

Spiritual Disciplines Made Easy Kathleen Deyer-Bolduc

Introduction to the Multi-Session Workshop

Practices are the nuclear reactors of the Christian faith, arenas where the gospel and human life come together in energizing, even explosive ways. Practices create openings in our lives where the grace, mercy and presence of God may be made known to us.

-Thomas Long, review of Craig Dykstra's, *Growing in the Life of Faith*

Purpose

In this series of workshops, we will explore:

- Prayer
- Centering Prayer (Christian Meditation)
- Lectio Divina
- Gratitude

Each workshop is interactive in style, with hands-on exercises that, practiced consistently, bring about personal transformation.

Time Frame: Each workshop can be facilitated in a 2-hour time frame, or more than one workshop could be facilitated in a weekend or day retreat setting.

Preparation and Materials for All Sessions

- It is important to meet in a comfortable space. A room with comfortable chairs and lamp light is ideal. Sitting around tables is not suggested.
- Arrange chairs in a circle, and make sure there are places to spread out.
- CD Player or iPad and speakers for music
- Flip Chart and Markers
- Spiral-bound notebooks for participants to use as journals (or ask participants to bring their own)
- Several versions of the Bible
- Coffee or Tea, water
- Tissues (expect some tears!)

NOTE FOR LEADERS: When leading "Group Processing":

- Do not critique participants' comments.
- Acknowledge each comment with a "thank you."
- Allow a short space of silence between people's comments.

About the writer: Kathy' Bolduc's life is a God hunt. She searches for God in nature, in prayer, in lectio divina, and in her son's autism. She walks alongside others who seek God's presence in her practice of spiritual direction and in her award-winning books. She and her husband, Wallym direct Cloudland Retreat Center hosting people who long for deep quiet and encounter with God. Her books include: *The Spiritual Art of Raising Children with Disabilities* (Judson Press), *Autism and Alleluias* (Judson Press), *A Place Called Acceptance: Ministry With Families of Children With Disabilities* and *His Name is Joel: Searching for God in a Son's Disability*

For more information, visit Patches of Godlight at www.kathleenbolduc.com.

Preparation and Materials:

- Collect images of various gardens from magazines or online—lush, overgrown country gardens; formal gardens; gardens in winter; gardens full of weeds; gardens in the rain; gardens in drought.
- Identify one image to display on a Power Point slide or to make copies of. As an alternative, make multiple copies of beautiful, healthy gardens to be available for participants to use in “visio divina” practice.
- Markers & Flip Chart
- Make copies of the handout
- Set-up comfortable space with couches, chairs, and lamplight or if that is not possible, set chairs in a circle to establish intimacy within the group.
- Bell or chime for signaling the end of prayer time (optional)

I. Welcome and Introduction

- ▶ Welcome participants and ask:
 - What drew you to a workshop on prayer?
 - When you think of prayer, what are the first words that come to mind? (list answers on flip chart)
- ▶ Add to the chart any of the following that have not been mentioned:
 - Listening to God
 - Communing with God
 - Experiencing God’s presence within us
 - Asking God for what we need
 - Resting in God’s presence and knowing what it means to be God’s beloved child

- ▶ Read or paraphrase:

Many times, our thirst for a deeper connection with God leads us into an adventure in prayer—our tried-and-true ways of praying are no longer satisfying. As we grow in intimacy with God, we outgrow old prayer patterns. In the book “Sacred Rhythms,” Ruth Haley Barton writes, “Like a plant that has become pot-bound, its roots searching for nutrients that have long since been used up, the human soul gets to the point when it is ready for a more spacious way to pray, one that provides more room for the mystery of growth in intimacy with God and more depth for the roots to sink into.”

The pot-bound plant is a garden image. The Bible, and spiritual writers throughout the ages, have used the garden as a metaphor for intimacy in prayer. Poets and songwriters have done so as well. In this workshop, we will employ this image as we explore new avenues of prayer.

- ▶ Read James 1:21: “In simple humility, let our gardener, God, landscape you with the Word, making a salvation-garden of your life.” (*The Message*)

- ▶ Spread the garden pictures across a table or the floor and invite participants:
 - to choose the image that most closely matches the landscape of your prayer life today;
 - not to select what they *want* it to look like, but as it actually is right now;
 - to take time to thoughtfully consider which image speaks to their heart.
- ▶ After everyone has chosen an image, invite them to spend 10 minutes journaling about the reason they chose their image.
- ▶ Break into groups of 3 and give each person 3 minutes to share:
 - his or her name, something interesting about him or herself
 - one sentence about why they chose the image

If the workshop group is smaller than 10 participants, consider doing the sharing activity as a large group (you may have to adjust timing of sharing).

- ▶ Read or paraphrase the following:

Whatever garden you find yourself in today, God invites you to deeper intimacy.

We often find that the structured prayer we've depended on since childhood or young adulthood—The Lord's prayer, litanies, the rosary . . . leaves us hungry for more.

We may need to fertilize our roots by soaking in the Lord's presence with a breath prayer consisting of one or two simple words, spoken with every inhalation and exhalation.

Perhaps we've had a daily prayer practice of reading the Bible before praying through our intercessory prayer list. One day we wake up to find that reading scripture leaves us feeling dull and dry. Imaginative prayer is a wonderful avenue for the visual among us. To come into the Lord's presence as we enter scripture with our imagination can take us to completely new levels of understanding the depths of God's love for us as beloved sons and daughters of the Most High King.

Those of us who come to God with many words might benefit from spending time in meditation or contemplative prayer, using a word to center our attention on God's loving presence. No other words needed! Those of us who have a habit of coming before God with request after request might find that a prayer of gratitude transforms our grasping to open hands; hands that are ready to receive the many gifts that God has to offer.

We will explore three avenues of prayer today:

- *Breath Prayer*
- *Praying with picture, which is called "visio divina"*
- *Imaginative Prayer*

II. Breath Prayer (20 minutes)

- ▶ Read or paraphrase the following:

This very easy method pulls our monkey mind, which is busily jumping from branch to branch, to the very center of our breathing. This prayer centers us when we feel disjointed. It calms us when we are anxious. It is a great relief when we don't have the words to pray. It puts us in the present moment. It is a wonderful prayer practice for when we find ourselves in a garden full of weeds or in a winter garden.

A. Practice

- ▶ Explain the practice of breath prayer as follows:
 - *Sit comfortably, feet flat on the ground, hands on lap, palms up.*
 - *Take a few deep breaths. Breathe from the belly, letting your belly expand with each inhale, and pushing the air out from the belly with each exhale.*
 - *Notice where in your body you are holding onto tension. Move that part of your body. Shrug your shoulders, or turn your head back and forth. Shake your hands or feet. Move whatever part of the body feels tight or tense.*
 - *When we begin the breath prayer, it will be as simple as this: With each inhale, silently say, "I receive," and with each exhale, silently say, "I let go."*
 - *With each inhalation, imagine that you are taking in more and more of the Holy Spirit.*
 - *With each exhalation, let go of worries and concerns; specific items that are bothering you, or simply let go of tension and anxiety.*
 - *Pay attention to what you are experiencing, physically, emotionally or spiritually. Do not dwell on those feelings or emotions, but simply take note of them as you continue to receive and let go with each cycle of breath.*
- ▶ Invite participants to practice breath prayer for 5 minutes.
- ▶ Gently end the prayer time, perhaps with a soft bell or tone from your phone.
- ▶ Explain that this is a prayer method they can come back to in times of stress, worry, or when they are unsure of the next step in their spiritual journeys.

B. Group Processing

- ▶ Take 5-7 minutes to discuss the following questions:

[Reminder: Do not critique participants' comments. Acknowledge each comment with a "thank you." Allow a short space of silence between sharing.
NOTE: If you have a large group, consider breaking the group into two or three groups for the group processing so that everyone can share and feel heard.]

- What did you experience: physical, emotional, spiritual experiences?

III. Praying with Pictures: Visio Divina

► Read or paraphrase the following:

Visio divina is a fantastic practice for those who are pot-bound in a formal garden, or in a water-parched garden. A prayer with very few words, "Visio divina" invites us into "divine seeing." This practice shares roots with the ancient practice of lectio divina, which calls for a slow, careful interaction with scripture through meditation and prayer, allowing a word or phrase to rise in one's consciousness. We will be exploring lectio divina in a separate workshop. Visio divina invites us to encounter the divine through images. A prayerful consideration of and interaction with a photograph, icon, piece of art, or other visual representation allows us to experience the divine in a unique and powerful way.

► Display a photograph of a beautiful, healthy garden. Alternatively, invite participants to go through the photos you've offered and select an image that represents what they desire their prayer life to look like.

► Walk participants slowly through the practice with as follows:

1. Look at the image of the garden. What is the first thing that catches your eye? Breathe deeply and let yourself gaze at that part of the image.
2. Now, take your time and look at every part of the photograph. What captures your attention now? What else do you notice? Reflect on the image for a few more minutes.
3. Place yourself in the photo. Where do you see yourself? Sit, stand or lie there and look around. What do you see from this vantage point?
4. Consider the following questions:

[**Note:** Take your with these questions so participants can savor the experience. Trying to enter into the picture yourself will give you a sense of how much time to take between questions.]

 - What does the image stir up in you?
 - What emotions does it evoke?
 - What might God be inviting you to today as you gaze at this photo?
 - Remember James 1:21, "In simple humility let our gardener, God, landscape you with the Word, making a salvation-garden of your life."
 - How does this Scripture fit in with what you are experiencing?
5. Take a few minutes to jot down your thoughts in your journal.
6. Close the practice with an invitation to off prayers to God in time of silence.

B. Group Processing

► Take 5-7 minutes to discuss as follows:

- Ask "What was this process like for you?"
- If you feel comfortable, share something that you learned about yourself or your relationship with God.

IV. Imaginative Prayer

- ▶ Read or paraphrase the following:

Imagination is another way to enter scripture, working from the right side of the brain, which deals with intuition, feeling, metaphor and image. This practice may feel awkward. Some of us mistrust the imagination. Some think it is simply fantasy—a world of make-believe with no place in the Christian life, but imagination can be a gift of grace, opening our hearts to deeper truths. It doesn't separate us from facts; it simply helps us see beyond facts. Through imagination we can enter a Bible story to see it with new eyes, hear it with new ears. Listen to Jesus' response to the question of why he taught in metaphors.

The disciples came up and asked, "Why do you tell stories?" He replied, "You've been given insight into God's kingdom. You know how it works. Not everybody has this gift, this insight; it hasn't been given to them. Whenever someone has a ready heart for this, the insights and understandings flow freely. But if there is no readiness, any trace of receptivity soon disappears. That's why I tell stories: to create readiness, to nudge the people toward receptive insight. In their present state they can stare till doomsday and not see it, listen till they're blue in the face and not get it. I don't want Isaiah's forecast repeated all over again:

Your ears are open but you don't hear a thing.

Your eyes are awake but you don't see a thing.

The people are blockheads!

They stick their fingers in their ears

so they won't have to listen;

They screw their eyes shut

so they won't have to look,

so they won't have to deal with me face-to-face

and let me heal them.

"But you have God-blessed eyes—eyes that see! And God-blessed ears—ears that hear! A lot of people, prophets and humble believers among them, would have given anything to see what you are seeing, to hear what you are hearing, but never had the chance. -Matthew 13:10-17 (The Message)

Jesus wanted his listeners to see with new eyes, to hear with new ears, attending to what was going on beneath the details of the story. He wants us to see with the eyes of our hearts. By paying attention to what Jesus is saying to us in the scriptures in this way, we are slowly fashioned into the persons he wants us to be.

- ▶ Explain that praying the scriptures requires: willingness to change; willingness to hear familiar stories with new ears— to come to them as if we'd never heard them before; and willingness to move from being an observer to a participant.

A. Practice (15-20 minutes)

- ▶ Ask participants to close their eyes and then slowly read Mark 10:46-52 (NIV):
Then they came to Jericho. As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus (which means "son of Timaeus"), was sitting by the

roadside begging. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" Jesus stopped and said, "Call him."

So they called to the blind man, "Cheer up! On your feet! He's calling you." Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus.

"What do you want me to do for you?" Jesus asked him.

The blind man said, "Rabbi, I want to see."

"Go," said Jesus, "your faith has healed you." Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

- ▶ Before reading a second time, ask participants to close their eyes and:
 - Pray for God's grace and an openness to enter into the passage.
 - Become present to the scene using all 5 senses—attending to what they see...hear...feel...smell...taste.
 - Simply let themselves be present to whatever is happening.
- ▶ Read the story slowly, then pace the following questions, giving participants time to place themselves within the scene, and process the experience:
 - Who is there?
 - Where are you in relationship to them?
 - Where is Jesus?
 - Do you find yourselves identifying with someone in the story?
 - What are you feeling?
- ▶ Encourage them respond to the story in their imaginations, talking with Jesus or other, saying what they need to say and listening closely for any responses.

B. Group Processing

- ▶ Take 5-7 minutes to discuss the following questions:
 - What did it feel like to enter into the Scripture?
 - Who did you identify with?
 - What is Jesus inviting you to through this method of prayer?

III. Closing

- ▶ Invite participants to find a comfortable spot to journal on the following:
 - What was meaningful for you today?
 - What surprised you?
 - How will you begin to use one or more of these prayer practices to grow in intimacy with God?
- ▶ Reconvene and invite participants to share a highlight or take-away.
- ▶ Distribute the handout.
- ▶ Close with a brief prayer

Breath Prayer

- Sit comfortably in your chair, feet flat on the ground, hands on lap, palms up.
- Take a few deep breaths. Breathe from the belly, letting your belly expand with each inhale, and pushing the air out from the belly with each exhale.
- Notice where, in your body, you are holding onto tension. Move that part of your body. Shrug your shoulders, or turn your head back and forth. Shake your hands or feet. Move whatever part of the body that feels tight or tense.
- Now we will begin the breath prayer. It is as simple as this. With each inhale, silently say, “I receive,” and with each exhale, silently say, “I let go.”
- With each inhalation, imagine that you are taking in more and more of the Holy Spirit.
- With each exhalation, let go of worries and concerns. You can let go of specific items that are bothering you, or you can simply let go of tension and anxiety.
- Pay attention to what you are experiencing, physically, emotionally, or spiritually. Do not dwell on those feelings or emotions, but simply take note of them as you continue to receive and let go with each cycle of breath.
- Know that this is a prayer you can come back to in times of stress, worry, or when you are unsure of your next step in your spiritual journey.

Praying with Pictures: *Visio Divina*

Visio divina invites the viewer into “divine seeing.” *Visio divina* invites us to encounter God through images. A prayerful consideration of and interaction with a photograph, icon, piece of art, or other visual representation allows us to experience the divine in a and powerful way.

-Gaze at the image you have chosen. What is the first thing that catches your eye; that jumps out at you? Breathe deeply and let yourself gaze at that part of the image for a minute or so.

-Now, enter the picture a little more deeply. Take your time and look at every part of the image. What jumps out at you now? What else do you notice? Reflect on the image for a few more minutes.

-Finally, place yourself in the photo. Where do you see yourself? Sit, stand or lie there, and look around. What do you see from this new vantage point?

-Consider the following questions:

- What emotions does this image evoke in you?
- What does the image stir up in you?
- How does this Scripture fit in with what you are experiencing today?
- What might God be inviting you to today as you gaze at this photo?
- Take a few minutes to jot down your thoughts in your journal.

-Offer your prayers to God in a final time of silence.

Imaginative Prayer

To approach Scripture with the imagination is to work from the right side of the brain, which may be foreign to many of us. The right side of the brain deals with intuition, feeling, metaphor and imagination. The left side of the brain is concerned with logic, rational thought, analysis. Some of us mistrust the imagination as something evil or bad. Some think it is simply fantasy – a world of make-believe that has no place in the Christian life. Imagination *can* lead to illusion or fantasy, or even to sin. But imagination is also a gift of grace. Imagination helps to open the eyes of our hearts—to see through the surface details to the truth underneath. Imagination doesn't separate us from the facts. It simply helps us see beyond the facts. With imagination we can enter the Scripture story and see it with new eyes, hear it with new ears. Jesus taught in metaphors (parables), and those who listened for the story's literal meaning just didn't "get it!" Praying the Scriptures requires 3 things of us:

- Willingness to change
- Willingness to hear familiar stories with new ears and eyes – to come to them as if we'd never heard them before, expecting to hear or see something new each time
- Willingness to move from being an observer to a participant

Practice:

- Slowly Read a Bible passage
- Pray for God's grace and an openness to enter into the passage
- Become present to the scene. Use all 5 senses. Pay attention to what you See...Hear...Feel...Smell...Taste
- Look around
- Who is there?
- Where are you in relationship to them?
- Notice if you find yourself identifying with someone. Simply let yourself be present to whatever is happening.
- How does it feel to be there?
- What are you feeling?
- Allow yourself to respond. Talk with Jesus or whoever it is in the Scripture that you find yourself identifying with. Say whatever you need to say. Listen closely for the response.

Scripture texts to use for Imaginative Prayer

Mark: 10:17-27

Mark 10:35-52

Luke 2:1-7

Luke 10:38-42

Matthew 7:7-11

Matthew 8:23-27

John 1:29-42

John 13:1-17

Resource Suggestions

- *Ruth Haley Barton Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation*).
- *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home* by Richard Foster
- Workshop writer's website: Patches of Godlight: www.kathleenbolduc.com

*I am standing in absolute stillness, silent before the One I love
Psalm 62:5a (The Passion Translation)*

PREPARATION

Materials

- Afghans or blankets (or ask participants to bring their own)
- Music source and "Come and Drink" by Julie Meyers or favorite devotional songs from CDs or You Tube
- Copies of Handouts

Room Set-up

- A carpeted, comfortable room with couches, chairs, and, if possible, lamplight. Set chairs in a circle to establish intimacy within the group. *Meeting in someone's living room would be the perfect setting!
- Flip Chart

I. Welcome and Introduction

► Welcome participants and ask each person to introduce him or herself and say a few words about what drew them to a workshop on centering prayer and whether or not they've had any experience with this spiritual discipline.

► Take a few minutes to go over the differences between Centering Prayer and other forms of meditation reading or paraphrasing the following:

Centering Prayer is also referred to as Christian Meditation. People are sometimes reluctant to practice it because they associate meditation with eastern religions or Transcendental Meditation. The goal of Centering Prayer is to rest in God. When we rest in God's presence, we are transformed. According to Thomas Keating, it is based on the call of Matthew 6:6 to go into our private (inner) room and close the door to pray to God in secret. It is a prayer without words allowing for a silence in which we are met by the grace of an ever-forgiving God. This continuous meeting gradually helps us let go of unhealthy compulsions and the masks we've worn for so long to protect ourselves. We become, over time, more and more the person God created us to be. This transformation can't help but spill outward, making our lives and our ministry more effective; blessing those we around us. Centering prayer:

- teaches us to quiet the mind in order to pay attention to the presence of God
- helps us detach from the noise and chaos of the world in order to gain a richer attachment to God and to the people around us
- stresses transformation into the wholeness for which God created us, becoming more like Christ

- ▶ Ask: *What scripture texts can you think of that speak to us of meditation?*
- ▶ Write suggested references on a flip chart adding the following as necessary:
 - “Happy are those...whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law they meditate day and night. They are like trees planted by streams of water” (Psalm 1:1-3).
 - “For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation” (Psalm 62:1).
 - “Be still before the Lord, and wait patiently for him” (Psalm 37:7a).
 - “I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” (John 10:10b NRSV) Jesus is the way to this fullness. In learning to meditate, we accept Jesus’ invitation to overflowing life in him.
 - “I am the light of the world. No follower of mine shall wander in the dark; he shall have the light of life” (John 8:12). The life and light of Jesus are found within each of us. In meditation, we intentionally leave the distractions of the world and self behind, and come into the presence of the light of Christ.
 - “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). When we meditate, we practice abiding in the vine that is Jesus.

- ▶ Explain (read or paraphrase):

*Theophan, a Russian Christian mystic writes, “To pray is to descend with the mind into the heart, and there to stand before the face of the Lord, ever-present, all seeing, within you” [from *The Way of the Heart: The Spirituality of the Desert Fathers and Mothers, quoted by Henri Nouwen*]. Like Theophan, many of the saints throughout Christian history have written about using a centering word or text as a tool to descend from the head to the heart.*

- *The Centering Word is a symbol of our intention to be in relationship with God. The quiet repetition of a single word or short phrase also helps us move from busy mind to centered heart. Some examples: Jesus. Peace. Yes. Maranatha (Aramaic for “Come Lord Jesus”); The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.*
- *This is not magic. It is not “New Age.” It is our way of saying “yes” to God; the intention of spending time with God. It is simply a tool that helps us to move to the center of our being, to create an inner stillness so that we might experience God’s presence. It helps, when distracting thoughts come to mind, to have a place to come back to. When we find our minds wandering, (which they will!), or bodily sensations distracting us (which they will!) we simply gently bring ourselves back to our centering word.*

- ▶ Offer a bathroom Break before entering into Centering Prayer.
- ▶ Devotional music during the break to set a quiet tone.

II. Practice

- ▶ Invite the participants to take a few minutes of quiet to choose a centering word (or short phrase) that they would like to use. Stress that it should be short, and something that they can repeat in rhythm with their breath.
- ▶ Ask them to sit upright but comfortably, shoes off if possible with feet flat on the floor, hands on lap, turned upward if so desired. Cross-legged is also okay. The key is to be comfortable enough to not be distracted by their bodies, but not so comfortable that they will fall asleep. Make afghans available.
- ▶ Explain that;
 - You will lead a 5-minute relaxation before 10 minutes of centering prayer, because relaxing our bodies helps prepare us to relax our minds.
 - The goal is to work up to 20-minute sessions.
 - For some people the time will seem an eternity; for others, too short.
 - If they have a hard time sitting or concentrating on their centering word, they can pause or simply follow their breath, which can help relaxation.
 - It is okay to move, to scratch your nose, clear your throat . . .
- ▶ Lead body relaxation slowly in a quiet voice. (5 minutes):
 - *Sit comfortably. We are aiming for an alert yet relaxed posture.*
 - *Take several slow deep breaths in and out.*
 - *Notice any tension in your body. Wiggle the muscles of the places in your body where you feel tension.*
 - *Imagine the warm, golden light of Christ shining on the top of your head. Let yourself see the light, shining on the top of your scalp, warming and relaxing as it begins to move downward.*
 - *Feel the warmth flowing down over your face, warming and relaxing your forehead, eyes, cheeks as it moves.*
 - *See it moving down the back of your neck. Let that warm light rest for a few moments on your neck and shoulders, where many of us carry tension.*
 - *Let the light penetrate down into your muscles.*
 - *Imagine that warm, golden light flowing down through your arms and into your hands.*
 - *Feel the muscles beginning to relax in the warmth. Your fingers may begin to tingle.*
 - *Go back up to your neck and shoulders, and let that light move slowly down your spine.*
 - *It's very warm, very golden, and every muscle it touches begins to relax. Feel the tension leaving your back.*
 - *Imagine that the light is penetrating to all of your internal organs. Your entire midsection is relaxing, all tension leaving your body.*

- *The warm, golden light continues to move down and over your hips and your upper legs, warming and relaxing every muscles as it moves.*
- *Feel yourself let go of tension as the light continues down your legs and into your feet, until your entire body is encased in a warm, golden glow.*
- *The light of Christ inside and outside of you. Warming you, loving you, never letting you go.*

► Guide the 10-minute centering prayer session, offering the following reminders in with a gentle slowly paced voice at moments throughout the silence. It should take about 7 minutes to lead the participants into the quiet with these steps.

- *Begin to repeat your centering word in your mind. Repeat it slowly, along with the rhythm of your breath.*
- *When thoughts come to mind, simply let them float across your field of vision like little boats on a stream. Let them float downstream.*
- *If you find yourself only thinking instead of repeating your centering word, do not judge yourself. Simply bring your mind back to your centering word.*
- *Give yourself grace. At first, it can feel foreign and contrived. It takes time and it takes practice. But in the end, it is well worth it as you descend into deep quiet where the voice of God can be heard.*
- *We are all beginners on this journey.*
- *Some people experience bodily sensations, such as a feeling of sinking into the chair, a feeling of floating, or of warmth spreading throughout the body. Acknowledge what you are feeling, then mind back to your centering word.*
- *You may find yourself in a place of great silence and peace, or you may find yourself just repeating your centering prayer with discernable manifestations of God's presence. That's okay. This is a practice. It takes time to find that place of quiet rest in the God's presence. Right now we're simply learning the discipline itself.*
- *When your mind wanders, simply bring it back to your centering word.*
- *Every time you bring yourself back to your centering word, you show your intention to become closer to God. That's a good thing, do judge it!*
- *Do not strive to make something happen. We are simply practicing; learning how to become quiet. Think of Psalm 84: Be still and know that I am God.*
- *I am now going into the quiet with you for the next few minutes. Remember not to judge yourself if your mind wanders. Simply gently bring yourself back to your centering word.*

► Bring participants out of the quiet: (read or paraphrase):

Take a few moments now to bring yourself back to this room, this space. Don't rush. Before you open your eyes, wiggle your fingers and toes or turn your head from side to side, or stretch. Know that this place of quiet is a place that you can return to whenever you desire. And know that this gets easier with practice. No judgment here! It helps to view your monkey mind with a sense of humor!

III. Debrief

- ▶ Invite participants to talk about the experience questions, such as:
 - What was this experience like for you? What was difficult? What was enjoyable?
 - What would make practicing Centering Prayer easier for you? (the tips in the handout to add to what participants say).
 - How might you fit this practice into your daily schedule? The optimum time for Centering Prayer is 20 minutes, but you can start with 5 minutes and build up from there.
 - What benefits would spur you on to practicing centering prayer regularly (lowered blood pressure, relieving tension, better concentration, resting in God's presence, peacefulness)?

VI. Closing

- ▶ Ask, "What was the highlight of today for you?"
- ▶ Distribute the handout, noting the Centering Prayer app by Contemplative Outreach that is available for iPhones.
- ▶ Thank the participants for coming and encourage them to begin a regular centering prayer practice at home.

General Suggestions

- Find a quiet place where you won't be interrupted
- Turn off your phone! Or, if you use a Centering Prayer app* turn off your ringer.
- Sitting for prayer at the same time and place every day to establish a habit.
- Sit in an uncluttered environment—outdoors is a great choice.
- Sit in a comfortable chair with relaxed but alert posture, feet flat on floor, palms in lap, turned up if desired. Close your eyes and take a few deep breaths, and visualize the warm, golden light of Christ traveling down your body. This helps you to relax physically, which then helps to relax mentally. Say a prayer, handing this time over to God. Doing so will help as you begin your practice, but will not be needed once you're accustomed to getting quiet.
- Use a candle, icon, flowers, or sacred art if desired
- Consistency is more important than duration. Begin with 5 minutes a day if that makes it easier for you to commit to it. Gradually lengthen to 20 minutes.
- A twice a day practice is ideal, but if that's impractical for you, fit 5-20 minutes in wherever and whenever you can: in your car in the parking lot before you walk into work; as you take a walk; close your eyes and repeat your centering word as you ride on the train or bus to work or school!

Full Body Relaxation Instructions

- Relaxing our bodies helps prepare us to relax our minds. This is not a New Age practice! It is simply a tool to relax the body.
- Sit comfortably, feet flat on floor, shoes off if possible. Aim for an alert yet relaxed posture.
- Take several deep breaths in and out.
- Notice any tension in your body. Wiggle the muscles of the places where you feel tension.
- Imagine the warm, golden light of Christ shining on the top of your head. Let yourself SEE the light, shining on the top of your scalp, warming and relaxing as it begins to move downward.
- Feel the warmth flowing down your face, warming and relaxing your forehead, eyes, cheeks.
- See it moving down the back of your neck. Let it rest for a few moments on the back of your neck and shoulders, where many of us carry tension.
- Let the light penetrate down into your muscles.
- Imagine that warm, golden light flowing down through your arms and into your hands.
- Feel the muscles beginning to relax in the warmth. Your fingers may begin to tingle.
- Go back up to your neck and shoulders, and let that light move slowly down your spine.
- It's very warm, very golden, and every muscle it touches begins to relax. Feel the tension leaving your back.
- Imagine that the light is penetrating to all your internal organs. Your entire midsection is relaxing, all tension leaving your body.
- The warm, golden light continues to move down and over your hips and your upper legs, warming and relaxing every muscle as it moves.
- Feel yourself letting go of all tension as the light continues down your legs and into your feet, until your entire body is encased in a warm, golden glow.
- The light of Christ inside and outside of you. Warming you, loving you, never letting you go.

Centering Prayer Instructions

- Begin to repeat your centering word in your mind. Repeat it slowly, along with the rhythm of your breath.
- If thoughts come to mind (which they certainly will), simply let them float across your field of vision like little boats on a stream. Let them float downstream.
- If you find yourself only thinking thoughts instead of repeating your centering word, do not judge yourself. Simply bring your mind back to your centering word.
- Give yourself grace. At first, this may feel foreign and contrived. It takes time and practice. In the end, it is worth it as you descend into deep quiet where the voice of God can be heard.
- We are all beginners on this journey.
- Some people experience bodily sensations, such as a feeling of sinking into the chair, a feeling of floating, or of warmth spreading throughout the body. If you do, acknowledge the feeling, but continue bringing your mind back to your centering word.
- You may find yourself in a place of great silence and peace, or you may find yourself just repeating your centering prayer with no visible manifestations of the Lord's presence. That's OK. This takes time and practice. It may take several times, or several weeks, to find that place of quiet rest in the Lord's presence.
- When your mind wanders, simply bring it back to your centering word.
- Every time you bring yourself back to your centering word, you are showing God your intention to become closer to God. That's a good thing, not something to judge!
- Do not strive to make something happen. We are simply practicing learning how to become quiet. Think of Psalm 84: Be still and know that I am God.
- Take a few moments to bring yourself back to this room, this space. Don't rush. Before you open your eyes, you might want to wiggle your fingers and toes or turn your head from side to side, or stretch (give them a minute or so to do this)
- Know that this place of quiet is a place that you can return to whenever you desire. And know that if this was difficult for you, it gets easier with practice. No judgment! It also helps to view your monkey mind with a sense of humor!

Helpful Resources:

Intimacy with God: An Introduction to Centering Prayer by Thomas Keating

*"Centering Prayer" app by [Contemplative Outreach](http://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/)

(<http://www.contemplativeoutreach.org/>), allows you to set a timer that will bring you out of the quiet with chimes or classical music, (Much better than a beeping timer!) You can choose from several written prayers or scriptures to begin and end your prayer time. (Available in the iPhone App Store and google play for androids).

There is only one way of reading that is congruent with our Holy Scriptures... This is the kind of reading named by our ancestors as "lectio divina," often translated as "spiritual reading," reading that enters our souls as food, enters our stomachs, spreads through our blood, and becomes holiness and love and wisdom.

(Eugene H. Peterson, *Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading*)

PREPARATION

- Become familiar with the process of *Lectio Divina* as outlined under "Practice."

Materials

- Flip Chart & Markers
- CD player or iPad with speakers
- Bell (optional)

Room Set-up

- A comfortable room with couches, chairs, and lamplight is best. If this is not possible, set chairs up in a circle to establish intimacy within the group.

Practical Considerations

- Be prepared with a text ahead of time. 5-10 verses is a good length. It is helpful to find a text that people can relate to on a personal level. The following scriptures work well or consider texts identified in the Revised Common Lectionary (Included in the *Discipleship and Christian Education Guide*, published annually by American Baptist Home Mission Societies.
 - Isaiah 43:16-21
 - Matthew 14:22-33
 - Luke 5:1-11
 - John 1:35-39
 - John 4:4-15
- Using different Bible translations for each reading can enrich the experience. *The Voice*, *The Message*, and *The Amplified Bible* are all helpful for hearing the passage with new ears.
- Meditative music may be used to lead the group into silence before first reading.
- During the *Lectio* process, encourage participants to move from the head to the heart by listening to *what God is saying to them, individually* rather than trying to discern what the texts mean in a broader context.
- Have a box of tissues handy. Some people drop into the heart quickly with this discipline.
- Timing Suggestions: Depending on the size of the group, time set aside for each movement of *Lectio Divina* will vary.

I. Welcome and Introduction

► Welcome participants and ask each person to introduce him or herself and say a few words about what drew them to a workshop on *lectio divina* and whether or not they've had any experience with this spiritual discipline.

II. Background

► Read or Paraphrase: *Lectio divina*, or “divine reading,” is an ancient practice with roots in the desert fathers and mothers and early monasticism. The practice is experiencing resurgence as it connects us with the scriptures on a personal level—to experience God’s love more deeply, to abide in the word of God.

In lectio divina we listen with the ears of our hearts. We listen for God’s voice—the voice that Elijah heard on the mountain—the voice he heard not in the wind, not in the earthquake, not in the fire—but in silence.

► Read 1 Kings 19:11-13:

The LORD said, “Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by.” Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came sheer, thin, silence. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, “What are you doing here, Elijah?”

► Explain (read or paraphrase):

- The phrase commonly translated as “still small voice” is based on three Hebrew words meaning small or gentle, sound and stillness or silence. It is translated here as “sheer, thin, silence,” which fits the story. Some scholars translate it “eerie silence. Elijah was in the cave in silence and it wasn’t until he stepped out that he heard what was recognizably the voice of God.
- In order to hear God’s voice, we first need to embrace silence. The spiritual discipline of *lectio divina* helps us to do that.
- This method of reading the Bible is transformational: “For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12).

III. Practice

► Begin by reviewing the following principles:

- Everything shared in the session is confidential.
- Participants share only as much as they feel comfortable sharing.
- Be considerate of time when sharing

- Be sensitive to each person's personal journey with God during this process. Listening to another speak to how God is moving within their heart is a sacred and holy privilege. Therefore, listen respectfully to one another without correcting, teaching or critiquing.
- When a person is finished sharing, you may thank them.

► Summarize the process, paraphrasing the main steps below. The titles of each movement are not important for the practice itself, and are simply used here for structural reasons. As you begin the practice, with each movement, give a short recap of what to do in that movement of the *lectio* process.

Overview of Lectio Divina Process

Beginning with *Silence (silencio)*, *Lectio divina* consists of four movements that can be practiced individually or within a small group. The movements are:

- *Read*
- *Meditate*
- *Respond*
- *Contemplate*

◇ *Silence*: Begin by sitting in silence or with meditative music to prepare to meet God in scripture. This is a time of expectancy. Encourage the group to use this time to enter into God's presence.

◇ *1st Movement: Read*

- One person in the group reads a short portion of scripture aloud slowly. It is important not to rush the reading.
- Encourage participants to listen for one word or phrase that grabs their attention—that shimmers—that speaks to them in a way they can't ignore. Some people may experience a feeling of peace washing over the body, or an unpleasant visceral reaction to a word.
- Pay attention to body *and* mind as the Word is read aloud.
- Each person in the circle shares the word that speaks to them with the rest of the group *without adding any explanation*.

◇ *2nd Movement: Meditate*

- Another person reads the scripture aloud slowly. Listen again for one word or phrase that shimmers with energy. It may be a different word or phrase from the first reading.
- Encourage participants to sit with the word for a few minutes, asking God where it intersects with their life situation today.
- Remind them, this is not a time to figure out what God is saying to the world or what the overall theology of the word is. This is a time to drop from the head to the heart, and ask:
 - "What are you saying to *me*, Lord, today, through this word?"
 - "What part of my daily life does this speak to?"

- Encourage a few moments of silence to ponder these questions before sharing with the group. Remind participants to only share as much as they are comfortable sharing. Depending on the size of your group, this portion of sharing may take fifteen to thirty minutes. (See timing section)

◇ 3rd Movement: Respond

- Another person reads the text aloud meditatively, and the group enters once more into a more extended time of quiet.
- Again, participants listen for one word or phrase that carries energy with it.
- This time, they listen also for God's invitation. Encourage them to ask: "God, what are you inviting me to today?"
- Set aside 15-30 minutes of silence after this reading. If there is room available, encourage participants to spread out for this extended time of silence.

◇ 4th Movement: Contemplate

Encourage participants to finish their time of listening for God's invitation by simply resting in God's presence, soaking up God's love.

IV. Closing

- ▶ Draw participants back together (You might want to use a bell)
- ▶ Invite people to share what God has written on their hearts during the silence.
- ▶ Distribute the handout and encourage them to continue this practice privately or in covenant groups.

Suggested Resource: *Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading* by Eugene Peterson

***Lectio Divina* Instructions**

Lectio divina, or “divine reading,” is an ancient practice with roots in the desert fathers and mothers and early monasticism. Rather than reading the Bible to gain information or insight into the historical context, it is a way of *abiding* with the Word of God. *In lectio divina we listen with the ears of our hearts. We listen for God’s voice—the voice that Elijah heard on the mountain—the voice he heard not in the wind, not in the earthquake, not in the fire—but in silence.* The four movements of *Lectio divina*— **Read; Meditate; Respond; Contemplate**—can be practiced privately or in a small group. These instructions are for personal use.

Begin by sitting in silence or with meditative music to prepare your heart. This is a time of expectancy.

1st Movement: Read a short portion of Scripture aloud slowly.

- Listen for one word or phrase that grabs your attention; that speaks to you in a way you can’t ignore. You may experience a feeling of peace, or an unpleasant visceral reaction to a word.
- Pay attention to your body *and* mind as you ponder the text.

2nd Movement: Meditate: Read the text again. Listen again for one word or phrase that shimmers with energy. It may be a different word or phrase from the first reading.

- Sit with the word for a few minutes, asking God where it intersects with your life situation. (This is not a time to figure out what God is saying to the world or what the overall theology of the word is. This is a time to drop from the head to the heart, and ask: “What are you saying to *me*, Lord, today, through this word?” “What part of my daily life does this speak to?”)

3rd Movement: Respond: Read the text again.

- Enter once more into a more extended time of quiet.
- Listen again for a word or phrase that carries energy with it. This time, listen as well for God’s invitation. Ask what God is inviting you to today.
- Set aside 15-30 minutes of silence after this reading.

4th Movement: Contemplate

- Finish your time of listening for God’s invitation by simply resting in God’s presence, soaking up God’s love. At the end of this movement, note what God has written on your heart during the silence. This is a good time to record your thoughts in a journal.

Suggested Texts

- Matthew 14:22-33
- Luke 5:1-11
- John 1:35-39;
- John 4:4-15
- Isaiah 43:16-21

Consider reading from a variety of Bible translations to enrich the *Lectio* experience. *The Voice*, *The Message*, and *The Amplified Bible* are all valuable for hearing passages with new ears.

*Prayer is sitting in the silence until it silences us,
Choosing gratitude until we are grateful
And praising God until we ourselves are an act of praise.
(Richard Rohr)*

PREPARATION

- Review the handouts for each gratitude station.
- Copy Gratitude Station Instructions (several of each)
- Copy Responsive Reading for closing (enough for each participant)

Materials:

- Chimes, gong or bell to signal moving from one station to another
- Computer or CD player
- Songs on CD or computer: on gratitude and a praise song for closing. Suggested: "Thank You, God" by Julie True (download at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sIYZWVfUlvI>)
- Materials for each station:
 - #1
 - Photos of faces from magazines: young, old, babies, men, women
 - Blank notecards and envelopes
 - Colored Pens
 - Postage Stamps
 - #2
 - Photos of nature: changing seasons, mountains, deserts, forests, ocean, fields, flowers, clouds, night sky
 - #3
 - Rocks (purchased or collected), enough for each participant to have one
 - #4
 - A Bible, a journal, a communion cup, a pitcher of water, a candle, a small bouquet of flowers

Room Set-up

- A comfortable room with enough room to set up 4 gratitude stations
- Set chairs up in a circle to establish intimacy within the group for the beginning of the workshop
- Set up 4 stations in corners of the room with tables, chairs and materials.

I. Welcome and Introduction

- ▶ Welcome participants and ask:
 - *What drew you to a workshop on gratitude?*
 - *Why do you think gratitude might be included as a spiritual discipline?*

▶ Read:

*To be grateful for the good things that happen in our lives is easy, but to be grateful for all of our lives—the good as well as the bad, the moments of joy as well as the moments of sorrow, the successes as well as the failures, the rewards as well as the rejections—that requires hard spiritual work. Still, we are only truly grateful people when we can say thank you to all that has brought us to the present moment. As long as we keep dividing our lives between events and people we would like to remember and those we would rather forget, we cannot claim the fullness of our beings as a gift of God to be grateful for. Let's not be afraid to look at everything that has brought us to where we are now and trust that we will soon see in it the guiding hand of a loving God. (Henri J.M. Nouwen, *Bread for the Journey*)*

▶ Ask: How does this quote color your idea of gratitude as a spiritual discipline?

▶ Explain: Gratitude, or praise, is known as the “gateway” spiritual discipline. Consider what Psalm 100:1-4a says:

Lift up a great shout of joy to the Lord!

Go ahead and do it—everyone, everywhere!

As you serve him, be glad and worship him.

Sing your way into his presence with joy!

And realize what this really means—

we have the privilege of worshiping the Lord our God.

For he is our Creator and we belong to him.

We are the people of his pleasure.

You can pass through his open gates with the password of praise.

*Come right into his presence with thanksgiving. (Poetry on Fire, *The Passion Translation*)*

▶ Play “Thank You, God” by Julie True or other song of gratitude.

▶ Ask: What words in the song made an impression on you? Why?

II. Gratitude Stations

▶ Divide participants into 4 groups.

▶ Explain:

▪ You will 25 minutes at each station. It is important that you give one another the gift of solitude while at each station.

▪ Please do not to interrupt one another with questions or chatter.

▪ There are instructions posted at each station.

▪ You hear (bell, chime, gong . . .) when it is time to move to the next station.

▶ Feel free to take bathroom breaks in between stations.

▶ Guide groups to their first stations and signal the start of the practice.

III. Closing

▶ Reconvene and debrief, asking: *What will you take home with you today?*

▶ Play a praise song that most people will know, such as “This is the Day”

▶ Join in the responsive reading of Psalm 136:1-9; 23-26

Gratitude Station #1 Meditation Suggestions

Station #1

Look at the photos on the table and let them remind you of the people in your life that you are thankful for. Close your eyes and let those people rise up in your mind. There will be the obvious ones, but some will undoubtedly surface from your unconscious. The piano teacher you had as a child. Your 9th grade algebra teacher or middle school English teacher. The person who waits on you every day when you stop for coffee. Take a few moments to reflect back on your childhood, your adolescence, your college years, years as a young parent, today. In your journal, jot down the names that come to the surface. How have they blessed your life? Write a note of thanks to one or two of these people. Address a card and place a stamp on it, and mail it after the workshop. If you enjoy videoing a message, or calling someone in person to thank them, find a quiet spot to do so where you will not disturb anyone else.

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Station #1

Look at the photos on the table and let them remind you of the people in your life that you are thankful for. Close your eyes and let those people rise up in your mind. There will be the obvious ones, but some will undoubtedly surface from your unconscious. The piano teacher you had as a child. Your 9th grade algebra teacher or middle school English teacher. The person who waits on you every day when you stop for coffee. Take a few moments to reflect back on your childhood, your adolescence, your college years, years as a young parent, today. In your journal, jot down the names that come to the surface. How have they blessed your life? Write a note of thanks to one or two of these people. Address a card and place a stamp on it, and mail it after the workshop. If you enjoy videoing a message, or calling someone in person to thank them, find a quiet spot to do so where you will not disturb anyone else.

Gratitude Station #2 Meditation Suggestions

Hallelujah! Praise the Lord! Let the skies be filled with praise
and the highest heavens with the shouts of glory!

² Go ahead—praise him, all you his messengers!
Praise him some more, all you heavenly hosts!

³ Keep it up, sun and moon!
Don't stop now, all you twinkling stars of light!

⁴ Take it up even higher—up to the highest heavens,
until the cosmic chorus thunders his praise!^[a]

⁵ Let the entire universe erupt with praise to God.
From nothing to something he spoke and created it all.

⁶ He established the cosmos to last forever,
and he stands behind his commands
so his orders will never be revoked.

⁷ Let the earth join in with this parade of praise!
You mighty creatures of the ocean's depths,
echo in exaltation!

⁸ Lightning, hail, snow, and clouds,
and the stormy winds that fulfill his word.

⁹ Bring your melody, O mountains and hills;
trees of the forest and field, harmonize your praise!

¹⁰⁻¹² Praise him, all beasts and birds, mice and men,
kings, queens, princes, and princesses,
young men and maidens, children and babes,
old and young alike, everyone everywhere!

¹³ Let them all join in with this orchestra of praise.
For the name of the Lord is the only name we raise!
His stunning splendor ascends higher than the heavens.

¹⁴ He anoints his people with strength and authority,
showing his great favor to all his godly lovers,
even to his princely people, Israel,
who are so close to his heart.
Hallelujah! Praise the Lord!

-Psalm 148 (The Passion)

- Take some time to look at the pictures on the table.
- What photo holds the most energy for you? Pick it up and let yourself enter the picture. Place yourself there. Close your eyes and let all 5 senses notice what is going on around you. What do you see, hear, smell? What can you touch? What can you taste? Remain there for several minutes. Ask yourself, "In this very moment, what am I thankful for?"
- Write a hymn or psalm of praise to God.

Gratitude Station #3 Meditation Suggestions

Station #3

Read the following texts.

Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, saying, "Thus far the LORD has helped us." 1 Samuel 7:12

*One generation commends your works to another;
they tell of your mighty acts.*

*They speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty—
and I will meditate on your wonderful works.*

*They tell of the power of your awesome works—
and I will proclaim your great deeds. Psalm 145:4-6 (NIV)*

In 1 Samuel, Samuel puts up a stone of remembrance, which he calls an Ebenezer, to remind the Israelites that God has delivered them by his might and power. In other Old Testament stories, our biblical forefathers do the same, naming the place where they met God. Sit in silence for a few moments, meditating on those places where God has met you; where God has delivered you; where God has saved you. It may help to jot these stories down in your journal. Choose one of the places where God has met you in a powerful way. Choose a rock, letting their colors and shapes speak to you. Take some time to meditate on a good name for your rock. Write a story in your journal about how God met you in this particular situation, and how you have chosen and named a rock of remembrance. You may want to write a prayer of thanksgiving. If you wish, take the rock home and put in a prominent place in your home—maybe your bedside table or on a shelf in the kitchen or bathroom. This is a rock that you can actually pick up and hold, or slip into your pocket on those really hard days. Consider sharing the rock and the story with someone you love.

Gratitude Station #4 Meditation Suggestions

Station #4

Each of us has his or her own personal pathway to God; a pathway that most readily leads us into God's presence. For some it's worship, for others it's service. For some it's intercessory prayer, and others, wordless meditation. Spending time with the body of Christ on Sunday morning may be the pathway for one, and time spent alone in nature may be the main pathway for another. The objects on the table are there as reminders or jump-off points for your meditation. Identify your chosen pathways. There will probably be more than one. Close your eyes and meditate on what pathways bring you joy in your walk with the Lord. Write them down in your journal. Write a prayer of thanksgiving that God readily waits for you in these places. You may want to find a scripture that speaks to your chosen pathway.

Take some time to reflect on how you can spend more time in God's presence; more time on those pathways where gratitude and praise wells up and spills over. If you have your calendar with you, get it out and find some times to plug in 30 minutes for a walk in the park, a cup of coffee with a friend who has lost a loved one, a regular time of meditation. Even if you don't have your calendar with you, jot down some regular times, on a weekly basis, to walk your most joy-giving pathway to the Lord.

Station #4

Each of us has his or her own personal pathway to God; a pathway that most readily leads us into God's presence. For some it's worship, for others it's service. For some it's intercessory prayer, and others, wordless meditation. Spending time with the body of Christ on Sunday morning may be the pathway for one, and time spent alone in nature may be the main pathway for another. The objects on the table are there as reminders or jump-off points for your meditation. Identify your chosen pathways. There will probably be more than one. Close your eyes and meditate on what pathways bring you joy in your walk with the Lord. Write them down in your journal. Write a prayer of thanksgiving that God readily waits for you in these places. You may want to find a scripture that speaks to your chosen pathway.

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Responsive Reading

Psalm 136:1-9; 23-26 The Passion Translation (adapted)

Let everyone thank God, for God is good, and easy to please!

God's tender love for us continues on forever!

Give thanks to God, our King over all gods!

God's tender love for us continues on forever!!

Give thanks to the Lord over all lords!

God's tender love for us continues on forever!

Give thanks to the only miracle working God!

God's tender love for us continues on forever!

Give thanks to the Creator who made the heavens with wisdom!

God's tender love for us continues on forever!

To the One who formed dry ground, raising it up from the sea!

God's tender love for us continues on forever!

Praise the One who created every heavenly light!

God's tender love for us continues on forever!

God set the sun in the sky to rule over day!

God's tender love for us continues on forever!

Praise the One who set in place the moon and stars to rule over the night!

God's tender love for us continues on forever!

He's the God who chose us when we were nothing!

God's tender love for us continues on forever!

God has rescued us from the power of our enemies!

God's tender love for us continues on forever!

God provides food for hungry men and animals!

God's tender love for us continues on forever!

Give thanks to the great God of the heavens!

God's tender love for us continues on forever!

Responsive Reading

Psalm 136:1-9; 23-26 The Passion Translation (adapted)

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God's tender love for us continues on forever!

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Praise the One who set in place the moon and stars to rule over the night!

God's tender love for us continues on forever!

He's the God who chose us when we were nothing!

God's tender love for us continues on forever!

God has rescued us from the power of our enemies!

God's tender love for us continues on forever!

God provides food for hungry men and animals!

God's tender love for us continues on forever!

Give thanks to the great God of the heavens!

God's tender love for us continues on forever!