

Prayer: Finding Intimacy with God

Session 2: Guigo's Ladder: A Way of Ascent

HOME STUDY: our program is on FORMED: www.formed.org – Sign-up then Sign-in.

To sign-up for a FORMED account, use our SJN Parish subscription code: FPVD8M (all CAPS); set email & password.

- Locate our Study Program, “Lectio: Prayer”, one of these ways: 1) type “Lectio: Prayer” in the Search field then click on the result, or 2) click on the *Study tab*; then on *Bible Studies*; click on “Lectio: Prayer”.
- After arriving at “Lectio: Prayer”, scroll down & select ‘Session 2’ (28 mins)

★ Prayer

Lord Jesus Christ, you continually invite us
into a deeper encounter with you.
May we always respond eagerly to your invitation.
As we receive from you the gift of living
water in prayer, may our hearts and our lives
be transformed to reflect your glory.
Amen.

★ Introduction

“For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven.” (Ecclesiastes 3:1). The divine ordering of things is a truth that strikes a deep chord within us, no matter how much we like to be in control. This divine order is especially important when it comes to the divine encounter of prayer. As the author of Ecclesiastes continues in verse 7, there is “a time to keep silence, and a time to speak.” We will examine the specific order to our prayer dialogue, from God initiating the conversation through the stages of our response.

★ An Encounter with God – an Outline of the Video Discussion on FORMED:

I. Order of Prayer – God Speaks First

- Two ingredients – Word of God and our response
- Woman at the well (John 4:1-43) – Jesus speaks first, “Give me a drink”
- Shema* [Hear] (Deuteronomy 6:4-5) “Hear, O Israel...” – Israel is to listen
- Prayer requires a disposition of humility; the posture of a beggar
- God’s complaint to Israel is that they didn’t listen
- “You would have asked... [for] living water” (John 4:10)
 - God is the fountain of living waters (Jeremiah 2:13)
 - God’s people chose broken, dry cisterns
 - Samaritan woman leaves her water jar because she has found the living water in Jesus
- Order matters – God speaks first in the Scriptures, and then we respond

II. Guigo the Carthusian

- Lectio* – reading
- Meditatio* – meditation
- Oratio* – talking to God
- Contemplatio* – being with God

III. The Ladder of Prayer

- We have to start at the first rung
- “This ladder has few rungs, and yet its length is immense and wonderful, for its lower end rests upon the earth, but its top pierces the clouds and touches the heavens.” – *Guigo the Carthusian*

✦ Being Open to God This Week: Focus on One Item This Week ✦

Referenced Scripture is on the pages that follow.

1 Hear, O Israel. "... and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart... your soul... your might" – Dt 6:4-5

The most important prayer in the Jewish faith begins with a command for his people: "Hear, O Israel" (Dt 6:4-5). God comes looking for us and starts the dialogue as when he walked in the Garden of Eden looking for Adam and Eve and asking, "Where are you?" (Gn 3:8-9); when he set the burning bush ablaze, attracting Moses' attention and calling his name, "Moses, Moses!" (Ex 3:2-4); and as he did when he woke Samuel in the middle of the night calling, "Samuel, Samuel!" (1 Sm 3:3-5). Several times God called to Samuel, but Samuel does not recognize God's voice, responding, "Here I am," to Eli. But it is when he stops to listen that he finally hears and recognizes God's voice (1 Sm 3:10). We often ask, "How is it that the God of the universe would speak into my life, my day-to-day circumstances?" But this is exactly what God desires to do, if we would but listen. God won't let anything get in the way of drawing close to us in prayer.

- ✦ What is getting in your way of listening and responding?

2 Living Water. "He who believes in me... 'Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.'" – John 7:37-38

In the heat of the day, the Samaritan woman comes to draw water, but her physical thirst betrays a deeper spiritual thirst that she would rather overlook – a spiritual thirst, which only God can heal and quench. In Jeremiah 2:13, God laments that His people have forsaken Him, the living waters, for broken cisterns. The contrast is stark – one bringing and sustaining abundant life, the other stagnant and not continually replenished. In our own lives, we are often guilty of trying to replace the living water of God with cisterns of our own making.

- ✦ Do you make cisterns of your own? Try to make fruitful prayer happen on your own? Do you let God lead?
- ✦ How can you be more aware of prayer as a gift from God?
- ✦ What do these passages have in common? Psalm 65:9, Isaiah 12:3, Revelation 21:6 and Revelation 22:1-2

3 Lectio: Jesus and the Samaritan Woman. "...whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst" – John 4:3-14

The encounter between Jesus and the Samaritan woman at the well tells us a great deal about what prayer is supposed to be. Jesus shows his love and concern in reaching out to this woman, and he demonstrates God's incredible generosity in the precious gift he offers her. Each of us is invited to the same encounter.

Read John 4:3-14

- ✦ How many times are "Samaria" and "Samaritans" mentioned? How many references to thirst, drinking or water?
- ✦ What does the physical setting of this encounter tell you about how Jesus was likely feeling? The Samaritan woman?
- ✦ What is unique about the water that Jesus offers? What might it mean to never thirst after receiving the living waters?

4 Guigo and the Ladder of Prayer – "The Word of God is so read and meditated that it becomes prayer" (CCC 1177)

Guigo was a Carthusian monk in the twelfth century and is best known for his classic work on prayer, *Ladder of Monks*, in which he lays out four simple steps for praying with Scripture. 1) *Lectio* [reading] – prayer begins with a careful reading of God's Word (Psalm 119:103); 2) *Meditatio* [meditation] – we listen to what God is saying in the Scripture passage we read and it provides the material for our conversation (Psalm 1:2); 3) *Oratio* [prayer] – pouring out our hearts to God (Psalm 62:8); 4) *Contemplatio* [contemplation] – rest in God's presence and experience the joy and peace that come from him (Psalm 27:4)

- ✦ Why must the ladder of prayer begin with Scripture?
- ✦ How might the practice of praying with Scripture help fulfill St. Paul's exhortation to "pray constantly" (1 Thes 5:17)?

5 Truth and Beauty. "[Jesus] discusses the most profound mysteries of God with her. He speaks to her of God's infinite gift of love." (*Mulieris Dignitatem*, 15) – St. John Paul II

Jesus was in Jerusalem for the Passover. While there, he drove the moneychangers and those selling animals for sacrifice out of the temple – those responsible for caring for the Temple, God's house, were treating it as a house of trade. The noise and concerns of the world had invaded the sacred space of encounter between God and his people. As he left to return to Galilee, Jesus passed through Samaria, not a necessity of geography: a Jew would normally avoid Samaria. But Jesus was going about his Father's business, and God's divine plan was that Jesus be at Jacob's well to encounter a Samaritan woman in need of his gift of living water. God will stop at nothing to make himself available to us. Why is she surprised that Jesus asks her for a drink? What does His willingness to talk to her and St. John's comment on the "necessity" of Jesus passing through Samaria teach us about prayer?

- ✦ Journal your ideas, questions or insights about this lesson. Write down thoughts you had that may not have been mentioned in the text. List any personal applications you got from the lessons. What challenged you the most?

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References in the 'Outline of the Video Discussion' on Page 1

John 4:1-43

¹ Now when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptizing more disciples than John ²(although Jesus himself did not baptize, but only his disciples), ³ he left Judea and departed again to Galilee. ⁴ He had to pass through Samar'ia. ⁵ So he came to a city of Samar'ia, called Sy'char, near the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.

⁶ Jacob's well was there, and so Jesus, wearied as he was with his journey, sat down beside the well. It was about the sixth hour.

⁷ There came a woman of Samar'ia to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." ⁸ For his disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. ⁹ The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samar'ia?" For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. ¹⁰ Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him and he would have given you living water." ¹¹ The woman said to him, "Sir, you have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep; where do you get that living water?" ¹² Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, and his sons, and his cattle?" ¹³ Jesus said to her, "Every one who drinks of this water will thirst again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life." ¹⁵ The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw."

¹⁶ Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." ¹⁷ The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; ¹⁸ for you have had five husbands, and he whom you now have is not your husband; this you said truly." ¹⁹ The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet." ²⁰ Our fathers worshiped on this mountain; and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship." ²¹ Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. ²² You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for such the Father seeks to worship him. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." ²⁵ The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ); when he comes, he will show us all things." ²⁶ Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."

²⁷ Just then his disciples came. They marveled that he was talking with a woman, but none said, "What do you wish?" or, "Why are you talking with her?" ²⁸ So the woman left her water jar, and went away to the city, and said to the people, ²⁹ "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" ³⁰ They went out of the city and were coming to him.

³¹ Meanwhile the disciples begged him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." ³² But he said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know." ³³ So the disciples said to one another, "Has any one brought him food?" ³⁴ Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to accomplish his work." ³⁵ Do you not say, 'There are yet four months, then comes the harvest?' I tell you, lift up your eyes, and see how the fields are already white for harvest. ³⁶ He who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. ³⁷ For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' ³⁸ I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor; others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."

³⁹ Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did." ⁴⁰ So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. ⁴¹ And many more believed because of his word. ⁴² They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of your words that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world."

⁴³ After the two days he departed to Galilee.

Deuteronomy 6:4-5

"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might."

Jeremiah 2:13

"for my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters and hewed out cisterns for themselves, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.

1 References Supporting Exercise 1

Deuteronomy 6:4-5 (see above)

Genesis 3:8-9

And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?"

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1 Continued from previous page

Exodus 3:2-4

And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked and behold, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, "I will turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt." When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here I am"

1 Samuel 3:3-5

The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down within the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was. Then the Lord called, "Samuel! Samuel!" and he said, "Here I am!" and ran to Eli, and said, "Here I am, for you called me." But he said, "I did not call; lie down again."

1 Samuel 3:10

And the Lord came and stood forth, calling as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant hears."

2 References Supporting Exercise 2

John 7:37-38

On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and proclaimed, "If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink. He who believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water.'"

Jeremiah 2:13 (see above)

Psalms 65:9

You visit the earth and water it, you greatly enrich it; the river of God is full of water; you provide their grain, for so you have prepared it.

Isaiah 12:3

With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation.

Revelation 21:6

And he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty I will give water without price from the fountain of water of life."

Revelation 22:1-2

Then he showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.

3 References Supporting Exercise 3

John 4:3-14 (see above)

4 References Supporting Exercise 4

CCC (1177)

The hymns and litanies of the Liturgy of the Hours integrate the prayer of the psalms into the age of the Church, expressing the symbolism of the time of day, the liturgical season, or the feast being celebrated. Moreover, the reading from the Word of God at each Hour (with the subsequent responses or *troparia*) and readings from the Fathers and spiritual masters at certain Hours, assist in understanding the psalms, and prepare for silent prayer. The *lectio divina*, where the Word of God is so read and meditated that it becomes prayer, is thus rooted in the liturgical celebration.

Psalms 119:103

How sweet are your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

Psalms 1:2

But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night.

Psalms 62:8

Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us.

Psalms 27:4

One thing have I asked of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.

1 Thessalonians 5:17

Pray constantly.