## Session 8. Called by the God *Within*

**Supplies Needed**

* Leader: Chapter 8 in *The Stories We Live*
* Participants: *The Stories We Live.*
* Participant Handout: “Paying Attention to God in Daily Life”
* Equipment for viewing video (optional)

#### Opening Prayer (2mins)

Welcome everyone by name as they enter. You may wish to provide nametags or table tent name cards for your group members.

Open the session with a prayer. You may wish to use this prayer or another of your choosing.

*In my heart I have known*

*such intimacy with you Lord,*

*known you are always within my reach.*

*I have heard your glorious whisper*

*breaking through the clamor*

*of the world in which I move,*

*spent time in silent worship*

*in places of tranquility and peace.*

*But there are moments*

*when deep in my soul*

*you seem so far away,*

*when the moments of my day*

*are consumed by my own self-interest*

*ambition and pride,*

*when my heart judges*

*and declares my guilt.*

*Draw me close again,*

*restore the love I first knew*

*that I might worship you*

*in spirit and truth*

*not only with my lips*

*but with each moment of my day.*

Faith and Worship: <http://www.faithandworship.com/prayers_Christian_calling.htm#ixzz5QbXFu2MD>

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#### Part 1. Introduction (2 mins)

Introduce the concept of *called by the God within* using this information from Kathleen Cahalan:

God’s callings can come to you in many ways—through others, through recognizing your gifts in service and work that make a difference for others, in your sorrows and pain, and at times in your dreams. But the call within takes some effort on your part. You have to attend to and build your capacity to listen to the One who dwells within you.

God comes to dwell within our midst, abiding within us, and God calls each of us to abide within the One Holy Mystery. The call within is God’s sheer graced goodness, a gift of pure love, a boundless power that is source and destiny.

But how? The call within is often difficult to hear because of the many distractions that keep you from listening to this source. How do you cultivate your awareness of the divine presence within you? How do you pray and listen?

​(From: *The Stories We Live: Finding God's Calling All Around Us*. Kathleen Cahalan. Eerdmans, 2017.)

#### Part 2. Explore: Cultivating Awareness through Spiritual Practices (30 mins)

In our session today, we’ll explore a couple of ways you might use to cultivate an awareness of the divine presence within and listen for God’s guidance in your life. We’ll explore the practices of **The Prayer of Examen** and **Lectio Divina**, or Holy Reading.

**The Prayer of Examen (12-15 min)**

If you were a part of the GIFT night on Oct 10, you will remember that we did a form of the Prayer of Examen in small groups. We shared our highs and lows, and then prayed for one another. In our session today, we’ll experience a slightly different form of the Prayer of Examen.

As the leader, you may elect to lead your group in the Examen using the handout “Paying Attention to God in Daily Life” or you might wish to experience the Examen through a guided video available at <http://bit.ly/praytheday> and on the thumb drive in the classrooms. While the premise is the same, each methodology is slightly different. Review each option and choose the one you feel is best for your group.

Whether you use the video or the handout, begin by lighting a candle, and spending a few moments in silence.

This form of the Examen is adapted from The Art of Discernment: Spiritual Practices for Decision-Making by Elizabeth Liebert.

The Prayer of Examen helps us look for traces of God’s actions in our daily life, individually or as a household. It is usually done in the evening, looking back over the day, or it can be done as a household at the evening meal. Allow between five and fifteen minutes for this spiritual exercise. Eliminate distractions during this time: no TV, radio, phones, social media, etc. This is a time of quiet to spend alone or with each other in the presence of God.

Light a candle and spend a few moments in silence, recognizing God’s presence with you.

Note the gifts God has given you today. Give thanks for all God’s gifts and benefits.

Pause for reflection.

Ask God that this reflection be a time of special grace and revelation. You can use these words:
Be near us now Lord. Let us look together at the day.

Pause for reflection.

Review the day with God. Look at the stirrings of your heart, your thoughts, your choices as the day progressed. Which have been of God? Which not? What does God want to say to you about both?

Pause for reflection.

Give God thanks and ask for forgiveness for any failure or omission, and for healing from their effects. Use these or similar words:

Gracious God, everything is a gift from you.
I give you thanks and praise for the gifts of today, such as ….
I ask your forgiveness and mercy for ….
I ask your healing in ….

Pause for reflection.

Look forward to the next day, and plan concretely with God how to live it according to God’s desire for your life. Ask for the graces you desire for tomorrow.
​
Lord God, continue to be present with me in my life each day.

Pause for reflection.

Lord God, thank you for your Presence and your guidance. By your grace, enable me to continue to be present to your Presence in my life. Amen.

**Lectio Divina (15 min)**

Lectio Divina(Latin for “divine reading” or “holy reading”)is an ancient practice of prayerful meditation of Scripture in which one listens to what Christ has to say. Lectio Divina is primarily for the soul, not the head; rather than studying or analyzing scripture, it is a way of praying scripture. In Lectio Divina, we listen for the voice of Christ as we seek to cultivate our relationship with him.

There are four basic steps in Lectio Divina:

1. **Lectio (reading).** A slow, meditative reading of Scripture. Passages best suited for lectio are generally shorter (6-8 verses) and include lots of imagery or tell a story.
2. **Meditatio (meditation).** Ruminating and reflecting on a “shimmering” word or phrase. Why did it stand out? Why did it strike your heart?
3. **Oratio (prayer).** Prayerful response to the word. Tell God how you feel.
4. **Contemplatio (contemplation).** Resting in God in silence – without words, thoughts, or images.

Today, we will be experiencing a group form of lectio as outlined by Norvene Vest in her book *Gathered in the Word*. The directions below will walk you through the process. A guide sheet is provided at the end of this lesson plan, which you may find helpful in leading your group in this experience of Lectio Divina.

Ideally during this experience, you will have three different voices read the scripture passage. If you don’t have three willing readers, the leader can read each time. If your group is not familiar with this practice, it’s best to stick with the same translation for all the readings. You can simply pass the Bible from one reader to another.

Invite the group into an experience of lectio divina.

Scripture: I Kings 19: 11-13 (or another passage of your choosing).

**11The Lord said, “Go out and stand on the mountain before the Lord, for the Lord is about to pass by.” Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake; 12and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. 13When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.**

1. Prepare: Take a moment to come fully into the present. Sit comfortably alert, close your eyes, and center yourself with your breathing.
2. Hear the word that is addressed to you: Someone reads the passage aloud twice, slowly and with intentionality. Listen for the word or phrase from the passage that attracts you (a “shimmering word”). Repeat it over softly to yourself during a one minute silence after each reading. When the leader gives the signal, each person say aloud only that word or phrase (without elaboration).
3. Ask, “How is my life touched?” A second person reads the passage once. Listen to discover how this passage touches your life today. Consider possibilities or receive a sensory impression during two minutes of silence after the reading. When the leader gives the signal, each person speaks a sentence or two perhaps beginning with the words I hear, I see, I sense. (Or you may pass.)
4. Ask, “Is there an invitation here?” (for you). A third person reads the passage once. Listen to discover a possible invitation relevant to the next few days. Ponder it during a few minutes of silence. When the leader gives the signal, speak of your sense of invitation. (Or you may pass.)
5. Pray (for one another’s ability to respond). Pray, aloud or silently, for God to help the person on your right respond to the invitation received. Conclude the time by praying the Lord’s Prayer aloud as a group.

#### Part 3. Evaluate Your Experience (10 mins)

Remind your group about the capstone GIFT night next Wednesday, Nov 14. We will have a social time at 6pm in the Wesley Center followed by our intergenerational program for all ages at 6:30pm.

Use the attached evaluation form (PDF) to share your feedback about this study of *The Stories We Live*. Please collect the surveys at the end of your time and leave them in your classroom for collection.

#### Closing Prayer (2 mins)

Close with the prayer below or a prayer of your choosing.

Your light is the only light I need as I travel through life's mystery. Your word the only voice I hear, that still small voice that leads me to the place where I should be.Your presence is the only company I need, as I walk this narrow road.Your fellowship the warmth I crave to help me on my way

Faith and Worship: <http://www.faithandworship.com/prayer_journey.htm#ixzz5QbYEsQpk>
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## The Prayer of Examen

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The Prayer of Examen helps us look for traces of God’s actions in our daily life, individually or as a household. It is usually done in the evening, looking back over the day, or it can be done as a household at the evening meal. Allow between five and fifteen minutes for this spiritual exercise. Eliminate distractions during this time: no TV, radio, phones, social media, etc. This is a time of quiet to spend alone or with each other in the presence of God.

**CENTERING**

Light a candle and spend a few moments in silence, recognizing God’s Presence with you.

**THANKSGIVING**

Note the gifts God has given you today. Give thanks for all God’s gifts and benefits.

Pause for reflection.

**REVIEWING**

Ask God that this reflection be a time of special grace and revelation. You can use these words:
Be near us now Lord. Let us look together at the day.

Pause for reflection.

Review the day with God. You might begin with your first thoughts and actions upon waking and move through the day in your memory. Look at the stirrings of your heart, your thoughts, your choices as the day progressed. Which have been of God? Which not? What does God want to say to you about both?

Pause for reflection.

**SURRENDERING**

Give God thanks and ask for forgiveness for any failure or omission, and for healing from their effects. Use these or similar words:

Gracious God, everything is a gift from you.
I give you thanks and praise for the gifts of today, such as ….
I ask your forgiveness and mercy for ….
I ask your healing in ….

Pause for reflection.

**LOOKING FORWARD**

Look forward to the next day, and plan concretely with God how to live it according to God’s desire for your life. Ask for the graces you desire for tomorrow.
​
Lord God, continue to be present with me in my life each day.

Pause for reflection.

Lord God, thank you for your Presence and your guidance. By your grace, enable me to continue to be present to your Presence in my life. Amen.

## Lectio Divina for Groups

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**PREPARE**

You may wish to light a candle as a reminder of God’s Presence. Take a moment to come fully into the present. Sit comfortably alert, close your eyes, and center yourself with your breathing.

**FIRST READING -** Hear the word that is addressed to you.

Someone reads the scripture passage aloud twice, slowly and with intentionality. Listen for the word or phrase from the passage that attracts you (a “shimmering word”). Repeat it over silently in your spirit during a one minute silence after each reading.

 **---SILENCE (One Minute)---**

Following the silence, when the leader gives the invitation, each person says aloud only that word or phrase (without elaboration).

**SECOND READING -** Ask, “How is my life touched?”

A second person reads the passage once. Listen to discover how this passage touches your life today. Consider possibilities or receive a sensory impression during two minutes of silence after the reading.

 **---SILENCE (Two Minutes)---**

When the leader gives the invitation, each person speaks a sentence or two perhaps beginning with the words I hear, I see, I sense. (Or you may pass.)

**THIRD READING -** Ask, “Is there an invitation here?” (for you).

A third person reads the passage once. Listen to discover a possible invitation relevant to the next few days. Ponder it during a few minutes of silence.

**---SILENCE (Three-Four Minutes)---**

When the leader gives the invitation, speak of your sense of invitation. For example, you might say something like “I feel God inviting me to let go of resentment for a situation at work.” (Or you may pass.)

**PRAY** for one another’s ability to respond.

During a few minutes of silence, pray silently for God to help the person on your right respond to the invitation received. If the group is comfortable with it, you may pray aloud for one another as well.

Conclude the time by praying the Lord’s Prayer aloud as a group.