

A Time of Prayer: Listen

June 2024 Edition

LISTENING FOR DIVINE SPARKS: A BIBLE STUDY GUIDE FOR JUNE 2024

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

God of opportunity, you want to be in relationship with us, your creatures. You desire justice and peace. You never force yourself upon us, but invite us to join with you in co-creating a more just and peaceful world. Help us to hear your invitations, be they whispered or loud, and encourage us to respond to them with enthusiasm, joy and energy. We pray all this in the name of your Son, our Redeemer Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Rev 3:20-4:2 "Opportunity Knocks"

<i>New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised (NRSVA)</i>	<i>The Message (MSG)</i>
<p>Rev 3:20-4:2 20 Listen! I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me. 21 To the one who conquers I will give a place with me on my throne, just as I myself conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. 22 Let anyone who has an ear listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches.'</p> <p>4 After this I looked, and there in heaven a door stood open! And the first voice, which I had heard speaking to me like a trumpet, said, 'Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.' 2 At once I was in the spirit, and there in heaven stood a throne, with one seated on the throne!</p>	<p>20-21 "Look at me. I stand at the door. I knock. If you hear me call and open the door, I'll come right in and sit down to supper with you. Conquerors will sit alongside me at the head table, just as I, having conquered, took the place of honor at the side of my Father. That's my gift to the conquerors! 22 "Are your ears awake? Listen. Listen to the Wind Words, the Spirit blowing through the churches."</p> <p>4 Then I looked, and, oh!—a door open into Heaven. The trumpet-voice, the first voice in my vision, called out, "Ascend and enter. I'll show you what happens next."</p> <p>2 I was caught up at once in deep worship and, oh!—a Throne set in Heaven with One Seated on the Throne</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, As the passage is read a first time, notice which word(s), sentence(s), or image(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), sentence(s), or image(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. This time, ask participants to notice which word(s), sentence(s), or image(s) catch your attention, but also consider what idea(s), feeling(s) or reflections 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. Consider the following questions:

- *How can I open the door of my heart, mind, and life so that I can sit and commune with Christ?*
- *When have I recognised Christ coming to me and giving me the opportunity to invite Him into my heart and life more deeply?*
- *What are some of the doors God is calling our congregation and our diocesan church to open as we hear 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.¹

¹ Prayers from “Litany for the Mission of the Church” (Episcopal Church’s *The Book of Occasional Services*, 2018.)

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

- "I stand at the door and knock..." In this five-minute video, Michelle Sibanda of the South African School of Theology puts Revelation 3:20 in helpful context, inviting us to look at this verse as more than a personal invitation to salvation. Watch the five-minute video here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xTzEd6XExIM>