

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

# The DEVO

MARCH 8 - 12, 2021

LENTEN SERIES 2021

FEB 21 - APR 4

# New Rhythms



# Lectio Divina

## Encountering God in Scripture

The practice of *Lectio Divina* includes a time of preparation, reading the same short passage of Scripture four times, and then taking that Word with us into our everyday lives with a resolve to live it out in concrete ways.

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### SUGGESTED SCRIPTURES

Psalm 23; Psalm 27:1-5; Psalm 63:1-4; Isaiah 43:1-4;  
Isaiah 55:6-9; Matthew 14:22-32; Luke 10:38-41;  
John 10:1-6, 7-10, 11-18; John 12:1-8; Ephesians 3:14-19;  
Colossians 3:1-4, 5-11, 12 - 17.

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**PREPARE (*silencio*).** Take a moment to become quiet. You may want to close your eyes as a way of eliminating distraction and focusing inward. Let your body relax and allow yourself to become consciously aware of God's presence with you.

**READ (*lectio*).** Turn to the passage of Scripture and begin to read slowly, pausing between phrases and sentences. You may read silently to yourself, or you might find it helpful to read the passage aloud and allow the words to echo and settle into your heart. As you read, listen for the word or phrase that strikes you or catches your attention. Allow for a moment of silence, then repeat that word or phrase softly to yourself, pondering it and savoring it as though pondering the words of a loved one. This is the word that is meant for you. Be content to listen simply and openly, without judging or analyzing.

**REFLECT (*meditatio*).** Once you have heard the “word” that is meant for you, read the passage again and listen for the way in which this passage connects with your life. Ask, “What is it in my life right now that needs to hear this word?” After reading, allow several moments of silence to explore thoughts, perceptions, and sensory impressions. If the passage is a story, perhaps ask yourself, “Where am I in this scene? What do I hear as I imagine myself in the story or hear these words addressed specifically to me? How does this story connect with my own life experience?”

**RESPOND (*oratio*).** Read the passage once again, and listen for your own response. In the moments of silence that follow this reading, allow a prayer to flow spontaneously from your heart. At this point you are entering into a personal dialogue with God. You might also listen to see if God is inviting you to act or respond in some way to the word you have heard. You might find it helpful to write your prayers or to journal at this point.

**REST (*contemplatio*).** In this final reading, you are invited to return to a place of rest in God. You have given your response, and now you move into a time of waiting and resting in God’s presence. This is a posture of being yielded and open to God.

**RESOLVE (*incarnatio*).** The culmination of the lectio process is resolving to live out the word that you have received from God, committing to carry this word with you each day and to live it out in the context of daily life and activity. As you continue to listen to the word throughout the day, God will lead you into new ways of understanding what it means to have the word “live” in you. You may even want to select an image or a picture or a symbol that you can carry around with you as a constant reminder of the word that was given to you.

**Source:**

Ruth Haley Barton’s book *Sacred Rhythms*.

# MONDAY

## Exodus 20:1-17

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In Exodus 20, which are the shortest commandments? Which is the longest? Which are the ones we keep? Which is the one that we most often break?

My guess is that you answered that we keep the shorter commandments; but keeping the longest (v. 8-11)—that is a different story. Note, by the way, who is to keep the longest commandment. Just the Israelites? No. Not only were the Israelites to keep the commandments, but also their slaves, their animals, even the foreigners residing in their towns. God not only graciously gives us the gift of Sabbath, He asks us to give it to others as well. Why was this command so important, and why is it one that even Christians have a difficult time keeping?

Some will quote Jesus saying that we no longer need to keep this command because Jesus did not keep it. He did not keep it according to the “letter” of the pharisaical traditional law, but He did honor the Sabbath, saying that man was not made for the Sabbath, but Sabbath was made for man (Mark 2:27). The Sabbath is a gift that God gives to man, a gift we often leave unopened.

Others will quote Paul and say that it does not make a difference on what day we worship God (Romans 14:5-6). Some were keeping the Jewish Sabbath; others were gathering on the First Day of the week to celebrate the resurrection. When Paul says that days don't matter,

he is not saying we do not need to keep a Sabbath; he is just saying that we do not need to keep a particular day as “Sabbath.”

Sabbath is meant to bring order to our lives. One author I read stated that in a blizzard if one leaves the house to go to the barn, for example, one might tie one end of a rope onto a house and hold on firmly to the other end so that they do not get disoriented and lose their way home. The Sabbath is a rope that enables us—in the midst of all the demands of this broken world—to be drawn back home to God, to not lose sight of what is really important and what reality is really like.

Pete Scazzero says: “The Sabbath is the resetting of our entire lives towards a new destination—God. It is an entirely new way of being in the world.” (p. 141)

## Lenten Practice

Plan now how you will keep the Sabbath this weekend? When will you keep it? What will you do? What arrangements do you need to make in order to “stop working”? Spend some time with the Lectio Divina Scripture reading practice.

# TUESDAY

## Hebrews 4:1-13

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In Hebrews we are called to enter into God's rest, being reminded that the problem that existed over and over again in the Old Testament was that the Israelites continuously hardened their hearts against God. They did not listen; they did not enter into His rest.

The Hebrew slaves worked seven days a week for 400 years while in Egypt. God's gift to them upon their freedom was to take a day off. He provided them food, so they might enjoy and enter into a time of rest. Some have said that the reason the Babylonian exile was 70 years long was to make up for the number of years the Israelites failed to keep the Sabbath after entering into the Promised Land.

Sabbath is all about resting: resting from work, resting from worry, resting from living as if everything depended on our making it happen. All too often our over-productivity becomes counterproductive and, even worse, habit forming. We find ourselves exhausted; and then when trials blow our way, we have nothing to give.

When we keep the Sabbath, we are remembering that life is not about us; it is about God. God alone is the giver of all good gifts. God alone sends the sun and the rain. God alone enables the sun to come up tomorrow. God alone numbers our days. When we do not keep the Sabbath, we are

saying to God, “I do not trust You to provide. Unless I do it myself, it will not get done. If I don’t work, the world will fall apart. God, I want to be god; I want to do it my way, to play by my rules.”

Keeping a Sabbath is not about legalistically not “lifting a finger.” It is about stopping your normal routine and embracing your limits. It is about intentionally surrendering to God in trust. It is about turning our attention to God and enjoying all of His good gifts: family, friends, creation, play. What brings rest and renewal into your life?

## Lenten Practice

Reflect on these 12 areas of your spiritual life: Scripture, silence, prayer, study, Sabbath, simplicity, play, service, care for your physical body, emotional health, family, hospitality. Which are strengths that add to your ability to “rest”? Are there areas that need work? Over the next weeks and months, how might you specifically work on these? Continue with the Lectio Divina Scripture reading practice.

# WEDNESDAY

## Isaiah 40

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Earlier this week we read the Ten Commandments. The first two commandments involve not having other gods and not making idols. Oswald Chambers, in his devotional *My Utmost for His Highest*, says: “The people of God in Isaiah’s day had starved their imagination by looking on the face of idols, and Isaiah made them look up at the heavens; that is, he made them begin to use their imagination aright. ... The test of spiritual concentration is bringing the imagination into captivity. Is your imagination looking on the face of an idol? Is the idol yourself? Is it your work?” (devotional for February 10).

Oswald Chambers further states: “Remember whose you are and whom you serve. Provoke yourself by recollection, and your affection for God will increase tenfold. Your imagination will not be starved any longer, but will be quick and enthusiastic, and your hope will be inexpressibly bright.” (devotional for February 11).

By keeping the Sabbath we direct our gaze from the things of this world to the greatness of our God as we stop activity and take time to rest, as we intentionally delight in the things of God—His gifts and creation. As we contemplate and worship our God, our gaze is taken off our idols and placed onto the One who truly is worthy of our energy and devotion.



What excuses do you use for not keeping the Sabbath? I think one reason we have such a hard time keeping the Sabbath is because we see the Sabbath as 36 hours (from dinner one night until breakfast the day after) rather than 24 hours. The Hebrews kept the Sabbath from sundown on Friday to sundown on Saturday. I know of one pastor who keeps the Sabbath from the time he gets home on Sunday until that same time on Monday.

The issue is not what day of the week we keep the Sabbath, but that we intentionally redirect our gaze to our God and the gifts that He desires to bestow on us, that we accept and enjoy that Jesus truly has finished the work.

The problem with idol worship is that idols demand something from us. Our God does not demand; He gives Himself completely to us. Are we “working for” or enjoying our God?

## Lenten Practice

**Continue the practice of Lectio Divina, but why not also take a prayer walk today. As you walk up and down your block in the company of Jesus, pray in Jesus’ name for the people who live in each house. Ask Him to tell you what to pray for.**

# THURSDAY

**Daniel 1:6-21; 6:1-14**

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Ruth Haley Barton writes: “Christian tradition has a name for the structure that enables us to say yes to the process of spiritual transformation day in and day out. It is called a *rule of life*. A rule of life seeks to respond to two questions: Who do I want to be? How do I want to live? Actually, it might be more accurate to say that a rule of life seeks to address the interplay between these two questions: *How do I want to live so I can be who I want to be?*”

“St. Benedict was the first one to develop a rule of life, to help monks who were living in community to order their days very simply around three key elements of their life in God: prayer, study and work. St. Benedict’s Rule, like any rule of life, is simply a pattern of attitudes, behaviors and practices that are regular and routine and are intended to produce a certain quality of life and character.” (Barton, p. 147)

“Rule” can sound legalistic or like work. But actually, it is Greek for “*trellis*.” A trellis is a tool that enables a grapevine to get off the ground and grow upward, becoming more fruitful and productive. In the same way, a Rule of Life is a trellis that helps us abide in Christ and become more fruitful spiritually. The starting point and foundation of any Rule is a desire to be with God and to love Him. (Scazzero, p. 190)

Again, the Rule is not a legalistic document as much as it is the scheduling of various practices, rhythms, or spiritual disciplines in order to make sure we are positioning ourselves to grow and be transformed in Jesus. These practices can involve the reading of Scripture, silence and solitude, prayer, study, keeping the Sabbath, simplicity, play and recreation, service and mission, the care of our bodies, emotional health, family and community. (Scazzero, p. 194)

The issue is: Are we planning these elements into our lives? Are we being intentional? Because Daniel had a routine when the challenges came, he was prepared. The Sabbath, feasts, and worship practices in the Old Testament were meant to keep the Israelites focused and in relationship with God.

# Lenten Practice

Continue the practice of Lectio Divina.

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You also might go to [GlenkirkChurch.org/become](https://GlenkirkChurch.org/become) and prayerfully use this booklet to allow God to further guide you in “becoming a more fully devoted follower of Jesus.” After answering the questions in this booklet, please email the Spiritual Formation Team and let us know how we can help you to enable you to deepen your walk with Jesus ([become@glenkirkchurch.org](mailto:become@glenkirkchurch.org)). As with growth in any area of our lives, even growth in relationships, without intentionality it does not happen. Make a commitment during this season to be intentional.

# FRIDAY

## Psalm 46

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Wayne Muller writes: “Sabbath is not dependent upon our readiness to stop. We do not stop when we are finished. We do not stop when we complete our phone calls, finish our project, get through this stack of messages, or get out this report that is due tomorrow. We stop because it is time to stop.

“Sabbath requires surrender. If we stop only when we are finished with all our work, we will never stop—because work is never completely done. With every accomplishment there arises a new responsibility ... If we refuse rest until we are finished, we will never rest until we die. Sabbath dissolves the artificial urgency of our days, because it liberates us from the need to be finished ...

“We stop because there are forces larger than we that take care of the universe, and while our efforts are important, necessary, and useful, they are not (nor are we) indispensable. The galaxy will somehow manage without us for this hour, this day and so we are invited—nay, commanded—to relax, and enjoy our relative unimportance, our humble place at the table in a very large world ...

“Do not be anxious about tomorrow, Jesus said again and again. Let the work of this day be sufficient ...

“Sabbath says, Be still. Stop. There is no rush to get to the end, because we are never finished.”

Thomas Merton writes: “There is a pervasive form of contemporary violence ... activism and overwork. The rush and pressure of modern

life are a form, perhaps the most common form, of its innate violence. To allow oneself to be carried away by a multitude of conflicts and concerns, to surrender to too many demands. To commit oneself to too many projects, to want to help everyone in everything is to succumb to violence. The frenzy ... kills the root of inner wisdom which makes work fruitful.”

And then Pete Scazzero adds: “When this happens, we do violence to ourselves, and we are unable to love others through the love of Jesus.”

(The quotes by Wayne Muller and Thomas Merton for today’s devo were taken from *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Day by Day*, Pete Scazzero, Author, pages 124 and 128.)

## Lenten Practice

Spend some time journaling and using Lectio Divina. Set aside one hour today or tomorrow to pray. Does that seem like a long time? Spend 5 minutes on each of the following:

**PRAISE:** Recognize God’s nature.

**WAIT:** Silently surrender to God your anxieties, needs, plans and desires.

**CONFESSION:** Ask God how you have brought Him sorrow or hurt others.

**SCRIPTURE PRAYING:** Pray a word of Scripture to God or one of the psalms back to God.

**WATCHING:** Ask God what He might want you to see.

**INTERCESSION:** Pray for those you know in need.

**PETITION:** Give to God what is on your heart.

**THANKSGIVING:** Be specific—how has God shown up in your life, how has He blessed you.

**SINGING:** Spend 5 minutes expressing joy in worship to God.

**MEDITATION:** Choose an attribute of God and ponder the implications for your life.

**LISTEN:** Ask God if He wants to say anything to you.

**PRAISE:** Conclude by praising God for who He is.

## Sources:

- Pete Scazzero, *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality Day by Day* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2017).
- Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest* (Nashville, Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982)
- Ruth Haley Barton, *Sacred Rhythms: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2006).

