

A Time of Prayer: Listen

August 2024 Edition

LISTENING FOR DIVINE SPARKS: A BIBLE STUDY GUIDE FOR AUGUST 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

O God of Love, your compassion fails none you created. Thank you for Jesus Christ and his example of a life that demonstrates how to live our daily discipleship. May we be instruments of your love, bringing you the pains of the sick, the injured, the weary, the heavy laden, those in sorrow or darkness, the hungry and weak. Grant us loving hearts and ready hands to help serve those in need among us. May our willingness to serve show our love and gratitude to you, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, **Amen.**

SCRIPTURE PASSAGE

Matthew 14:13-21 “Feeding the Five Thousand”

| <i>New Revised Standard Version, Anglicised (NRSVA)</i> | <i>The Message (MSG)</i> |
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| <p>13 Now when Jesus heard this, he withdrew from there in a boat to a deserted place by himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed him on foot from the towns. 14 When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. 15 When it was evening, the disciples came to him and said, ‘This is a deserted place, and the hour is now late; send the crowds away so that they may go into the villages and buy food for themselves.’ 16 Jesus said to them, ‘They need not go away; you give them something to eat.’ 17 They replied, ‘We have nothing here but five loaves and two fish.’ 18 And he said, ‘Bring them here to me.’ 19 Then he ordered the crowds to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to</p> | <p>When Jesus got the news, he slipped away by boat to an out-of-the-way place by himself. But unsuccessfully—someone saw him and the word got around. Soon a lot of people from the nearby villages walked around the lake to where he was. When he saw them coming, he was overcome with pity and healed their sick.</p> <p>Toward evening the disciples approached him. “We’re out in the country and it’s getting late. Dismiss the people so they can go to the villages and get some supper.”</p> <p>But Jesus said, “There is no need to dismiss them. You give them supper.”</p> <p>“All we have are five loaves of bread and two fish,” they said.</p> |

the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds. 20 And all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over of the broken pieces, twelve baskets full. 21 And those who ate were about five thousand men, besides women and children.

Jesus said, "Bring them here." Then he had the people sit on the grass. He took the five loaves and two fish, lifted his face to heaven in prayer, blessed, broke, and gave the bread to the disciples. The disciples then gave the food to the congregation. They all ate their fill. They gathered twelve baskets of leftovers. About five thousand were fed.

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:

- *What do we have in our hands to give to Christ that he can use to meet the needs of others?*
- *How could compassion transform the way I view other people and their circumstances?*
- *What is God saying to our congregation and our diocesan church as we read 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

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

- Alyce McKenzie, the George W. and Nell Ayers Le Van Professor of Preaching and Worship at Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University, invites us to “stand in the shoes of the disciples” and “obey Jesus' daring, ridiculous command. We are to offer our limited resources to him to bless and multiply, and take responsibility, not to hoard them for ourselves, but to distribute them to others.” <https://www.patheos.com/resources/additional-resources/2011/07/you-want-us-to-do-what-alyce-mckenzie-07-25-2011>

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