

Going Deeper in Prayer

Praying with Scripture

Praying with Scripture throughout the entire year will allow you to encounter Jesus in a deeply personal way and develop a close friendship with Him. The following resources are meant to foster this process. Please consider praying with a Scripture passage every day. This can take as little as 5 minutes or 20 minutes, as planned or as time is available. (See page 3 for variations of Praying with a Scripture passage that differ in the amount of time needed.)

There are 4 different Prayer Cards posted at: <http://diolc.org/catechesis/deeper/>

1. Jesus' public ministry
2. Advent and Christmas
3. Lent
4. Easter



Jesus' love for you

"Can a woman forget her nursing child, or lack compassion for the son of her womb? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! Behold, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands..." (Isaiah 49:15-16) Jesus loves you so much that He gave His life for you. As you spend time with Him in conversation (in prayer) you will become more aware of how much Christ cares for you, and for every detail of your life. Take time each day to be with Our Lord by praying with a Scripture passage so that you come to know this to be true.

Why would you pray with Scripture passage on a daily basis?

- 1) To encounter the Person of Christ each day
- 2) To enter into / go deeper in a relationship with the Person of Jesus
- 3) To come to know how much Jesus loves you, that He is faithful and that you can trust Him
- 4) To develop a habit to prayerfully read God's Word each day

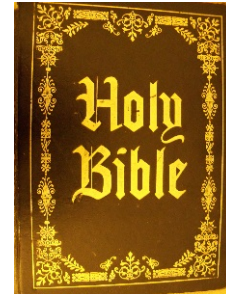
Learning the Principles

- Your relationship with the Lord Himself is what really matters. One of the best ways you can encounter Jesus and dispose your heart to hear from the Lord personally is through Praying with Scripture (*Lectio Divina*).
- Praying with Scripture is a way of prayerfully pondering a Bible passage in which you encounter the Person of Christ. There is a progression that takes place that is not a method or technique but a way that incorporates the natural development of a relationship between two persons. In pondering the passage, there is a deepening process that starts in the head and goes to the heart as the Holy Spirit makes a



connection between the persons and events in the Scripture and your own personal life by reminding you of something from your life. Further, you are ultimately led to simply rest in God, to be in His Presence and listen to what Jesus might whisper to your heart through a thought or a word. The goal is communion with Christ. The Praying with Scripture prayer worksheet includes these four steps: Read, Reflect, Spontaneous Prayer and Resting in God. The worksheet is available at diolc.org/deeper

- By prayerfully pondering Scripture passages, you will grow in your friendship with Jesus by encountering Him in His Word.
- “Praying with Scripture” is commonly called *Lectio Divina*, which is Latin for Divine Reading.
- “A time-honored way to study and savor the Word of God is ‘Lectio Divina’ which constitutes a real and veritable ‘spiritual journey’ marked out in stages.” (Benedict XVI, Pope Emeritus)
- “I urge you to become familiar with the Bible, and to have it at hand so that it can be your compass pointing out the road to follow. By reading it, you will learn to know Christ. (Message of Pope Benedict XVI, World Youth Day, 2006)
- To seek the Lord and find Him in your life also means accepting His Word, which is joy for your heart. The Prophet Jeremiah wrote: “When I found Your words, I devoured them; they became my joy and the happiness of my heart” (*Jeremiah* 15:16).
- “Learn to read and meditate on the Sacred Scriptures. There you will find an answer to your deepest questions about truth. God’s word reveals the wonders that He has accomplished throughout human history, it will fill you with joy, and it will lead you to praise and adoration: “Come, let us sing joyfully to the Lord; let us kneel before the Lord who made us” (*Psalms* 95:1,6). (Message of His Holiness Pope Benedict XVI for the Twenty-Seventh World Youth Day, 2012)
- Benedict XVI, Pope Emeritus said, “the ancient tradition of *Lectio Divina*: the diligent reading of sacred Scripture accompanied by prayer brings about that intimate dialogue in which the person reading hears God who is speaking, and in praying, responds to Him with trusting openness of heart...This practice will bring to the Church – I am convinced of it – a new spiritual springtime.” (Pope Benedict’s address to the International Congress commemorating the 40th Anniversary of Dei Verbum, September 16, 2005.)
- It is common to experience **distractions** during prayer. It is important not to follow the distraction, but as you notice it, simply turn back to the prayer at hand. If the same distraction keeps returning, it could be something you will want to talk about with Jesus.
- Praying with Scripture (*Lectio Divina*) is a privileged meeting place with Jesus. (See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraph 2708) In praying with Scripture, the progression that takes place is not a technique but a way that incorporates the natural development of a relationship between two friends. This way of praying with the Word of God is also not a method of human invention but derives from the way that God has touched and drawn human hearts into relationship with Himself down through the ages. It happens automatically as we sincerely spend time with the Word of God. However, an awareness and understanding of the progression can help our participation in it.



- Let's examine the progression of how a relationship develops. Think of a person that you truly love and trust, such as a spouse, friend, sibling, or grandparent. How does a relationship begin? In talking and spending time with the person, your conversation might initially be a bit superficial. How does the relationship develop? Your conversation begins to include sharing what you think about things. As the relationship deepens, your trust grows and develops, and you now feel comfortable relating how you feel about things. Communication is now at the heart level; if the friend moves, you would really miss him; you would mourn her loss because you have shared your heart with this person. After talking a lot about how you feel, eventually you are able to sit in a room with the person and no words need to be spoken. The relationship is now at that deep level where you feel totally comfortable with no outward communication and just being present to each other is very calming. An example is being in a boat on a pond with your grandfather, just sitting there, totally at peace. There is a sense of communion; words could even disrupt this peaceful communion.
- This is what God desires with each one of us. This is the same progression that we find in praying with Scripture using *Lectio Divina*. Talking, spending time with and getting to know Jesus takes place in reading a particular Scripture passage. Sharing what you think comes about in reflecting on the Scripture passage by re-telling it in a few short sentences, in other words summarizing it. Relating how you feel takes place in spontaneous prayer as you answer three, simple questions that lead you to become personally involved with the passage. This spontaneous prayer fosters a movement from your head to your heart as the Holy Spirit makes a connection between the persons and events in the Scripture and your own personal life by reminding you of something from last week, last year, or perhaps a very long time ago. Finally, the peaceful communion with no outward communication develops through simply resting in God, being in His Presence and listening to what Jesus might whisper to your heart through a thought or a word. This is a beautiful way to encounter Our Lord in the words of Scripture.



Activities

- Specific Bible passages are listed below so that you may pray with Scripture during your personal prayer time each day. The best place to begin is the Gospel of Luke.
- Pick one Scripture passage and pray with it, writing out your short answers using the “Praying with Scripture” prayer worksheet found at diolc.org/deeper. It is best to pray with passages that include persons, rather than just text.
- Simple directions to pray with a Scripture passage:



- 1) Write the Scripture chapter and verses at the top of the prayer worksheet, such as Matthew 8:23-27 (for example). First, read aloud the passage. The first time is for you to hear the passage.
- 2) Next, re-read the passage silently. This will allow you to see the words of the passage. On the worksheet, summarize what is happening in the passage in just a few sentences – to grasp the big picture. This is not about interpreting what it means; but simply to re-state the key points in 3-4 brief phrases. This allows you to work with the passage. In this 3-4 phrase summary, you are re-telling the passage as if explaining the passage to a small child.

This is about re-telling the Story from the passage in your own words and this does not need to be full, perfect sentences but only covering the most important facts.

Note: Summarizing the story is important because you need the structure of the Story line before you can go deeper.

- 3) Now pick a person from the passage. You will want to choose someone that you can relate to even though you might not fully understand why at this point. You may choose to be “a silent observer” – someone standing nearby and just watching.
- 4) Then answer the three questions:
 - How do you think this person or you yourself would feel in this situation?
 - Does it remind you of something or someone in your life?
 - Is there anything you would say or do differently? Note: This is not asking you to change the Scripture passage.
- 5) Take some quiet time to speak with Jesus, sharing your honest feelings. Don’t just think about the situation/ the life experience that came to mind, but have a heart-to-Heart talk with Jesus.
- 6) Pick a word or phrase that stood out for you / that has special meaning for you.
- 7) Read the passage again. Listen to what Jesus might whisper in your heart.
- 8) Close the time of prayer with the Our Father



Note: The Teacher’s Instruction Sheet included with the prayer worksheet has some further details if needed. This way of *Praying with Scripture* is to be very simple.

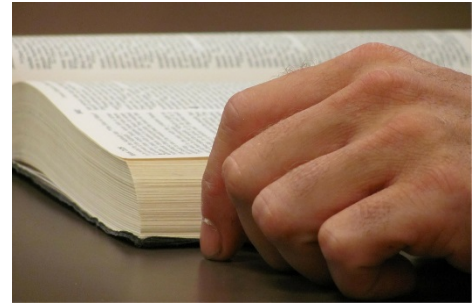
- Ways to change it up:
 1. After hearing or reading a Scripture passage, simply choose a word or phrase that stood out for you (without using the prayer worksheet).
 2. Other times, journal about a specific Scripture passage.
 3. Another choice would be to simply answer the questions interiorly.
 4. Another way is to journal about what stood out for you and why.



5. Read the chosen passage silently and underline what stood out for you and then journal in your notebook the reason why.
6. For a fuller prayer experience, complete the prayer worksheet found here: <http://diolc.org/deeper>
 - When you speak with Jesus, you will want to pray with your heart. “Prayer is internalized to the extent that we become aware of Him ‘to whom we speak.’”
 - Prayer is a vital necessity. Prayer and Christian life are inseparable. (CCC 2744-2745) In other words, when you pray with your heart, you will come to know Jesus Christ personally and deeply. As this friendship with Him grows, you will recognize more and more how much He loves you and how much you love Him. From this love, received and given, you may respond from a natural desire to be one with Him in all things, and live your life in a way that is reflective of His own. This brings much peace and joy to yourself and those around you.
 - Memorize the Scripture verse: Psalm 119:105
 - Play Amy Grant’s song, “Thy Word is a Lamp unto My Feet and a Light unto My Path.”

Spiritual Comprehension

- Ensure that you receive answers to clear up any misunderstandings and/or barriers in praying with a Scripture passage, such as those listed below. The answers to these statements can be found on the Praying with Scripture worksheet’s directions, pages 2-3.
 - I will mis-interpret a Scripture passage.
 - I haven’t really studied Scripture before.
 - I don’t know anything about the Bible
 - I don’t want to make a mistake.
- You will want to become familiar and very comfortable with this way of praying with Scripture by praying with a passage every day throughout the year.



Encountering God in Prayer

- In the pondering of a Bible passage, you have a privileged meeting place with Jesus.
- When you are moved during the prayer time and encounter Jesus in prayer, take time to thank Him for the gift of His Word.
- Slowly build up the amount of silence that you have in prayer. As a further progression, have a “heart-to-heart” conversation with Jesus after pondering a Scripture passage.
- To deepen your relationship with Jesus, allow frequent times of silence in the chapel where Our Lord is reserved in the tabernacle. Acknowledge that you truly believe that the Person of Christ is in the tabernacle by a reverent genuflection and attentiveness to Him. Allow your language, when speaking about Jesus in the tabernacle, to reflect this truth.

The Universal Church (Magisterial) Sources for “Praying with Scripture” (*Lectio Divina*)

- *Dei Verbum*, n. 25



- *Catechism of the Catholic Church* paragraphs 2708, 1177
- *National Directory for Catechesis*, n. 67
- *Guide for Catechists*, part II, n. 7
- *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, Apostolic Letter of Pope John Paul II, n. 39
- *Final Message from the Synod on the Word of God in the Life and Mission of the Church*, n. 9
- *Post-Synodal Apostolic Exhortation Verbum Domini – The Word of God* by Pope Benedict XVI, n. 86-87

Sacred Art that depicts this way of praying with Scripture – putting yourself in the “scene”

- *St. Francis in Sacred Art*: St. Francis is pictured with the Creche to symbolize his placing himself in the passage to ponder the events and the people.



Scripture foundation

- “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” Psalm 119:105
- “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.” 2 Timothy 3:16
- “For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.” Romans 15:4
- “So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.” Romans 10:17
- “So shall my word be that goes out from My mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it.” Isaiah 55:11

