

BIBLE STUDY

Session 7

Directing Imagination

This is the final session on Bible Study. This session will focus on practicing using our imagination when listening to Biblical stories. The benefits of using directing imagination when you approach scripture is that it helps you deal with scripture at both a conscious and subconscious level. The more vividly you are able to imagine these scenes, the more deeply the story will imbed itself into your memory. Unlike other sessions, Pastor Rebecca will actually guide participants through a Directing Imagination exercise in the video segment. Be prepared to pause the video where prompted.

Opening Activities



Centering Moment

Light a candle and observe 30 seconds of silence as a reminder of God's presence among us.



Luke 1:24-25

After this his wife Elizabeth became pregnant and for five months remained in seclusion. "The Lord has done this for me," she said. "In these days he has shown his favor and taken away my disgrace among the people."



Reflect

Imagine you're an elderly woman like Elizabeth. What are your thoughts when you discover you are pregnant at your age? Why do you go into seclusion? What are you pondering and praying about during these five months? Can you relate with Elizabeth in any way?



Opening Prayer:

Gracious Lord, we forget sometimes that the people we read about in scripture were human beings just like us - having the same emotions, thoughts, and fears. As we read the stories of your people, help us to recognize how you are speaking to us through them. Amen.



Music (optional)

Sing or listen to "My Soul Proclaims Your Greatness" (The Magnificat)



Share

Share with one another any thoughts from last weeks' exercises or session.



Watch: Bible Study - Directing Imagination



Discuss

- What was this experience like for you? Have you ever read scripture this way before? What new insights did it possibly open up for you?



Group Bible Study - Directing Imagination

Read all the way through Luke 18:35-42

As he [Jesus] approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging. When he heard a crowd going by, he asked what was happening. They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." Then he shouted, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Those who were in front sternly ordered him to be quiet; but he shouted even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" Jesus stood still and ordered the man to be brought to him; and when he came near, he asked him, "What do you want me to do for you?" He said, "Lord, let me see again." Jesus said to him, "Receive your sight; your faith has saved you." Immediately he regained his sight and followed him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, praised God.

Now read it verse by verse, pausing to ask questions:

As he approached Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the roadside begging.

Imagine you are the blind man sitting by the side of the road. Close your eyes to feel the darkness of being sightless. Feel the heat of the sun on the rocks beneath you. Why are you begging? Where is your family?

What caused you to lose your sight? In the distance you hear a crowd of people approaching. What are they saying? What grabs your attention?

When he heard a crowd going by, he asked what was happening. They told him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by."

What do you know about Jesus? Do you stay seated or try to stand?

If you're in the crowd, what are your thoughts about the blind man on the side of the road? About Jesus?

Then he shouted, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Those who were in front sternly ordered him to be quiet; but he shouted even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

You're a crowd member telling the man to be quiet. Why? How do you feel about this blind man who is yelling? Do you know him? Is he a stranger?

Imagine again you are the blind man. What would cause you to yell out to Jesus? How do you feel when the people tell you to be quiet? Why do you yell louder? Do recognize any of the voices trying to silence you?

Jesus stood still and ordered the man to be brought to him; and when he came near, he asked him, “What do you want me to do for you?”

Imagine you are Jesus. You hear the sound of someone calling your name in the midst of the crowd. How do you feel about the crowd? When you come near the blind man, what are your initial thoughts? Why do you ask him what he wants?

He said, “Lord, let me see again.” Jesus said to him, “Receive your sight; your faith has saved you.” Immediately he regained his sight and followed him, glorifying God; and all the people, when they saw it, praised God.

Imagine what it would be like to suddenly have sight again after years of being blind. Is it painful at first? Imagine how it feels when you walk out of a dark theater into bright sunlight. What does praising God look like for you?

If you're a person in the crowd - especially one who told the man to be quiet - what are your thoughts as you witness this?



Closing Prayer

Choose a prayer style that you have learned about to close.



Exercises To Do At Home

Practicing Directing Imagination Techniques

Imaginative readings are best suited to the Gospels. Visualize the event as if you were making a movie. Pay attention to the details: sights, sounds, tastes, smells, and feelings of the event. Lose yourself in the story; don't worry if your imagination is running too wild. At some point, place yourself in the scene and meet Jesus there.

John 4:1-42 Samaritan Woman at the Well

Read the story through once, then go through the story again more slowly and begin asking yourself these questions:

- *Imagine for a moment you are the woman. You've had five husbands. Why? What has happened in your life that has caused this? Were you discarded time after time for being barren? Were you widowed five times? What is life like for you in a society where women have few options and limited resources? Why are you going at noon instead of in the evening or morning when the other women go? What are you feeling as you approach Jesus? A man, sitting at a well where women typically gather? A Jewish man - remembering Jews and Samaritans don't typically get along all that well.*
- *What are your thoughts when Jesus - a Jewish man - asks you to draw water for him?*
- *Now imagine that you are Jesus. You are regarding this Samaritan woman who you know likely is skeptical of your motivations. What is the real issue that you see as she approaches and talks with you?*
- *You are the woman again. Jesus has just told you that he can give you water from a well that never runs dry. What are you thinking? What are you feeling?*
- *What do you feel when Jesus states he knows you have no husband and in fact have had five husbands?*
- *Jesus tells the woman: "believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will*

worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.”

- *How would you respond, as a Samaritan, to Jesus saying “You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews.”*
- *What does it mean to you, as a Samaritan, to hear that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah?*
- *Now imagine you are the disciples. You see Jesus hanging out at the well where women typically go, talking with... a Samaritan woman. What are you thinking? Why do you not question what Jesus is doing?*
- *Imagine you are the townspeople. What is your relationship to this woman? How do you view her? What are your thoughts when she tells you about Jesus?*

Additional scripture passage suggestions to contemplate using directing imagination:

- *Luke 19:1-10 - Jesus and Zacchaeus*
- *Mark 5:25-34 - Jesus and the woman with a hemorrhage*
- *Luke 10:25-37 - Good Samaritan*
- *Luke 15:11-32 - Prodigal Son*

As you read:

1. *Focus your heart and mind. God is present and your desire is to encounter God through your reading.*
2. *Read the passage twice, becoming familiar with the story and its details.*
3. *Sit quietly and close your eyes. Picture the scene. Where is it taking place? Who is there? What are the characters doing? What are the sights, sounds, smells? Are you observing the scene as an outsider, are you one of the characters? How do you feel? What do you think?*
4. *The scene may come to life for you in vivid detail. Or you may enter into it through verbally describing what you see, contemplating people’s words or actions. Engage with the scene and gain a more personal knowledge of Jesus.*
5. *As you conclude, take time to talk directly to Jesus. Speak whatever comes to your heart.*