterson, Answering God: The Psalms as Tools for Prayer

WEDNESDAY MORNING

Turning Our Eyes to Jesus

Intercession

Begin praying together Psalm 119:37

"Turn our eyes away from worthless things; preserve our lives according to your word."

Psalm 16 Message translation

¹⁻² *Keep me safe, O God,
I've run for dear life to you.
I say to God, "Be my Lord!"
Without you, nothing makes sense.*

³ *And these God-chosen lives all around—
what splendid friends they make!*

⁴ *Don't just go shopping for a god.
Gods are not for sale.*

*I swear I'll never treat god-names
like brand-names.*

⁵⁻⁶ *My choice is you, God, first and only.
And now I find I'm your choice!
You set me up with a house and yard.
And then you made me your heir!*

⁷⁻⁸ *The wise counsel God gives when I'm awake
is confirmed by my sleeping heart.
Day and night I'll stick with God;
I've got a good thing going and I'm not letting go.*

⁹⁻¹⁰ *I'm happy from the inside out,
and from the outside in, I'm firmly formed.
You canceled my ticket to hell—
that's not my destination!*

¹¹ *Now you've got my feet on the life path,
all radiant from the shining of your face.
Ever since you took my hand,
I'm on the right way.*

Solitude:

Find your consolation. What word or phrase especially helps you turn to Jesus to give and receive love from him?

What else has been helpful to keep your attention on God at any point throughout the Awakening?

Acknowledge your desolation. What has been frustrating or confusing? Has anything made you angry? Has anything especially kept you distracted from giving and receiving love with God?

If you could say anything to God as you bring this day to a close, what would you say? Write a one-sentence prayer.

Community:

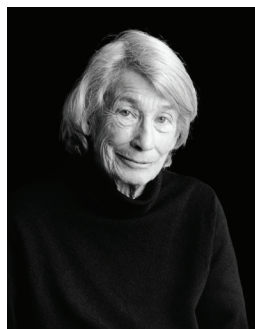
Return to your small group and discuss anything you discovered in Psalm 16 that helped you pray. Share responses to your reflection questions as time allows.

Bonus group question: when you offer intercession, do you really believe God hears and answers your prayer?

The Summer Day

Mary Oliver

Who made the world?
Who made the swan, and the black bear?
Who made the grasshopper?
This grasshopper, I mean--
the one who has flung herself out of the grass,
the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,
who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down --
who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes.
Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.
Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.
I don't know exactly what a prayer is.
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down
into the grass, how to kneel in the grass,
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields
which is what I have been doing all day.
Tell me, what else should I have done?
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?
Tell me, what is it you plan to do
With your one wild and precious life?



Poet Mary Oliver (1935 -2019) is one of America's most celebrated poets. Her work is inspired by nature, rather than the human world, stemming from her lifelong passion for solitary walks in the wild

THURSDAY MORNING

Turning Our Eyes to Jesus

Devotion & Discipline

Begin praying together Psalm 119:37

"Turn our eyes away from worthless things; preserve our lives according to your word."

Psalm 119:1-10 Message translation

¹⁻⁸ You're blessed when you stay on course,
walking steadily on the road revealed by God.
You're blessed when you follow his directions,
doing your best to find him.
That's right—you don't go off on your own;
you walk straight along the road he set.
You, God, prescribed the right way to live;
now you expect us to live it.
Oh, that my steps might be steady,
keeping to the course you set;

*Then I'd never have any regrets
in comparing my life with your counsel.
I thank you for speaking straight from your heart;
I learn the pattern of your righteous ways.
I'm going to do what you tell me to do;
don't ever walk off and leave me.
⁹⁻¹⁰ How can a young person live a clean life?
By carefully reading the map of your Word.
I'm single-minded in pursuit of you;
don't let me miss the road signs you've posted.*

Solitude:

Find your consolation. What word or phrase especially helps you turn to Jesus, to give and receive love from him?

What else has been helpful to keep your attention on God at any point throughout the Awakening?

We shall never succeed in knowing ourselves unless we seek to know God: let us think of his greatness and then come back to our own baseness; by looking at his purity we shall see our foulness; by meditating upon his humility, we shall see how far we are from being humble.

—Teresa of Avila, *The Interior Castle*

St. Teresa of Avila was a 16th Century doctor of the church, a Carmelite nun, and prominent Spanish mystic and religious reformer.



Acknowledge your desolation. What has been frustrating or confusing? Has anything made you angry? Has anything especially kept you distracted from giving and receiving love with God?

If you could say anything to God as you bring this day to a close, what would you say? *Write a one-sentence prayer.*

Community:

Return to your small group and discuss anything you discovered in Psalm 119 that helped you pray. Share responses to your reflection questions as time allows.

Bonus group question: what are some ways your daily prayer practices might change after the Awakening? How will you continue to grow your devotion through discipline

FRIDAY MORNING

Turning Our Eyes to Jesus

Examen

Lectio Divina

Our 'text' this morning for prayer is you, your journey this week of the Awakening. This is a way to practice the prayer of Examen. Let's review how you have been able to turn your eyes to Jesus by prayerfully reviewing the week. You can look through your notes in this prayer guide and recall in your memory: where did God especially become real, true, loving, a source of hope and healing?

Consider the people you've been with, the activities you've been involved in, the places you've been, the songs you've sung. Look through your journal entries. Read through favorite sections of the Psalms.

This is a special opportunity for you to practice hearing God's voice. God has been speaking to you. God wants to continue speaking to you. There is so much for you to talk to God about!

Pray

Quiet yourself. Return to abiding as deeply in Jesus' presence as you can. Then walk through your week identifying words or phrases that help you recognize God's movements in and around you.

Your prayer might look like this:

Begin with silence – rest!

Sunday: Where did I notice God on my first day at the Awakening? Look back over your notes in this prayer guide. Circle and underline where you notice God. Add additional notes.

Silence – rest!

Monday: Where did I notice God during my first day at the Awakening? Review the day in this prayer guide and your memory. Circle, underline, make notes.

Silence – rest!

Tuesday: Where was God? Review like you did above.

Silence – rest!

Wednesday: Where was God? Review like you did above.

Silence – rest!

Thursday: Where was God? Review like you did above.

What stands out as the most important ways Jesus has revealed himself to you? Make a list below of words or phrases that describe the movements of God this week.

Now sit back and look for the way these words and phrases resonate with each other. Can you identify some themes? What have you learned about your story, your song? in Jesus? When you look over the week, is God saying something specific to you? What have you learned about yourself, others, and God? How have you turned your eyes to Jesus this week? Journal your reflections.

Discuss - Gather in your small groups and share with each other offering witness to how the Spirit has moved in your life this week. Close by praying for each other.

Appendix A

Lectio Divina

“Divine Reading”

Lectio

Meditatio

Oratio

Contemplatio

Actio

The main purpose of lectio divina is to allow the text to read us. Most often we come to a book, a class, a conversation or idea with a posture of control. It's as if we pin the book on a table like a frog to dissect. We then use our mental scalpel to take the book apart. In Literature class this is required, to separate plot, setting, major and minor characters, and theme to identify the meaning of a book. We do the same thing with Bible study when we read from a posture of power working with our intellects to make sense of the Bible. Through lectio we offer our whole selves as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1) to God by submitting to him, by giving ourselves to God as we read the Scriptures.

But the Bible doesn't always make sense to my mind. Often, I don't even make sense to myself. I am messy, out of sorts, and out of control, in no condition to grapple God's Word onto a table. Through lectio I approach God in humility to become more familiar with my desperate need for the help of the Bible. I am not surrendering my attention to just any book. In fact, am not coming to a book at all. I am approaching the person of God revealed to me through the Scriptures, the Living Word revealed through the scriptures. In lectio divina we surrender control and acknowledge our dependence upon Jesus by reading the Bible with the deeper, secret places of our heart. It's not that we don't use our minds. It's that we join our minds to heart and soul. We come to the Bible with our guts open wide. In this posture of surrender, I am laid on an altar, vulnerable to the work of the Holy Spirit trusting the Bible can make sense of me.

Is this confusing? Hard to comprehend? Don't worry. The only way to learn these deeper things is to practice them and let the Holy Spirit teach you. Let's look at the steps of lectio divina more closely. Preparation: Do your best to surrender to God. All of the thoughts that have been spinning around in your mind, those thoughts that you haven't noticed yet—dismiss them gracefully as you are able. Acknowledge any tension in your body. Slow your breathing. By faith acknowledge that God is near in love.

LECTIO - Read slowly with care.

Read the Scripture carefully, slowly listening to each word and phrase. Here you are getting comfortable with the Bible, yourself, and God. You are coming into the house of God to find a good place to sit and rest. There is nothing for you to accomplish other than to be still and quiet.

Return to Silence & Rest

MEDITATIO –Meditate, chew, shift, digest, mull, ruminate

Read the passage a second time. Identify a bit of the passage that “tastes good,” a word or phrase that seems to stand out. This word or phrase does not need to make sense to your mind. You don’t need to have a reason why you are interested in these words. You are listening with your inner, deepest heart for the part of this passage that especially seems inviting, good, nourishing, resonant with life. When you are invited to, share your word or phrase out loud with your group.

Return to Silence & Rest

ORATIO – Pray, talk lovingly with Jesus.

Read the passage a third time looking again for a word or phrase that stands out to you. You might be drawn to the same word or phrase that you chose last time. It doesn’t matter. Again, you are listening with your inner being, deep in the guts of your soul. Surrender any need to be in control and to make sense of the passage. Remember, this is not Bible study. Here in this movement after hearing the passage three times, you will be more settled inside of yourself and familiar with the passage so you can have a loving conversation with Jesus. This may simply be a practice of repeating your word or phrase slowly or carefully inside your heart. You may be led to ask Jesus to help you live into the truth of the passage. Or you may find that the word or phrase leads you to think about something happening in your life, and now you can talk to Jesus about what you are noticing.

Return to Silence & Rest

CONTEMPLATIO – Go deeper, wait, trust, love.

Read the passage a third time looking again for a word or phrase that stands out to you. At this stage you will be more centered in yourself and open to God. Now you may especially want to slowly and lovingly repeat your word or phrase again and again to savor the richness of the presence of God revealed through the Bible. Or you may be able to sit quietly with your heart and mind open to the presence of God. This is especially where we learn to

sit with Jesus like we might sit silently with a dear friend.
Return to Silence & Rest - Give thanks!

ACTIO – Do the Bible...let the passage come to life in and through you.

There are longer and shorter ways of practicing lectio divina. You can try it with two, or six, eight, ten readings of the passage depending on your group and the time you have. One variation of the lectio is to add a final step of actio. Here you conclude your time by talking freely with Jesus about how he may be inviting you to practice the truth of the Scripture. You can simply ask Jesus, how would you like this Scripture to come to life in and through me? Depending on the time available, you might share with the whole group a small bit of the insight you have gained about your actions. If you have less time, it may be best to turn to one person for you to share briefly with each other. Or if you have even less time, you can just share a word or phrase that can represent what is stirring inside of you. If you have the time to linger and journal a response, the act of writing becomes another step of intentional listening through which your encounter with God becomes more practical and tangible. Resolve the temptation to fix yourself or to force anything at this point. God can speak to us in ground breaking, world shaking ways. But most of the time, for most of us, the leading of the Spirit is incremental, subtle, careful and yet deeply robust. Allow your sense of action to emerge gracefully by remaining attentive to God's presence and love.

Silence & Rest! Give thanks!

**One perennial question about this practice is: what do I do in the moments of silence and rest? This question is itself your prayer. Indeed, what do I do in God's presence when there is no specific instruction? It's easier to describe what not to do: avoid judging yourself, avoid expecting too much, resist trying to figure yourself out. We live in a world that is overprogrammed and overcalculated. Whether you actively recognize these thoughts, your nervous system is more or less wired to assume every moment of your attention should be consumptive or should have measurable outcomes. The intent of lectio is to help you intentionally use this time to be relatively boring and unproductive. This rest between each movement of lectio is the space of discerning what contemplation is and what it might become for you. Each step of this approach allows you to increase your intention to notice God in and in through yourself. The Spirit may especially reveal love and wisdom during this pause. And/or the pause may just serve as a palate cleanser to allow you attention to settle down more to be more capable of noticing the Spirit in the scripture. Finally, trust that we all need to practice these disciplines again and again before we can begin to get a sense of God's purposes in the method. It is okay if you don't "get" anything significant from the practice in one, two, or six times. If after a few months of practice, there is little goodness or if the practice especially is disconcerting, you can either try lectio in a different creative way or not at all.*

Appendix B

Visio Divina

“Divine Seeing”

With the visio divina, we come to the visible world around us and surrender to God in a similar way that we come to the Scriptures through the discipline of lectio divina. We should not confuse nature or art with the importance of the Scriptures, yet we do confess that God can speak to us through anything around us. Many of us especially find refreshment by being outside. Others have learned to be nourished by engaging art and music. This discipline of visio divina is a practice of welcoming the Spirit into the way we see anything and everything. One theologian, Walter Burghardt, describes the deepest prayer as a “long, loving look at the real.” We are always turning our eyes to look and see the world. We look at the sidewalk or road in front of us. We look at words on a page. We spend hours looking at screens of phones or computers. We look at the people in front of us. While visio divina we prayerfully consider: do I really see what is there? Do I truly enjoy what is in my line of sight? Can I God around me?

An adjustment to a classic hymn offers us insight here:

Turn your eyes upon Jesus.
Look full in his wonderful face.
And the things of earth
will grow strangely dim...**clear!**
In the light of his glory and grace.

When we avoid God and are distant from love, life can seem heavy and confusing. On the other hand, everything makes so much more sense when we are in God’s presence. And so, we can go about our days with expectation of seeing Jesus in and through all of creation. Visio Divina is a way of training the eyes of our hearts to see God in anything and everything.

Here’s one way to practice visio divina if you have chosen something spend time with a piece of art or a place in nature for example:

Prepare: Close your eyes, breathe, clear your mind, and ask God to help you see in this time of prayer. Ask God to speak to you through your sight.

Lectio (read): Open your eyes and scan the image or a scene of nature. Note what draws your interest but continue to scan the whole image. Close and rest your eyes a minute. Gaze lovingly and patiently with hope to be nearer to God’s presence and love.

Mediatio (meditate): Open your eyes and let your eyes be led. Focus on just the part of the image that caught your eyes and name it. Recognize what feature, shape, line, texture, of color especially seems helpful. Close your eyes, seeing that feature in your mind. Rest. Wait. Trust and linger in God's presence.

Oratio (pray): Open your eyes and look again at the feature that caught your eye. Allow it to bring forth a word, image, an emotion, or desire. Close and rest your eyes, your heart, mind, and body. Then consider further insight into what you are noticing. Is God speaking to you through what you are seeing. Have you found something you want to express to God through what is before you?

Contemplatio (contemplation): Open your eyes and gaze at the whole image. Make an inner intention to open your heart further to God's presence and love. Linger and treasure the moment attempting to remain present to yourself in and through God. Allow the visual feature of what you have been gazing at to return you again and again more gracefully in God's presence. Treasure. Enjoy. Linger in the presence of God.

Actio (action): How will you respond to Him? Spend time considering this question with God. Don't overthink this. There is nothing to strive for here, nothing to force or fake. Usually, the Spirit speaks to us in smaller ways. At least our initial perception of what we notice is smaller and more subtle. There is a good chance that with further, loving, careful time what seemed smaller will grow in significance and substance. If you have occasion to journal or to share with others something about what you are noticing, often this attempt to put words to your noticing will allow you to behold the depth and significance of what you are noticing. It's not that we can ever find the exact words to describe God's wisdom. It's that by attempting to communicate these things leads us to more awe and wonder that surely God is in this place.

Appendix C

The Prayer of Examen

Testing Spirits. A Biblical Basis

1 John 4:1-6

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world. ²By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, ³and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. And this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming; and now it is already in the world. ⁴Little children, you are from God, and have conquered them; for the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world. ⁵They are from the world; therefore what they say is from the world, and the world listens to them. ⁶We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us, and whoever is not from God does not listen to us. From this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

St. Ignatius of Loyola teaches on the Discernment of Spirits - Ignatius began to learn about the discernment of spirits while convalescing in his family home from a battle injury. He did not have access to the romance novellas he preferred and was left with biographies on the lives of saints and of Jesus. While reading, he noticed different interior movements as he imagined his future. When he spent too much time dreaming of going to court, of chivalry, and of winning fame and the attention of ladies, he discovered a heaviness and even a sadness. When he dreamed of becoming a saint like St. Francis, he experienced lightness of heart, hope, and joy.

Good and Evil Spirits - Consolation and Desolation - Ignatius taught that these interior movements were caused by “good spirits” and “evil spirits.” Our hearts are divided between good and evil impulses. To call these “spirits” simply recognizes the spiritual dimension of this inner struggle. Ignatius defined these feelings stirred up by good and evil spirit, “consolation” and “desolation.”

Spiritual consolation is an experience of God’s love that inspires us to praise, love, and serve God and help others as best as we can. Spiritual consolation encourages and facilitates a deep sense of gratitude for God’s faithfulness, mercy, and companionship in our life. In consolation we feel more alive and connected to others. For people who are trying to live a life pleasing to God, the good spirit strengthens, encourages, consoles, removes obstacles, and gives peace.

Spiritual desolation, in contrast, is a heavy experience of the soul in darkness

or turmoil. We experience doubt, temptations, and are mired in self-preoccupations. We are restless and anxious and feel cut off from others. Such feelings, in Ignatius's words, "move one toward lack of faith and leave one without hope and without love." The evil spirit tries to derail them by stirring up anxiety, false sadness, needless confusion, frustration, and other obstacles.

The key question in interpreting consolation and desolation is: where is the movement coming from and where is it leading me? Surprisingly happiness does not always mean you are experiencing spiritual consolation, and sadness does not always mean spiritual desolation.

For people who have closed themselves off from God's grace, the good spirit disturbs and shakes up. It stirs feelings of remorse and discontent. The purpose is to make the person unhappy with a sinful way of life. On the other hand, the evil spirit wants such people to continue in their confusion and darkness. So the evil spirit tries to make them complacent, content, and satisfied with their distractions and pleasures.

Sometimes an experience of sadness is a moment of conversion and intimacy with God. Times of human suffering can be moments of great grace. Similarly, peace or happiness can be illusory if these feelings are helping us avoid changes we need to make.

Discernment of spirits is a challenging task. It requires maturity, inner silence, and an ability to reflect on one's interior life. Discernment takes practice. It is something of an art form. Ignatius' rules for discernment provide a framework, not a program. We must be ready to improvise and adjust because God works in each of us different ways. That is why it is recommended to discern spirits with the assistance of a spiritual director, a trusted pastor, or spiritual friend. Yet with practice, the examen can allow us to become more familiar with hearing and trusting how God can and will speak.

A Very Personal, Yet Cosmic & Practical Discipline

Practicing the Examen will require us to pay close attention to everything and anything. Ignatius had a rich, cosmic understanding of the Holy Spirit's ability to speak to us in and through all created things. The Examen is a working out of the First Rule and Principle at the beginning of the Spiritual Exercises:

All the things in this world are gifts from God, Presented to us so that we can know God more easily and make a return of love more readily. As a result, we appreciate and use all these gifts of God Insofar as they help us to develop as loving persons. But if any of these gifts become the center of our lives, They displace God And so hinder our growth toward our goal.

We must develop a facility of inner attention in order to practice this kind of discernment. This inner facility is something like a muscle, a capacity, an inner reflex. The Orthodox tradition refers to this as ‘nepsis,’ what they call the inner eye or a ‘third eye.’

Consider the language of Psalm 130:

I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning.

In the examen we ‘watch for the Lord’ through all of the happenings of our days. It is also helpful to think of the Examen as a practice of listening as well as seeing. Ignatius encouraged his Jesuits to practice the Examen at least twice a day so as to not miss out on the opportunity to hear the voice of God yes, but also to make sure the Jesuits were practicing and learning to hear God’s voice. Jesus proclaims in Matthew 11:15, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” And indeed, this is the crux of the problem: God is always speaking by the Holy Spirit through our created existence but most of us have not practiced and tuned our ears to hear. We do not know how to pay attention. Regular practice of the Examen is a way for us to spiritually exercise and develop this inner facility.

Steps of the Prayer of Examen

1. Wait. Rest. Center. Draw near in gratitude. Place yourself in God’s presence. Give thanks for God’s great love for you.

2. Illumination. Petition. Ask. Open to help. Pray for the grace to understand how God is acting in your life.

3. Notice. See. Be attentive. Review your day — recall specific moments and your feelings at the time. Use this space to write down specific names and details about your day where you sensed either consolation or desolation. Identify at least three specific instances. One way to approach this is by making a list of anything that seems significant in a brainstorm list. Alternatively, you might want to make two lists, one of consolations and the other of desolations. However, resist getting bogged down in making judgements about any of these items. Right now you are just opening your gaze to see what is going on. You are gathering in details.

4. Meditate. Converse with God. Reflect on what you did, said, or thought in those instances. Look over what you have detailed above slowly with care. As you are able, remain attentive to God’s presence and love while also aware of what is happening inside of yourself. Invite the Spirit to draw your

attention to what is especially important for your prayer. How are the details of your life opening or closing you to love? Your attention may be drawn to one or a few items. Focus your prayer on those items. Or you may notice an overall theme emerge from what you have written out. You may notice your own increasing desire, a deeper and wider openness to love. Or you may notice your heart, mind, even your body close and tense with confusion, exhaustion, fear, or even anger. As you notice these inner movements, do what you can to write down your noticings. What is God saying to you? What do you want to say to God?

5. Commit. Resolve to change. Look toward what is next today or tomorrow — think of how you might collaborate more effectively with God's plan. Write out how you want to respond to God tomorrow. Be specific. Resist the need to fix yourself. Avoid striving and trying to make too much out of this step. Trust the Spirit will help you learn and grow. What seems like a small, insignificant choice may be much more significant in depth and breadth with further, careful consideration. We are attempting to cooperate with transformation here, to become more like Jesus. Each step toward God is relatively enormous. Conclude with a prayer of thanks.

Appendix D

The Spirituality Wheel©

A Spiritual Type Selector

by Corinne D. Ware, D. Min.

The purpose of this exercise is to DRAW A PICTURE of your personal style of spirituality.

Read through the following statements, circling the number corresponding to the statement in each category that best describes your personal belief or preference. You may select as many statements as you wish; you need not only choose one. Match the chosen statement numbers with the quadrant numbers in the circle on the last page. Draw a spoke in the appropriate quadrant for each statement selected. The result is a portrait of your personal spiritual type.

THE ORDER OF WORSHIP

1. A carefully planned and orderly worship service is a glory to God.
2. A deeply moving and spontaneous service is a glory to God.
3. Simplicity and some silence are important elements needed for worship.
4. It is not a service, but ordering ourselves to God's service that is important.

TIME

1. It is important to stick to announced beginning and ending times of worship services.
2. It is important to extend the service time if one feels led to do so.
3. All time is God's time. A sense of timelessness is important.
4. Gather whenever and as long as you need to in order to accomplish the task.

PRAYER

1. Words express poetic praise; I ask for knowledge and guidance.
2. Let words and feelings evoke God's presence in this moment.
3. Empty the mind of distractions and simply BE in the presence of the Holy.
4. My life and my work are my prayer.

MUSIC

1. Music and lyrics express praise to God and belief about God.
2. Singing warms and unites us and expresses the soul's deepest worship.
3. Music brings the soul to quietness and union with God.

4. Singing can mobilize and inspire to greater effort and dedication.

PREACHING

1. The Word of God, rightly proclaimed, is the centerpiece of worship.
2. The gospel movingly preached is the power of God to change lives.
3. Proclamation is heard when the Spirit of God speaks to the inward heart.
4. What we do is our “preaching” and speaks louder than anything we say.

EMPHASIS

1. It is important that I fulfill my vocation (calling) in the world.
2. It is important that I learn to walk in holiness with the Lord.
3. It is important that I be one with the Creator.
4. It is important that I obey God’s will completely.

SUPPORT OF CAUSES

(If necessary, circle the words that apply and select categories with the most circles.)

1. It is important to support seminaries, publishing houses, scholarship, and preaching.
2. It is important to support evangelism, missions, spreading the word on television and radio.
3. It is important to support places of retreat, spiritual direction, liturgical reform.
4. It is important to support political action to establish justice in society and its institutions.

CRITICISM

1. Sometimes I may be too intellectual, dogmatic, and “dry.”
2. Sometimes I may be too emotional, dogmatic, anti-intellectual.
3. Sometimes I may escape from the world and not be sufficiently realistic.
4. Sometimes I may have tunnel vision and be too moralistic.

DOMINATING THEMES

(If necessary, circle the words that apply and select categories with the most circles.)

1. Discernment, discipline, knowledge, order, grace, justification.
2. Love, conversion, witness, spontaneity, sanctification.
3. Poverty, humility, wisdom, letting go, transcendence.
4. Simplicity, purity of heart, action, temperance, obedience, martyrdom.

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP CRITERIA

(What I believe should be necessary)

1. Assent to doctrine; baptism; endorsement by group.
2. A personal inward experience of God; baptism; public declaration.
3. All who face Godward.
4. Solidarity with humankind is membership in God's kingdom.

RITUAL AND LITURGY

1. Ritual and liturgy evoke memory and presence, teaching traditional truths.
2. Liturgy and ritual ceremonies are not of great importance.
3. Ritual and liturgy are ways in which God becomes present to us.
4. Ritual and liturgy are one way we make statements about inner conviction.

CONCEPT OF GOD

1. God is revealed in scripture, sacrament, and in Jesus Christ and his cross.
2. I can feel that God is real and that Christ lives in my heart.
3. God is mystery and can be grasped for but not completely known.
4. We participate in the mystery of God when we become co-creators with God in the world.

added questions

When explaining to people about my faith I would use as my primary resource:

1. The Commentary or 27 Fundamental Beliefs
2. My own experience of what Jesus and the Church have meant to me
3. Prayer and the experience of the holy
4. The corporal and spiritual works of mercy

When I pray I mostly seek:

1. Insights, guidance or answers
2. A closer walk with the Lord
3. An inner consciousness of God
4. A deeper commitment to God's reign on earth

Which description of a spiritual pathway best describes your experience

(If necessary, circle the words that apply and select categories with the most circles.)

1. Theological renewal, confidence in being right, knowledge, insights, connections, attention, revelation.
2. Personal renewal, holiness in everyday life, born again, emotion, relationships, devotion, conversion.
3. The inner life, contemplation, stillness, asceticism (spiritual disciplines), union, mystery, awareness.
4. Prophetic witness, the reign of God, social concern, justice, peace, relevance, love in action.

The Spirituality Wheel©

A Spiritual Type Selector

by Corinne D. Ware, D. Min.



* *Apophatic*, or negative spirituality stresses interiority, imageless-ness and wordlessness. *Kataphatic*, or positive spirituality is image-driven and uses analogies to speak of God.

Discuss 4 Types

Type 1 (Head Spirituality) - Danger is Rationalism

- This is an intellectual “thinking” spirituality that believes strongly in the knowability of Gods (as based on revelation)
- It favours the concrete (what it can see, touch and imagine)
- It tends to mistrust mystery and minimize emotions
- This style produces theological reflection and precision in thinking and communication
- People attracted to this form of spirituality tend to be rational and logical, valuing precision in their thinking and speech
- Content is of primary importance to these people
- Faith is belief in certain things
- Congruence of thought, and thought and action, are important
- Tend to look to the sermon and scriptures for spiritual guidance
- Tend to be people of the Word and people of words
- Prayer tends to be language or word-based
- Spiritual danger is rationalism – an over intellectualization of one’s spiritual life with a consequent loss of feeling and inner conviction

Good example would be John Calvin

- Father of Reformed and Presbyterian theology
- Initially commenced training for the priesthood but came into contact with Protestants whom he felt had a clearer grasp of the Biblical message
- At age 27 wrote The Institutes of Christian Religion (which remains one of the great theological treatises of the last four centuries)
- Over next 25 years wrote commentaries on all NT books and 23 OT books, all of which were distributed and read throughout Europe, changing the face of the church there, and in the New World
- A man of the Word who encouraged a religion of the head that emphasized theological precision and conviction

Type 3 (Mystical Spirituality) – Danger is Reclusivity

- This is a mystical spirituality that emphasizes the mystery of faith and the ultimate un-knowability of God
- Emphasizes that our thoughts about God are always pale and imperfect reflections of his being as he is “wholly other”, unnameable, beyond our comprehension and containment
- Emphasizes hearing from God over speaking to him
- Goal of spirituality is understood as union with God
- People attracted to this type of spirituality are often contemplative and intuitive, tending to be focused on an inner world that is as real to them as

the external one

- Renewal of the inner life is at the core of their understanding of spirituality
- Emphasize the process of spirituality (favouring metaphor of the journey)
- Spiritual danger is reclusivity – an exaggerated retreat from reality and from interaction with the world, associated with passivity

Good example would be Thomas Merton

- Twentieth century adult convert to Christianity from a non-religious background, quickly entering training for the priesthood and subsequently entering the Cistercian monastic order
- Spend the rest of his life in contemplative prayer and writing books and talking with others about such life of prayer as mystical union with God

Type 2 (Heart Spirituality) – Danger is Emotionalism

- Here God is still understood to be knowable, but more through the heart than the head
- If God is love, assumption is that he must be known through love, not simply known through ideas
- Spirituality is not, therefore, a head trip – it's all heart
- Theology still important and Scriptures seen to be the source of our knowing of God
- But our response to knowing God is expected to involve heart, not just head
- Result is a more charismatic spirituality whose aim is to achieve holiness of life
- Personal holiness is the goal of spirituality
- Prayer is made with words but words may be used less formally and prayer is often extemporaneous, spontaneous and even exuberant
- Of primary importance is experience
- Spiritual danger is excessive emotionalism and the belief that emotion is the test of the validity of a person's spiritual experience
- Another danger is an exclusive spirituality that results in an "us against the world" mentality that fails to recognize the spiritual experience of those in other spiritual traditions

Good example would be John Wesley – the founder of the Methodist Church and what has been called the Holiness tradition

- As a university student at Oxford, he and his brother (Charles) started a club dubbed as the Holy Club – later to be called the Methodists for their emphasis on the methods of bible study and other spiritual disciplines
- Emphasized the spiritual journey as growth in love of God
- Not known as a systematic theologian, but rather as one who inspired others in their love of God and commitment to a life of holiness

Type 4 (Social Justice Spirituality) – Danger is Moralism

- Mystical experience is here coupled with an intellectual mode of gathering data
- Result is an active visionary who is single-minded with a deeply focused, almost crusading, type of spirituality
- People of this type often minimize importance (or value) of denominational affiliation (or even affiliation with organized religion)
- Goal is simply to obey God and in so doing, transform society by contributing to the establishment of God's Kingdom
- These people equate prayer and theology with action
- They have strong vision and ideals, but are not content to live with ideas – ideas always translate into action
- Spiritual danger lies in a moralistic and unrelenting tunnel-vision that excludes or judges others who do not share their passion

Good example is St. Francis of Assisi

- 12th century Italian who left his former life of privilege and went about the countryside caring for the poor and sick
- Soon was followed so many others that even the Pope took notice and named them an order
- Had a profound effect on not only the spirituality, but on disease and poverty, throughout Europe

Appendix E

Notes for writing a Psalm

Review the main themes of the Psalms:

Adoration: 2, 18, 63, 84, 95

Exaltation: 19, 57, 96, 126, 145

Devotion/dedication: 5, 27, 63, 73, 84, 89, 119

Celebration/thanksgiving: 7, 34, 92, 95,

Confession: 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143

Lamentation: 3, 6, 12, 13, 22, 25, 31, 86, 142

Meditation/Remembrance: 1, 39, 86, 90, 135, 139

Supplication: 16, 27, 55, 73, 79, 86, 161

Intercession: 3, 13, 20, 57, 72,

Most Psalms express a few of these themes, yet they tend to emphasize one.

For example:

- To truly celebrate God, we need to remember God's faithfulness.
- To intercede for God's help, we begin in lamentation over the brokenness of our world.
- To emphasize how much I adore God and am devoted to my faith, I first confess my unfaithfulness, doubt, and anger.

Be honest in your psalm

Before you begin writing your Psalm, prayerfully look back over what you've been writing in this prayer guide. Look especially at your responses to the prompt: *if you could say anything to God rightwrite now, what would you say?*

Attempt to communicate honestly and freely with God about what you really are thinking and feeling. Can you write out an honest prayer in one sentence?

Find a psalm to learn from

Identify what theme or themes you are expressing and then consider finding a psalm to learn from. Consider writing your psalm based on a psalm in the Bible.

Common conventions in the Psalms

Consider including some typical features of the Psalms.

- A logic from the heart, not the calculative reasoning of the mind

- Open with an address, an invocation; who are you speaking to? What characteristics of God will you name from the beginning?
- Name the trouble, question, lament, obstacle to faith that you are facing.
- Appeal again to God's character. How do you believe God can help you?
- Be creative. Use of metaphor, similar, and/or analogy.
- Help the reader see a picture of either what is so troublesome and/or what God's help looks like.

Let's stay connected!

This prayer guide was written by Josh Banner who serves as the director of the discipleship for the Awakening. Josh was previously the Minister of Music & Arts at Hope College from 2006-2013. During his tenure at Hope he also taught in the Studies in ministry Minor degree program and shared the oversight of the campus recording studios.

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Josh is married to Dr. Susanna Childress, a professor of creative writing at Hope College, and he is father to Casper, Shepherd, and Merritt.

If you have any questions about this guide or would just like to say hello, please don't be shy!

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