

# A Time of Prayer: Listen

July 2024 Edition

## LISTENING FOR DIVINE SPARKS: A BIBLE STUDY GUIDE FOR JULY 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

Heavenly Creator, thank you that we have been placed into the Body of Christ by faith. May we draw on the example of those faithful disciples who obeyed your Word. We pray that, like them, we may devote ourselves to apostolic teaching, Christian fellowship, the breaking of bread and earnest prayer. May we seek to share the truth of the glorious gospel of the grace of God with everyone we meet, in humility and love. This we ask in Jesus' name, **Amen.**

### SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

#### Acts 2:41-47 “Becoming Disciples”

<i>New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised (NRSVA)</i>	<i>The Message (MSG)</i>
<p>41 So those who welcomed his message were baptized, and that day about three thousand persons were added. 42 They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.</p> <p>43 Awe came upon everyone, because many wonders and signs were being done by the apostles. 44 All who believed were together and had all things in common; 45 they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need. 46 Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, 47 praising God and having the goodwill of all the people. And day by day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.</p>	<p>That day about three thousand took him at his word, were baptized and were signed up. They committed themselves to the teaching of the apostles, the life together, the common meal, and the prayers.</p> <p>Everyone around was in awe—all those wonders and signs done through the apostles! And all the believers lived in a wonderful harmony, holding everything in common. They sold whatever they owned and pooled their resources so that each person’s need was met. They followed a daily discipline of worship in the Temple followed by meals at home, every meal a celebration, exuberant and joyful, as they praised God. People in general liked what they saw. Every day their number grew as God added those who were saved.</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:

- *In what ways are we devoted to Christ's teaching, worship and prayer? Personally and as a congregation?*
- *How does this enrich our common life and equip us in the service of others?*
- *What could sharing resources with people in need look like today? What does this say to the people who are not members of our faith community?*

## 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.**<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> 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 the four steps helpful in identifying and capturing any divine sparks that have come up:
  1. Listening
  2. Capturing
  3. Sharing
  4. Acting
- 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

- Matt Skinner, Professor of New Testament at Luther Seminary, reflects on the idealism of the Christian community presented in this passage: "The idea of community simultaneously attracts and repels most of us. We long for the life-affirming benefits that community can bestow, but we resist the demands that community makes. No wonder that we find it difficult to know what to do with passages such as this one." Read the full article here:  
<https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/fourth-sunday-of-easter/commentary-on-acts-242-47-2>