



Week 2 | Scripture as Communion

Exercises

Exercises 1-3 - *Meditation and Contemplation*

“But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it.” -Deuteronomy 30:14

This week, our exercises center on reading for “depth” instead of “width.” Many times we believe that the primary way to take in scripture is through reading lengthy passages in one sitting, trying to get as much information as we can out of the text.

This week, we’ll be focusing instead on “depth”—reading shorter passages of Scripture and prayerfully meditating on them (some traditions call this method contemplative reading, or *lectio divina* which means “divine reading”). The exercises this week will be less about reading for information or motivation and more about communing with Jesus. Christians throughout the centuries have engaged in this kind of prayerful, meditative, and contemplative reading of scripture.

This week, we’ll read and listen to short passages of scripture several times with stillness and silence between and within each reading. There are four movements in this process: **Read, Reflect, Respond, Rest**. Below are the suggested scripture passages for this week, and on the next page, the steps are explained.

Day 1:

“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits, who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from the pit, who crowns you with steadfast love and mercy, who satisfies you with good so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.” -Psalm 103:1-5

Day 2:

“And he said to his disciples, ‘Therefore I tell you, do not be anxious about your life, what you will eat, nor about your body, what you will put on. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the ravens: they neither sow nor reap, they have neither storehouse nor barn, and yet God feeds them. Of how much more value are you than the birds! And which of you by being anxious can add a single hour to his span of life? If then you are not able to do as small a thing as that, why are you anxious about the rest?’” -Luke 12:22-26

Day 3:

“Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.” -Colossians 3:12-17

Day 1: Psalm 103:1-5

Day 2: Luke 12:22-26

Day 3: Colossians 3:12-17

The above are suggested passages, but the steps below can be used as a tool with any scripture passage. Four to six verses is an ideal length.

Prepare to enter this devotional time with a posture of prayerful expectancy. Find a quiet place, sit comfortably, alert, and relaxed. Try, if you can, to put away your thoughts of the day and ready yourself to listen. Start with a simple prayer, “Lord, thank you for your loving presence. Prepare my heart and mind to receive your word.”

Read: Read the passage aloud (or silently, if you are not in a place where you can read aloud). Listen for a word or phrase that sticks out to you. Read the passage again. If one word or phrase stood out the first time, see if it does the second time. Begin to repeat this word or phrase to yourself and let it resonate with you. If nothing sticks out, that is okay; just read again. Imagine someone taking a highlighter and pointing out one word or phrase. Remember, this is not a performance-driven exercise. Focus on spending time with God in His word.

Reflect: Reread the passage. Meditate upon your word or phrase and ask God how this word speaks to your life. This could be a realization, feeling, sensory perception, image, thought, etc. Let your imagination be engaged, as well as your heart and mind. As these images, thoughts, and feelings come to you, take time to think about them. When you feel like praying, move to the next phase.

Respond: Thank God for the gift you’ve been given in His personal word to you. Then allow your heart and head to lead you in a response. Pray what you most desire to say to God, then listen. Journal and write down thoughts that come to mind, and what you believe God is speaking to you. Listen to the Holy Spirit to discover a possible invitation relevant to today, the next few days, or the season to come. It could be an action to take, a truth to discover about God, a way of life to change, someone to forgive, or something to celebrate. As you sense God bringing the time to a close...

Rest: As your worded prayer comes to an end, simply be with God in stillness. Celebrate hearing from God and soak in the goodness of God’s grace. Enjoy the silence then reflect on the experience. Thank God for the chance to encounter him and his living word and for the encouragement to learn more about Jesus. Ask God to bless you, especially if you feel called to an action. Spend another moment in silence before ending your time.