

PRAYER

FINDING INTIMACY WITH GOD

LEADER'S RESOURCE GUIDE

SAMPLE



LECTIO™

UNVEILING SCRIPTURE AND TRADITION

TIM GRAY

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WELCOME TO LECTIO

Welcome to the *LECTIO* Study Series. In these sessions of *LECTIO*, your participants will begin to discover the profound importance, meaning, purpose, and beauty of Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition, as seen through the eyes of the Church.

LECTIO studies are designed for adult faith formation, to help unveil both Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. The Latin word *lectio* means “reading,” and often refers to a careful and prayerful reading of Scripture. These studies cover a wide variety of topics, including individual books or letters of the Bible, the lives and writings of the saints, Church teaching, and topics to help serve the formation of Catholics living out the call of the New Evangelization.

The Leader’s Resource Guide, Study Guide, and Session Videos are the three components you will be using for each *LECTIO* session. All three work together to enable a small group to receive the truth of the Catholic Faith and apply it to their everyday lives. We’ve found that when these resources are used along with your personal witness to the faith, you and your participants can better grow together in knowledge of the Faith and in relationship with Jesus Christ. By leading a *LECTIO* study, you can help participants encounter Jesus Christ and his Church in their own lives, and help them share the faith in the lives of others.

SOME OF THE WAYS TO USE LECTIO

- **Men’s & Women’s Groups:** For groups of men and women within the parish to grow in the faith through study, discussion, prayer, and service
- **Bible Study Groups:** To explore the profound connections between the Sacred Scriptures and the teachings of the Catholic Church
- **Before/After Mass:** To enrich Catholics’ understanding of the Faith and the mysteries of the Liturgy
- **Advent & Lent:** To enhance efforts for ongoing conversion, especially during the seasons of Advent and Lent
- **Catechist Training:** To give those who teach the faith in the parish a more complete and cohesive understanding of the Catholic Faith and to help them express the faith more clearly to those whom they teach
- **Small Christian Communities:** To deepen the growth of parishioners as they participate in a variety of subgroups and apostolates within the parish
- **Families:** As an in-home tool to help parents raise their children to be lifelong disciples of Jesus Christ
- **Individuals:** As a resource for anyone who wants to better understand the Catholic Faith and be equipped to better live it out and explain it to others

LEADING A LECTIO SESSION

The Study Guide takes participants step by step through each session, both the small group gathering and video teaching, as well as five days of follow-up study. The resources are carefully crafted to lead participants through an opening of their hearts and minds to God's Word and the Traditions of the Catholic Church.

The Leader's Resource Guide begins with an introduction of the key points to be covered in each session and includes suggested answers for each of the discussion questions.

WHAT YOU'LL FIND IN EACH LECTIO SESSION:

CONNECT

- 1. Opening Prayer:** For this study on prayer, we have chosen specific psalms as a way to grow together in the practice of praying with Scripture. Pope Benedict XVI called the psalms the "prayer book 'par excellence'" and "a school of prayer" for the faithful, and so they are particularly fitting prayers for this study. The Opening Prayer is in the Study Guide, so participants can follow along.
- 2. Introduction:** This brief overview of the topic, including the key points for the session, is also located in the Study Guide and should be read aloud following the Opening Prayer. This helps contextualize the topic, show its relevance for daily life, and inspires participants to delve into the particular aspect of the faith that is being presented.
- 3. CONNECT Questions:** These first "ice-breaker" questions are provided to get your group talking. As participants watch the video teaching, they will soon find that these questions connect to a theme or topic of the current session.

VIDEO

- 4. Video Teaching:** The video segments present teaching that delves into and makes relevant the Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition of the Catholic Church. The video teachings for the study on prayer are presented by Dr. Tim Gray, president of the Augustine Institute. The Study Guide includes a brief outline of the key points in the teaching.

DISCUSS

- 5. DISCUSS Questions:** Each video segment is followed by questions in the Study Guide to help participants discuss and apply what they have learned to their lives. If you have a large group, consider forming smaller groups for the discussion, with team members facilitating and keeping each small group on track.

We have included suggested answers for the DISCUSS Questions in this Leader's Resource Guide. Suggested answers can help to get a discussion started, bring greater clarity to the study topic, or answer a difficult question.

- 6. Memory Verse:** The participants are encouraged to memorize and reflect on a Scripture verse for every session so as to nurture the faith that has been deepened through your catechetical session.
- 7. Closing Prayer:** The Closing Prayer in your Study Guide has been chosen to reflect back to God an appropriate response to his loving action in the session.

8. For Further Reading: These additional resources will help participants to nurture their faith throughout the week.

9. Quotes, Tips, and Definitions: We have also included throughout the study additional Scripture passages, quotes from saints, and excerpts from other texts and documents such as the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* to help further understanding of a particular topic. You can choose to share this information during the session or direct the participants to it after the session.

COMMIT

The Study Guide includes five COMMIT reflections that will help participants more deeply explore the main topics of each session—and more firmly commit to following Christ in their daily lives. These reflections include more information on Sacred Tradition and Sacred Scripture, as well as topics such as geography, history, and art. These reflections will also include times of prayer, including the practice of Scripture meditation known as *lectio divina*.

AN OVERVIEW OF LECTIO DIVINA

Lectio divina is an ancient practice of enhancing one's prayer life through the power of God's Word. The term itself means "divine reading" of the Sacred Scriptures. It is our hope that by using these simple steps each day as they study Sacred Scripture in *LECTIO*, participants will develop an effective way to study and pray with God's Word and hear God's voice in their daily lives.

Here is a brief description of each step of *lectio divina* for your reference as you guide participants through the practice:

- **Sacred Reading of the Scriptures (*Lectio*):** The reading and rereading of the Scripture passage, with close attention to words, details, themes, and patterns that speak to you.
- **Meditation (*Meditatio*):** Meditating or reflecting on what you've read, to gain understanding. Allow the Holy Spirit to guide you as you spend time pondering what you have read and striving to understand it in meditation.
- **Prayer (*Oratio*):** A time to bring your meditative thoughts to God in prayer. Talk with God about how the connections and implications of your meditation on the Scripture affect your life and the lives of those around you.
- **Contemplation (*Contemplatio*):** A time of quiet and rest, when you become the receiver and listen to God's voice. Contemplation is a gift from God, not something we achieve on our own—so be patient as you practice this step and strive to be receptive to God's voice speaking into your life.
- **Resolution (*Resolutio*):** A call for resolution and action, inviting you to respond to the things you have read in Scripture and have prayed about and to put them into practice.

To learn more about *lectio divina*, refer to Dr. Tim Gray's book *Praying Scripture for a Change*, available at www.AscensionPress.com.

HOW TO LEAD SMALL GROUPS

The *LECTIO* Study Series Leader's Resource Guide provides opportunities for small group discussion. Leading a small group discussion does not mean you have to lecture or teach—a successful small group leader facilitates, getting group participants to interact with each other as they make new discoveries. Here are some tips to help you get started as you lead and facilitate your small group:

ENVIRONMENT

- **Make It Friendly:** Set up your meeting space so discussion and conversation happen naturally. Avoid sitting at tables or desks; instead arrange chairs in a circle or meet in a living room environment that encourages casual, friendly conversation. Choose a meeting space that's free of distractions and that offers a fair amount of privacy.
- **Be Tech-Ready:** Make sure you have WiFi or other technology requirements available in your chosen space. Set up and test your audio/video equipment in advance. Queue up videos so they're ready to go to avoid losing valuable discussion time.
- **Consider Refreshments:** Depending on your meeting time, consider offering a light snack so participants won't be distracted by a growling stomach. Even if you don't offer any food items, always have water available for participants.

LOGISTICS

- **Provide Name Tags:** Especially when you first begin meeting, have participants wear name tags so you can easily address them by name and other participants don't have to worry about trying to remember everyone's names.
- **Bring Supplies:** Always have extra pens on hand for people to take notes. Also consider having highlighter pens, paper, and extra materials or Bibles available for participants to use.
- **Be Prompt:** While you can encourage a time to mingle at the beginning of your meeting time, don't let it get out of control so you have to rush through materials and discussion. If people know you're dedicated to starting on time, they'll begin to arrive a bit early to socialize. Likewise, reserve your meeting space for 30 minutes after you're scheduled to end so people can mingle afterward. Be diligent in starting and ending on time.

BEFORE YOU MEET

- **Prepare:** Look over discussion materials and preview video segments before your meeting time. Go through the questions to make discoveries about how they apply to your own life—this will help you to be more credible as a leader.
- **Pray:** Take time to pray for group members individually and lift up any needs they've expressed during previous meetings. Pray specifically for the Holy Spirit to open the participants' hearts to spiritual growth, renewal, and new discoveries.
- **Evaluate:** As you get to know the needs of individuals and your group's dynamics, evaluate your discussion materials and highlight information or questions that you think would be particularly helpful and insightful for your group.

DURING THE MEETING

- **Set the Tone:** Let group members know from the beginning that your time together is meant to be for discussion and discovery, not lecture. Also remind participants that every question is welcomed and worthy of discussion.
- **Encourage Involvement:** Work to invite all participants to engage in discussion. Don't be afraid of periods of silence, especially during your first few meetings. If one person begins to dominate the discussion time or gets off track, kindly acknowledge the person and invite him or her to explore that topic more after your group time. Ask questions such as "What do the rest of you think?" or "Anyone else?" to encourage several people to respond.
- **Use Open-Ended Questions:** Use questions that invite thought-provoking answers rather than "yes" or "no," "true" or "false," or a one-word, fill-in-the-blank answers. As a leader, your job is to get participants to think about the topic and how the Scriptures and reflections can be relevant and applicable to their daily lives.
- **Affirm Answers:** People are often reluctant to speak up for fear of giving an incorrect answer. Affirm every participant by saying things such as "Great idea," "I hadn't thought of that before," or "That's a great insight." These types of phrases communicate that you value everyone's comments and opinions.
- **Avoid Advice:** Remember, you're acting as a facilitator—not a college professor or counselor. Instead of giving advice or lecturing, when appropriate offer how a Scripture passage or something in the video spoke to you personally, or give an example of how you've been able to apply a specific concept in your own life.
- **Be Flexible and Real:** Sometimes your group time may veer off-track due to something that's going on in our culture or your community (for example, a natural disaster strikes your area or a group member is experiencing a family tragedy). Use relevant topics as a time to model for participants how God is always with us and that we can seek guidance from Scripture, the Church's teachings, and the Holy Spirit in every situation. If you model relevant discussion and transparency, your group participants are more likely to do the same.
- **Transition to Life:** Toward the end of each session, transition discussions toward sharing how participants will apply what has been discussed to their lives in the upcoming week. Close your time together in prayer each time you meet. Invite participants to share requests, either verbally or in writing, so you know how you can pray for them throughout the week.

AFTER THE MEETING

- **Stick Around:** As the leader, make yourself available after your meeting time for questions, concerns, or further discussion on a topic that a participant may have been hesitant about during the scheduled time. If a question arises that has you stumped, admit that you don't have the answer and offer to contact someone who may be able to provide one, such as your parish priest, deacon, or someone else in your diocese.
- **Follow Up:** Making contact with group members during the week will strengthen your relationship. Call or email to see how they're doing at making lessons relevant in their own lives, give a quick encouragement to engage in daily Scripture reading and prayer, or recognize a birthday or anniversary.

SAMPLE 60-MINUTE SESSION

Below is the suggested outline for an hour *LECTIO* session. Use the time allotments as a guideline; the length of time spent on each section will vary from group to group.

	TIME	STEPS	OVERVIEW
CONNECT	2 minutes	Opening Prayer and Introduction	Begin with the Opening Prayer, then go over the Introduction of the session's key points.
	5 minutes	Review	Go over any follow-up questions that participants might have from the previous session's daily COMMIT reflections.
	10 minutes	CONNECT Questions	Present questions to introduce the topic for the current session.
VIDEO	30 minutes	Video	Play the video segments and then facilitate the DISCUSS questions that follow.
DISCUSS	10-15 minutes	DISCUSS Questions	After each video segment, facilitate discussion of the DISCUSS questions in large or small groups.
COMMIT	2 minutes	Summary and Closing Prayer	Summarize the main points from the study, and encourage participants to complete the daily COMMIT reflections.

SAMPLE 90-MINUTE SESSION

Below is the suggested outline for a hour-and-a-half *LECTIO* session. Use the time allotments as a guideline; the length of time spent on each section will vary from group to group.

	TIME	STEPS	OVERVIEW
CONNECT	5 minutes	Opening Prayer and Introduction	Begin with the Opening Prayer, then go over the Introduction of the session's key points.
	10 minutes	Review	Go over any follow-up questions that participants might have from the previous session's daily COMMIT reflections.
	10 minutes	CONNECT Questions	Present questions to introduce the topic for the current session.
VIDEO	30 minutes	Video	Play the video segments and then facilitate the DISCUSS questions that follow.
DISCUSS	20-30 minutes	DISCUSS Questions	After each video segment, facilitate discussion of the DISCUSS questions in large or small groups.
COMMIT	5 minutes	Summary and Closing Prayer	Summarize the main points from the study, and encourage participants to complete the daily COMMIT reflections.

SESSION 1

PRAYER: AN INTIMATE DIALOGUE

SESSION OVERVIEW

Read this overview in advance to familiarize yourself with the session.

Prayer is fundamental to the Christian life because we are created by God for an intimate and everlasting relationship with him. But a relationship can't be built or maintained without ongoing conversation with the other person. Despite how basic prayer is to a life of faith, it is not always easy. This session will explore the difficulties we experience in prayer and point us in the right direction of approaching prayer as a conversation.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches us that all prayer is a response to God's desire for us—prayer is an encounter that God initiates. When we experience difficulty and dryness in prayer, it's often a result of approaching prayer as a monologue rather than a dialogue. It's important to open our hearts and express our thoughts and feelings in prayer, but if we're only talking and not listening, then prayer cannot be a conversation. We speak to God in prayer, but we must also learn to engage God in silence, especially through the Scriptures. Listening to God speak through the Scriptures is the secret of the saints who mastered the art of prayer.

This session establishes the importance of approaching prayer as a dialogue and emphasizes that Scripture is the normative way in which God speaks to his people. These principles set the foundation for our study.



CONNECT

*Begin this session by leading the **Opening Prayer** and reading aloud the **Introduction**, both found in the Study Guide. Then discuss the following questions.*

What is your earliest memory of praying?

Memories might be from childhood, such as learning a formal prayer like the Our Father, listening to a parent pray out loud at mealtime or bedtime, or being encouraged to talk to God in their own words. Memories might also be from later in life, such as hearing someone else pray and feeling moved, reaching out to God (maybe even before really believing he exists), learning formal prayers, experiencing the Mass for the first time, etc.

If you had to define prayer for someone who had never heard of it, how would you explain it?

Explanations might include defining prayer as an encounter or a conversation with God, thinking of it as talking to a friend. Some might include explanations of formal prayers as both teaching us about God and as articulating our relationship with God. They also might include the rationale behind why we pray—to deepen our relationship with God and to seek and understand his will for our lives.



Play the video segment, which will last about 29 minutes. The Study Guide provides participants with a brief outline of the topics covered in the video teaching, along with the following discussion questions.



DISCUSS

After the video segment, discuss the following questions. Familiarize yourself with the comments after each question; these are meant to guide you in the conversation.

AN ENCOUNTER WITH GOD

1. What was one thing you heard for the first time or that was an “aha” moment for you?

Participants might not have realized that finding prayer to be difficult or even a somewhat unpleasant obligation was a common experience. They might not have realized they were treating prayer as a monologue rather than a dialogue. They might not have realized that when they read Scripture, God is speaking to them directly and personally.

2. What obstacles to prayer do you experience? How have you dealt with these in the past? How might approaching prayer as an encounter and a dialogue affect your experience?

There is no end to the obstacles we encounter in prayer: laziness, feeling like it isn't doing any good, simply being busy, setting unrealistic or unsustainable goals and giving up, feeling like we don't know how to pray and not knowing where to start, getting into a rut and not knowing how to get out, etc. Participants may have dealt with these by establishing a set time for prayer, by starting small in the amount of prayer time and in their expectations and increasing these over time, and by reading books or writings on prayer. Approaching prayer as a dialogue can change our focus from “prayer is my job/work” to “prayer is a relationship.”

3. Do you feel it is easy or difficult to hear God speaking directly to you in Scripture? Why?

Some participants may have grown up with the understanding that Scripture is meant to be personal—God's love letter to each of us—and so the idea of God speaking to them personally isn't new and may be easier. Others may be used to viewing Scripture as an ancient text and not taking it personally. Some may even feel it is presumptive to read Scripture as God's words directed to them. Some may get hung up on passages that don't seem to apply to them (like laws or genealogies in the Old Testament) and that might get in the way of hearing God in other passages.

*Direct participants to this session's **Memory Verse** in their Study Guides, and read it together. Then lead the **Closing Prayer**. Encourage participants to do the **COMMIT** reflections on their own before you meet again as a group.*



COMMIT

*The following are suggested answers to the questions participants will be asked to reflect upon in their daily **COMMIT** reflections.*



DAY 1 – THE IMPORTANCE OF PRAYER

Participants will explore the importance of prayer as seen in its repeated appearance throughout the Bible.

How do you keep Sunday, the Lord's Day, as a day of prayer? How does this influence the rest of your week?

The first way we keep Sunday as a day of prayer is by participating at Mass—we pray together with the rest of the Church to mark the day as holy and a day of prayer. Other ways may include special family prayer (perhaps a Rosary) or Scripture reading times on Sunday to foster the habit of prayer together. Keeping Sunday a restful day free from unnecessary work or busyness also makes space for prayer and for a spirit of restfulness and quiet that is more conducive to hearing God speak. Hopefully the prayers and readings of the Mass stick with us throughout the week, continuing to bear fruit—and perhaps prompting us to attend daily Mass if possible. Being especially aware of God and the importance of prayer on Sunday can help us improve our habit of prayer throughout the week.

Look up the following psalms: Psalm 73:28 and 105:1–4. Take a moment to recall and praise God for his many works in your own life.

In both these psalms, and many others, the psalmist exhorts us to “tell of all [God’s] wonderful works” and to give God thanks. In the monotony of daily life, we can forget the many blessings of God. Remembering these things, small and great, renews in us a spirit of joy and thanksgiving and draws us nearer to God.

What does your life of prayer have in common with prayer as lived throughout Salvation History?

Mass on Sundays and other Holy Days of Obligation corresponds with Israel’s liturgical feasts: worshiping God in community and responding together to his invitation to encounter him in prayer. As Catholics we pray the psalms in the Mass and in the Liturgy of the Hours and in many hymns and songs; this unites us with a tradition of prayer that is 3,000 years old. We also face many of the same challenges and difficulties that the Israelites faced in being faithful to God in prayer—and when we fail, as they did, God also calls us back to faithfulness.



DAY 2 – THE PROBLEM OF PRAYER

Participants will look at some of the things that make prayer difficult—especially too much talking on our part and not knowing how to listen.

What are some activities you know to be good and important, but that you simply don't like to do—the ones that always seem to get moved to the bottom of your “to do” list?

Some examples might include: flossing my teeth, going to the dentist, exercising, chores around the house such as vacuuming, folding laundry, or cleaning out the gutters, etc.

What is your greatest struggle with prayer right now?

Struggles might include being so busy that it's difficult to find time for prayer, not knowing how to pray, not feeling like it does any good, or even doubting the efficacy of prayer. When we encounter struggles in prayer, it's important to remember that a difficulty or struggle is not a defeat or failing—in fact, persevering through doubt, difficulty, etc. is virtuous, proving our love and faithfulness.

What are some things you can do to cultivate a habit of exterior and interior silence, and practice the art of patient listening?

Some ideas include setting limits on background noise—both audio and visual. Consider committing to a “media fast”—don't listen to the radio on your drive to work for a few days, or limit the time spent watching movies and videos, etc. Practice giving your full attention to whatever you are doing (no multitasking or daydreaming), and practice active listening in your conversations with friends and family (if you aren't really listening to God, maybe you're not listening 100% to others either). When thoughts or “to do's” interrupt your interior silence, practice setting those aside, maybe by writing them down so that you aren't anxious about forgetting them after your prayer time. Begin by setting small goals for silence and listening in prayer to start and increase slowly over time.



DAY 3 – LECTIO: “I THIRST”

Participants will reflect on Jesus' words from the cross, “I thirst,” and how they relate to prayer.

LECTIO

What need or desire does Jesus express in this passage? What does he receive?

Jesus expresses his thirst—both a need for something to satisfy his physical thirst and a passionate desire for each and every one of us. He receives vinegar or sour wine to drink.

What does Jesus give in this passage?

Jesus gives his life, and he gives up his Spirit. He also gives forth water and blood from his side (symbolizing the Sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist, which are received in Christ's Church; the water and blood are also proof that he really died, etc.).

What reason does St. John offer for presenting his testimony in this passage?

St. John says that his reason is “that you also may believe.” His whole account of the crucifixion is directed toward inspiring faith—inspiring us to respond to Christ's thirst for us.

MEDITATIO

From the cross Jesus said, “I thirst,” and in response he was given vinegar or sour wine—a common drink of the lower classes that, although cheap, was considered refreshing. What does Christ thirst for from you? What can you offer him on a daily basis? Weekly? Over the course of your whole life?

What Christ desires from each of us is our total gift of self to him. We may need to be offering Christ things such as our pride or will so as to conform these more to God’s will. Daily we can offer Jesus time in prayer, our love for him lived out in service to others, etc. Weekly offering should include Mass. Long term we can offer Christ ourselves without holding anything back.

The *Catechism* states: “Whether we realize it or not, prayer is the encounter of God’s thirst with ours. God thirsts that we may thirst for him. . . . Prayer is . . . a response of love to the thirst of the only Son of God” (CCC 2560–61). Why is it important to understand prayer as a response to God rather than something we initiate? What effect might this view have on your prayer life?

If God initiates prayer, then we need to be listening and responding, not setting our own terms for the encounter. It also takes away some of the burden of prayer being difficult (for example, “It’s okay if I’m ‘bad’ at prayer right now because it doesn’t totally depend on me.”) But it also lays on us the responsibility to be available to God, to respond to his call to conversation. We might think of prayer as less of something that we have to decide/choose to do, and more of an appointment that has already been set up by God and we just have to show up.

In John 19:28–35, God thirsts for us, but we cannot even respond to him in prayer without his help. From the cross Jesus gives up his Spirit (verse 30), and blood and water flow from his pierced side (verse 34). How do the Holy Spirit and the life of the Church (symbolized by the blood and the water) enable us to respond to God in prayer?

The Holy Spirit teaches us to pray, and the Holy Spirit prays through us (see Romans 8:26). The Church also teaches us to pray by giving us formal prayers to learn and formats for prayer to follow (liturgies).

The Church leads us in prayer by drawing us into her liturgies and her communal life of prayer, as well as providing us a community to encourage and help us along in our journey of prayer.



DAY 4 – GOD SPEAKS

Participants will explore the importance of listening to God speak to them personally in Scripture.

Is there a Scripture verse that is particularly meaningful or applicable to your life right now? (It might be something you have memorized, something you heard or read recently, or even something that made an impression but you can’t remember the exact verse.)

If participants do not have a passage in mind for this question, here are some passages that may resonate with them:

Psalms 118:24 – “This is the day which the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.”

Proverbs 3:5–6 – “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not rely on your own insight. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.”

Jeremiah 29:11 – “For I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.”

Matthew 6:34 – “Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself. Let the day’s own trouble be sufficient for the day.”

1 Corinthians 13:7 – “Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”

1 Timothy 4:12 – “Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.”

Consider your current habits for reading Scripture. Do you read from the Bible on a regular basis? Is it for prayer or for study? What are some steps you can take this week to begin praying with Scripture or to increase the time you spend praying with Scripture?

Some participants may already pray with Scripture on a regular basis; others may not have considered the distinction between praying with Scripture and studying Scripture (although both are important and one enhances the other). Concrete steps to take include setting a specific time aside for prayer with Scripture, increasing the existing time, choosing a set place and making it conducive to prayer, possibly getting a Bible without commentaries so as not be distracted when trying to simply pray with the text, picking a specific book of the Bible and reading through it completely rather than skipping around each day, starting the habit of underlining parts of verses in your Bible that touch your heart as you read, etc.



DAY 5 – TRUTH AND BEAUTY

Participants will reflect on Fra Angelico's Annunciation, c. 1450 in the Convent of San Marco, Florence.

Look up Luke 1:26–38. In this conversation between God (through his messenger Gabriel) and Mary, who initiates? Is this a monologue, or a dialogue? How does Mary's interaction with Gabriel change over the course of the conversation?

God initiates the conversation by sending Gabriel to Mary and with Gabriel's words, “Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!” (Luke 1:28). The conversation is a dialogue as both Gabriel and Mary speak to one another. At first, Mary is perplexed by Gabriel's greeting and considers it in her mind. As Gabriel continues, she dialogues with him, asking him questions about just how God's plan is to come to fruition. As Gabriel continues and she gains understanding, she is able to respond to God's invitation and will for her life. This response comes both in words, “I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word” (Luke 1:38a), and also in deeds, as she departs to help her elderly kinswoman, Elizabeth (Luke 1:39–40).

NOTES
