

# PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE SERIES

OVERVIEW, TALK OUTLINES AND  
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

**SYNOD 2022**



ARCHDIOCESE OF SAINT PAUL & MINNEAPOLIS



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OF  
SAINT PAUL &  
MINNEAPOLIS

OFFICE OF THE ARCHBISHOP

September 11, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

At the core of our Catholic faith is a relationship with the Triune God who created and saved us out of love. Reflecting that love, the Lord desires a personal relationship with each of us, but never forces anything upon us. Instead, we are invited into a relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit through prayer. Bishop Cozzens and I are pleased that you are now joining us in accepting the Lord's invitation to go deeper in our prayer lives. We feel particularly privileged as we attempt to shepherd you through this *Praying with Scripture* series.

You may wonder why we are doing this now. Participants in the Prayer and Listening events that occurred over the course of last year expressed a strong desire to encounter the Lord more deeply, especially through prayer. The additional year of preparation for the Synod that resulted from the pandemic seems like a providential opportunity to address this desire, and open our hearts more widely to how the Holy Spirit wants to speak to us in the consultative stage of the Synod process still to come.

I believe, moreover, that the *Praying with Scripture* series is not only a timely virtual resource for the Synod, but also one of enduring value. I hope that it will be used in the Archdiocese long after the Synod is completed. I encourage you to use the 25 Prayer Companions as your personal guide in your prayer journey over the course of this series. It is my hope that they may become a treasured diary of sorts for you as you fall more deeply in love with our Triune God.

Seeking the intercession of St. Joseph, Protector and Guide, in this year of preparation, I extend to you every personal good wish and prayer,

Sincerely in Christ,

Most Reverend Bernard A. Hebda  
Archbishop of Saint Paul and Minneapolis

# PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

## SERIES OVERVIEW

Welcome to the Praying with Scripture series taught by Archbishop Bernard Hebda and Bishop Andrew Cozzens. If you have never prayed with Scripture, that's okay - this teaching series will help you get started! If you have prayed with Scripture and want to go deeper, this teaching series will help you grow.

Prayer is a relationship with God. Just like any relationship, there are always opportunities to grow deeper. That's what this series is about. It has four components:

1. Archbishop Hebda and Bishop Cozzens offer a series of five teaching videos. These videos also feature testimonials from fellow Catholics from across the Archdiocese. The series is hosted by Yen Fasano. The titles of the talks and speakers are listed below:

o Week 1: Prayer is a Personal Relationship with God	Archbishop Hebda
o Week 2: How to Listen to God in Our Hearts	Bishop Cozzens
o Week 3: Conversation with God – Acknowledge, Relate, Receive, Respond	Bishop Cozzens
o Week 4: Discernment of Spirits – Consolation and Desolation	Bishop Cozzens
o Week 5: Overcoming Obstacles	Archbishop Hebda
2. Talk outlines are provided for each week. As you listen to the teaching video, follow along in the outline. You may print the outline and use the space on the right for notes or use your own journal for notetaking.
3. Discussion questions accompany these outlines. If you are participating in this series together with a group, consider selecting some or all of these questions for your group discussion.
4. Twenty-five Prayer Companions, each with a different scripture verse and guided reflection, provide a structure for your time of prayer as explained in this series, with space for journaling. We invite you to use one Prayer Companion a day throughout the course of this five-week series, feeling free to return to your favorites as desired.

These materials are available at [archspm.org/synod](http://archspm.org/synod).

## PRACTICAL TIPS

Every journey begins with that first step. Don't wait for tomorrow or next week – commit to pray starting today! Here are a few practical tips as your start:

- Routine is important. It's helpful to find a consistent time and place to pray each day. You may try various times to see what works best for you.
- If you haven't prayed before, start with 15 minutes each day. If you do miss a day, that's okay – just start again the next day.
- The Prayer Companions are guides to assist you in your prayer time. Throughout the five talks, each step in the Prayer Companions will be explained in greater detail. Use them when it is helpful, while knowing that prayer is personal. Simply ask the Lord to lead you.
- Sometimes it's hard to make yourself sit down and pray. Even the saints struggled with prayer at times. Some days you may feel God is near, and other days not. In both cases, the Lord is pleased you chose to spend time with him. Trust he is doing his work in your heart, even if you do not feel it.



## SPIRITUAL READING

Good books can help us understand what is happening in our lives of prayer and learn the ways of God. They can spur our imagination and our desire to grow in prayer.

Some suggestions for growing in prayer are:

- Fr. Jacques Philippe, *Time for God*
- Peter Kreeft, *Prayer for Beginners*
- St. Francis de Sales, *Introduction to the Devout Life*
- Fr. Timothy Gallagher, *The Discernment of Spirits*

May God bless you on your prayer journey!

# FALL 2020: PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE SERIES

## TALK OUTLINE & DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### Talk Outline for Week 1: Prayer is a Personal Relationship with God

Welcome to the Praying with Scripture series taught by Archbishop Hebda and Bishop Cozzens.

Below is the outline for Talk 1, titled "Prayer is a Personal Relationship with God." As you listen to the teaching video, follow along in this outline. You may print this outline and use the space to the right for notes or your own journal for notetaking.

Discussion questions for this talk can be found at the end of the outline. If you are participating in this series together with a group, consider selecting some or all of these questions for your group discussion.

#### Talk Outline

##### **I. The goal is to help everyone grow in their prayer life.**

- A. Will draw upon the tradition, with a focus on St. Ignatius teaching on prayer.
- B. St. Ignatius teaching is designed for the active life. Finding God in all things was his goal.

##### **II. Prayer is a way to enter into a relationship with God.**

- A. God is personal.
- B. "Being a Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea, but the encounter with an event, a person, which gives life a new horizon and a decisive direction." (Joy of the Gospel 7; Pope Francis quoting Pope Benedict XVI)

##### **III. Prayer is the place where I live this relationship.**

- A. "Prayer is not something accessory, it is not 'optional' but rather a question of life or death. Only one who prays, that is, who entrusts himself to God with filial love, can enter into eternal life, which is God himself." Pope Benedict (March 4, 2007)

##### **IV. I must believe that God desires a personal relationship with me.**

- A. Letter from Mother Teresa to her sisters in the 1990s. "... have you seen with the eyes of your soul how He looks at you with love? Do you really know the living Jesus – not from books but from being with Him in your heart? Have you heard the loving words He speaks to you? Ask for the grace, He is longing simply to give it...." (Mother Teresa, Varanasi Letter)

- B. Prayer is this encounter with love that changes me and begins to transform me.

**V. God speaks first, God pursues us; what He has to say is most important.**

- A. Zacchaeus – Jesus takes the initiative.  
B. "... The wonder of prayer is revealed beside the well where we come seeking water: there, Christ comes to meet every human being. It is he who first seeks us and asks us for a drink. Jesus thirsts; his asking arises from the depths of God's desire for us. Whether we realize it or not, prayer is the encounter of God's thirst with ours. God thirsts that we may thirst for him. CCC ¶2560

**VI. A word about silence and imagination.**

- A. The importance of silence. St. Augustine: "I was without, you were within."  
B. Use of imagination.  
1. Imagination is a faculty that God gives us to make images in our mind and to experience within ourselves a spiritual reality.  
2. Real imagination verses fantasy.  
3. St. Ignatius conversion; God at work in his imagination.  
4. Scenes in scripture communicate truth, not just the words.  
5. Prayer with the imagination can provide a real experience of God's love, God's glory that transforms me. "Meditation engages thought, imagination, emotion, and desire. This mobilization of faculties is necessary in order to deepen our convictions of faith, prompt the conversion of our heart, and strengthen our will to follow Christ..." *Pope Benedict XVI, Address to Seminarians and Youth*  
6. St. Ignatius encourages us to pray with our imagination, applying all the spiritual senses of the soul. In the example of praying with the Nativity scene, see with the site of imagination the place and the persons, hear what is being said, smell, taste and touch, drawing profit from it.

**VII. Basic outline of a time of prayer; The Prayer Companion**

- A. I prepare my heart for prayer and ask for a grace.  
B. Prayerfully, I read the scripture passage using my reasoning and imagination, reflecting on the truth the Lord is communicating to me.

C. I converse with God:

1. Acknowledge – I acknowledge the thoughts, feelings and desires arising in my heart.
2. Relate – I honestly relate these to God, trusting he is present and listening to me, his beloved child.
3. Receive – I listen to what the Lord wants to say to my heart.
4. Respond – I conclude my prayer time speaking to Jesus, God the Father, and/or the Holy Spirit as I would speak to a friend. I resolve to act in a concrete way to love God and neighbor, which could be something small.

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D. I rest in the Lord.

### **Discussion Questions for Week 1: Prayer is a Personal Relationship with God**

1. The video teaching discusses what is prayer, and why pray. Describe your prayer life at this moment in time. How are you desiring to grow?
2. St. Ignatius' teaching on prayer and the spiritual life is particularly helpful because it is designed for the active life. What are some of the obstacles in your active life that make it difficult to pray? How might you overcome these obstacles?
3. "Thanks solely to this encounter – or renewed encounter – with God's love, which blossoms into an enriching friendship, we are liberated from our narrowness and self-absorption. We become fully human when we become more than human, when we let God bring us beyond ourselves in order to attain the fullest truth of our being" (Pope Francis, Joy of the Gospel 8). How have you encountered God's love? What does it mean to you to have a liberating encounter with God?
4. Have you experienced God thirsting for you as Mother Teresa described in her letter? If so, describe that experience. If not, how might you open yourself to experience his thirst for you?
5. Archbishop Hebda discussed how God speaks first, how God pursues you, and what he has to say is most important. In this study we will be discussing in more detail how to learn to listen to God in prayer. As you begin, how can you carve out time in the busyness of life to have the silence and the time to listen?
6. St. Ignatius encourages us to pray with our imagination. Fr. Timothy Gallagher, in his book Meditation and Contemplation, says, "In this manner of praying, St. Ignatius tells us, we imaginatively see the persons in the Bible passage, we hear the words they speak, and we observe the actions they accomplish in the event." Have you prayed this way before? If you have, describe a time when you imagined yourself in a scene from the Bible. What thoughts, feelings, and desires arose in that experience? (Note: if you haven't actively prayed this way before, the Prayer Companion with the guided reflection will help you with this type of active prayer.)