

A Time of Prayer: Listen

February 2024 Edition

LISTENING FOR DIVINE SPARKS: A BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

To facilitate group meetings in person or on Zoom, this month's Bible study is also offered as PowerPoint slides that can be downloaded and modified.

OPENING PRAYER

Living God, we praise you and give thanks for your loving care and guidance. As we listen for your divine sparks in our midst, help us remember that we are like trees planted by your life-giving water and keep our hearts and minds open to hear your desires for our diocesan church, our parish, and our community. In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Psalm 1

<i>New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised (NRSVA)</i>	<i>The Message (MSG)</i>
<p>1 Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffers; 2 but their delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law they meditate day and night. 3 They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper. 4 The wicked are not so, but are like chaff that the wind drives away. 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgement, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous; 6 for the Lord watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.</p>	<p>1 How well God must like you— you don't walk in the ruts of those blind-as- bats, you don't stand with the good-for-nothings, you don't take your seat among the know- it-alls. 2-3 Instead you thrill to God's Word, you chew on Scripture day and night. You're a tree replanted in Eden, bearing fresh fruit every month, Never dropping a leaf, always in blossom. 4-5 You're not at all like the wicked, who are mere windblown dust— Without defense in court, unfit company for innocent people. 6 God charts the road you take. The road they take leads to nowhere.</p>

LECTIO DIVINA

Ask someone to read the NRSVA translation of the passage aloud.

Allow for several minutes of silence as each bible study participant contemplates the passage, noticing which word(s), sentence(s), idea(s) or feeling(s) catch their attention. The group can decide how long the period of silence should last, but in the *Lectio Divina* tradition, it is substantial (a minimum of 3-5 minutes is suggested, perhaps working up to a longer interlude).

Invite participants to briefly share with one another those word(s), phrase(s), idea(s) or feeling(s) stirring them. Encourage participants to avoid interpreting or expanding on them at this time, but simply to state them out loud. Explain that time for reflection and discussion will follow later in the prayer time.

Have another person read the MSG translation of the passage aloud, followed by a second period of silence and invite participants to share again. The same or different word(s), phrase(s), idea(s) or feeling(s) may emerge.

Have a third person re-read the NRSVA version aloud again, followed by a final period of silence and invite participants to reflect on what they think is being drawn to their attention by the Holy Spirit. There are no right or wrong answers. It might be helpful to consider the following questions:

- *What is God saying to me about how to live fruitfully?*
- *How can our parish community help plant new trees by the streams of God's living water?*
- *What is God saying to our congregation and our diocesan church through this passage today?*

CLOSING PRAYERS

Gracious God, we listen for your divine sparks in our midst and seek to understand how you wish our parish and diocese to grow, nourished by the streams of your life-giving water. Show us the people to whom we should go, the path we should travel, and strengthen us for your service by your grace. Give us your wisdom so that we might bear fruit worthy of your kingdom. We ask this in the name of your beloved Son, **Amen**.

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.

CAPTURING THE DIVINE SPARKS KINDLED

- Consider whether there were sparks kindled during this prayer session. Ask a participant to write down any important ideas that emerged and ensure that there is group consensus around what is captured.
- Who do these sparks need to be shared with at this time? Find a way to share the insights gained with those who need to hear them.

COMMENTARIES

- In this commentary, Paul K.-K. Cho reflects on the role of Psalm 1 as a bridge between the books of the Old Testament, and on what that might tell us about “mediating on the law of the Lord.” Here is the link: <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/ordinary-30/commentary-on-psalm-1-17>
- Yolanda M. Norton reflects on what it means to meditate, suggesting “meditation then becomes active participation in the world in ways that demonstrate God’s presence in the world.” Here is the link: <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/ordinary-23-3/commentary-on-psalm-1-13>