

## Ignatian Contemplation: Imaginative Prayer with Scripture

### I. Purposes of this session:

- A. To experience Ignatian Contemplation.
- B. To share what we experience with each other.
- C. To practice leading one of the prayer practices

### II. Suggested Procedure

#### A. Opening - (5-10-minutes)

1. **Light the candle** to symbolize God's presence, God's desire for us to come to him in prayer, and the Spirit's work in our hearts as we seek God.

2. **Explain the process** - You will pray using Ignatian Contemplation, a prayer in which you engage with God using all your senses and imagination followed by a time of sharing as time permits.

**Ignatian Contemplation is prayer with Scripture.** It is meeting God through story. The prayer develops as you "live into" a Scripture story with all your senses and imagination. You become a participant in the story, and you continue in the story in your heart, mind, imagination, spirit and body after the reading ends. You let the Spirit guide the prayer - you don't force anything to happen - you let it happen to you, within you, around you. You may pray with the same story for many days in a row before you feel the prayer is complete, that God has spoken to you, that you have heard God, and worked through what it means for you. It is a wonderful, rich experience.

#### B. Leading the Prayer Exercise

1. **Remind group members of what Ignatian Contemplation is** - a prayer form developed by Ignatius of Loyola in the 1500's to help people come to know Jesus through imaginative interaction with Scripture. Through the story God meets and interacts with each listener personally and differently. *That interaction of our spirit with God is prayer.* The difficult part of the process is relaxing into it and letting God be in control, rather than trying to force your response or reaction.

2. **Explain the process of the prayer** -

- The story is read aloud 4 times. It can be read by one person, or up to 4 different people.
- Before each reading, you will tell them what to be aware of as they listen.
- Following the last reading, there will be **20 minutes** of silence during which they continue in the story in their minds, hearts, and spirits - until the leader ends the prayer with "Amen."
- Then they share with each other what happened as they prayed with the story.

3. **Begin the readings**, giving the instruction for each reading just before that reading begins. You can do the reading, or you can ask someone else to read all, **or** have a different reader each time.

First reading instructions: listen to the story for the broad strokes:

- where and when does it take place
- who is there
- what happens

Read through the passage slowly. Pause 1-2 minutes, then:

Second reading instructions: listen for more details:

- who are the major players
- who else is there
- what are they doing
- how do they interact
- what is the setting like
- what time of day is it
- what is the mood, the atmosphere

Read the passage slowly. Pause 1-2 minutes, then:

Third reading instructions: Notice more detail and begin to feel yourself in that place, in that story.

- who are you or what are you (you may be an inanimate object, an animal, part of the scenery; you may be a person or thing that is not specially mentioned in the printed story, but that you sense as you hear it read.
- what are you doing, thinking, feeling or what is being done to or with you if you are inanimate.
- what are the sounds, the smells, and the other details about the location that you notice
- what are the emotions and the undertones that you notice

Read the passage slowly. Pause 1-2 minutes or maybe a little longer, then:

Fourth reading instructions: Experience the story as the person or object that you are in the story.

- When the reading ends, let the story continue to unfold within you, in your imagination, mind and heart, as the person/object you are, until you hear the leader say "Amen."

Read the passage slowly - and then enter into silence for prayer.

**4. Allow 8-10 minutes for them to pray with the story.** End the silence with "Amen" and ask them to slowly leave their prayer and return to this time and place. When they are ready, they can open their eyes. The group will wait in silence until all are ready.

**5. Invite each to share what happened for them in the story** - who or what they were and what happened. It may be not much of anything, it may seem strange or silly, it may be quite dramatic or powerful for the person. Whatever happens is what they say - there is no right and no wrong answer.

**6. Respond to each person's sharing** with a simple "Thanks" or "Thank you." Do not enter into conversation around the circle until all have had a chance to share.