

A Time of Prayer: Listen

March 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

Lord Jesus, you commissioned us to make disciples of all the nations and promised that you would be with us always: So guide our parish and diocese to see the peoples you would have us reach and empower us to be instruments of your saving work, for the glory of God. **Amen.**

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Matthew 28:16-20 - The "Great Commission"

<i>New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised (NRSVA)</i>	<i>The Message (MSG)</i>
<p>¹⁶ Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshipped him; but some doubted. ¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'</p>	<p>¹⁶⁻¹⁷ Meanwhile, the eleven disciples were on their way to Galilee, headed for the mountain Jesus had set for their reunion. The moment they saw him they worshiped him. Some, though, held back, not sure about <i>worship</i>, about risking themselves totally. ¹⁸⁻²⁰ Jesus, undeterred, went right ahead and gave his charge: "God authorized and commanded me to commission you: Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you. I'll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age."</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 my discipleship?*
- *What is being said about the community around us?*
- *What is God saying to our congregation and our diocesan church through this passage today?*

CLOSING PRAYERS

O Holy God, you breathe your life-giving Spirit into this parish and diocese and call us to join together in mission for the spreading of the Gospel: show us the people to whom we should go and the path we should travel; help us to understand the deep longings of their hearts, and enable us to feed them through the living presence of Jesus Christ our Saviour, in whose power we set forth and in whose Name we pray. **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.

ADDITIONAL BIBLE STUDY RESOURCES

- Osvaldo Vena writes, “Obedience to everything that Jesus has commanded them is more than accepting a certain dogma or doctrine. It is ... a command to be doers of the word that Jesus has spoken from God, and not simply hearers.” Read the brief commentary here: <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revise-common-lectionary/the-holy-trinity/commentary-on-matthew-2816-20-9>
- Richard Beaton writes, “There are four “alls” in this text ... These four “alls” capture much of what the paragraph intends to communicate and also the central message of the Gospel of Matthew.” Read the brief commentary here: <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revise-common-lectionary/the-holy-trinity/commentary-on-matthew-2816-20-3>