

Paying Attention to God in Scripture, Writings, and Creation

Meditation on Scripture

Praying the scripture is a way of listening to God. With this practice we become more aware of God, centered in Christ, and receptive to the Spirit. The fruit of such prayer is awareness, peace, and love. This way of praying involves four deepening movements of attention:*

1. Reading (with my eyes)

This is the attentive reading of scripture. Come to a passage of scripture and call upon the Spirit to speak through the reading. Read out loud in a whisper or low voice. Don't speed-read; slowly and fully take in what you read. Like a bee that penetrates the depths of a flower to gather its nectar, carefully select a word or phrase for further reflection (now and during the day).

2. Reflecting (with my mind)

This is the meditative reflection on scripture. Open your mind to understand God's word as it emerges from the text. Reflect on its meaning for you. You might also imagine yourself in the scripture's setting and experience as one of the characters, or if reading a Gospel story, imagine what Jesus does or says to you.

3. Responding (with my words)

This is our response to God's word. Having heard God speak through the text, respond to God with however you are moved. After this prayer, complete the movement from meditation to contemplation by descending with the mind into the heart.

4. Resting (with my heart)

This is contemplative resting in God. Deeper than conversation, it is communion with God. By centering prayer, descend with the mind into the heart to enter God's peaceful presence. For this, don't think anything, don't say anything, don't do anything; simply sit still. Choose a word like "shalom" or a phrase like "be still," and repeat it softly in your mind to quiet and center yourself in God's presence. When distracting thoughts occur—resist no thought, retain no thought, react to no thought; simply return to your centering word or phrase.

* Traditionally known as *Lectio Divina* with four movements—*lectio*, *meditatio*, *oratio*, and *contemplatio*. From these Latin words we get lection, meditation, oration, and contemplation.

Note: Don't be discouraged by periods of emptiness, darkness, or dryness, which are normal for all people in prayer. These often increase with spiritual maturity. Dry spells can be God's way of drawing us further along our path of prayer. In such times, neither give up nor push yourself, but "be still . . . and wait patiently for [God]" (Psalm 37:7).

Meditation on Writings

Reflecting on devotional classics and spiritual writings is another way of paying attention to God. This is a way of reading for transformation more than information. To make this part of your practice:

Set aside time on a regular basis for spiritual reading and reflection.

Read slowly and attentively so the writing may speak to you.

Let what's sown in you spring forth, grow, and bear fruit in your life.

Remember St. Augustine's invitation: "Search in reading, ask in prayer, find in meditation, hold in love."

Meditation in God's Creation

Before God spoke through scripture, God spoke through nature, and still does. Creation, as Psalm 19 proclaims, continues to reveal God's abundant life. Other scriptures to consider on noticing God in creation include Genesis 1:31; Psalm 8:1, 19:1, 104:24; Wisdom 1:13-14, 13:1-9; Matthew 6:25-30; John 15:4-5; and Romans 1:20.

Pay attention when you're in creation, God's great outdoor cathedral. Allow gardening, sitting, walking, running, hiking, and other outdoor sports to become a means of spiritual meditation.

For more on meditating in creation, see **Beholding God in Creation**.

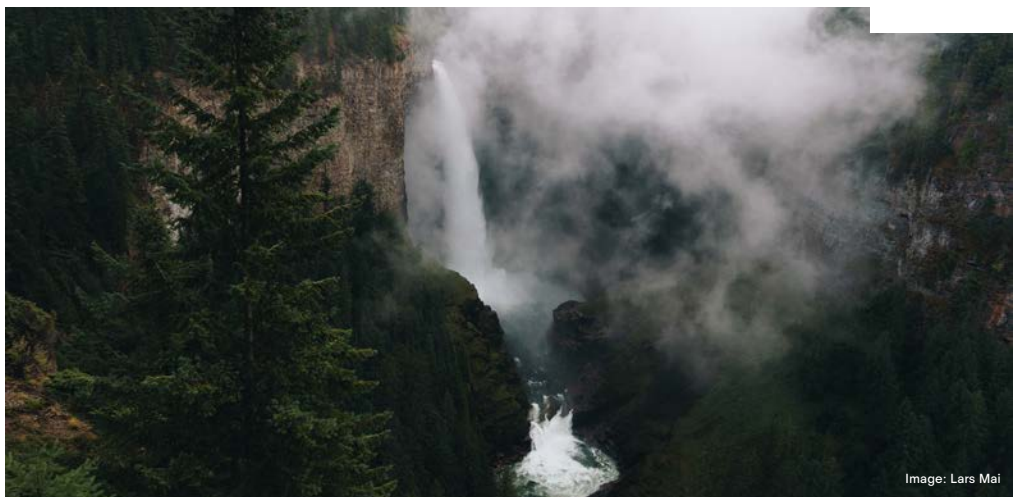


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