

Week of October 25: Ephesians 2:11-22

Seeing Jesus:

Encountering Him in the Epistles



Introduction

About once a month we will be looking at different pictures of who Jesus is in the Epistles. These weeks, rather than doing a traditional Bible Study, we will use different methods of engaging with Scripture.

This week we will use a method called *Lectio Divina*, or Spiritual Reading. This is a way of prayerfully reflecting on Scripture.

The idea of reflecting or meditating on God's word is something that is found in the Psalms. In Psalm 1:2 and Psalm 119:97 the psalmist speaks about meditating on God's law and statutes. Meditating here is a prayerful pondering of God's word. It is thinking about God's truth and committing to live it out.

This practice was used in the early church as well. The most notable example of this was in the 6th century when it was used by Benedict of Nursia in his Benedictine monasteries. It became standard practice for monks to be either reading scripture or hearing it read to them for a few hours each day. Benedict believed it was important to spend time reflecting on God's word.

How to read Scripture in this way

In *Lectio Divina* the scripture passage is read aloud four times and each time the focus is a bit different:

- 1) **First reading:** Listening for a word
 - During this first reading, we listen to the Scripture and pay attention to what word or phrase stands out to us.

- 2) **Second reading:** Listening to reflect
 - After the second reading we reflect on or 'weight' the word or phrase. Why did this part stand out to you? What is God saying to you in this?

- 3) **Third reading:** Your word back to God
 - Silently respond to God in prayer. Ask him how he would have you live this out.

- 4) **Fourth Reading:** Listening to be with God
 - In this fourth reading the aim is simply to be in God's presence. Spend time resting in the truth you heard and internalizing the message.

Study Instructions

Step 1: Reading and Reflecting

Read the Ephesians passage out-loud four times. You could have one person read all four times, or you could ask different group members take turns.

Remind people of what they are to do during each reading (ie: first reading - listening for a word or phrase, etc.)

Allow for a few minutes of silence after each reading (3-5 min)

If you're meeting over Zoom, you might want to encourage people to turn their cameras off during this part.

Step 1: Reading and Reflecting

Text: Ephesians 2:11-22

11 Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (which is done in the body by human hands)— **12** remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. **13** But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, **15** by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, **16** and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. **17** He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near.

18 For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God’s people and also members of his household, **20** built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. **21** In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. **22** And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Step 2: Sharing

Allow time for people to share about their experience of this if they would like to.

Step 3: Prayer

Spend some time praying for each other out of what God has said.

If your group is large, try breakout rooms to give more people the chance to share.