

Writing my personal scriptures

A method of spiritual direction

The following is a method of spiritual direction I developed so that I would be able to offer spiritual direction to people despite distance or extreme pastoral busy-ness. I call it "writing your own personal scriptures". It is rooted in the idea that God is the ultimate spiritual director, constantly calling us to Him, constantly working in our heart, and what we need to do first and foremost is encounter Him and let Him lead us. This is the most important element of any form of spiritual direction **Beven** the meeting with a priest or other spiritual director.

The method is called "writing your own personal scriptures" because it is based on a premise drawn from Biblical theology. The Bible is the writing of people who have experienced God's action (or absence) in their lives and who reflected on these experiences and wrote about them. God was present in this reflection and writing, but also in the original action itself, whether it was something mighty like the parting of the Red Sea or something more humble like the love of a parent for a child. Just like for those Biblical authors God has been present in each of our lives, whether actively or passively. Using themes drawn from the existing books of the Bible, the "writing your own personal scriptures" method allows a person to explore key spiritual themes in a way appropriate to them.

In essence, what this method involves is a kind of directed journal keeping. After an introductory meeting in which the spiritual director and directee become acquainted, the SD gives the directee homework: the directee must prayerfully reflect on the questions found in one of the themes below, and write about them. The results are then shared, whether in person or by letter or email, and any questions or issues surfacing from the time of reflection and writing are noted and answered and/or worked on, as appropriate. At a certain point, either the director or directee may decide to move on to another theme, and reflect on new questions.

If a directee works through all these themes, he or she will discover some amazing things. Most importantly, s/he will come to appreciate the practical nature of the Christian faith much better.

The most important thing is to approach the method with an open and sincere heart, and let God be the ultimate guide. The Biblical themes and their related questions are:

Genesis (I): Write a chronology of the major events of your life. Where do I come from? How has God been part of making me who I am?

Genesis (II): Draw out your family tree, and describe how each member of your family is significant to you, whether positively or negatively. How is God present in those relationships?

Exodus (1-18): what has been the Pharaoh in my life? how has God rescued me from my personal Egypt? what "mighty works" did he perform? what do I do to keep a remembrance of that?

Exodus (19+) in what way can I say that I truly have a relationship, a "covenant"

with God? in what ways have I complained to him, or not trusted him entirely? have I ever worshipped the "golden calf", and what was that golden calf for me?

Leviticus: what place do the sacraments and liturgies of the Church have in my relationship with the Lord?

Numbers: have I ever been bored in my spiritual life? how did I live my spiritual life in those moments of boredom and of routine?

Deuteronomy: have I ever faced having to leave a cherished project, perhaps unfinished? have I had to say good-bye to precious people in my life? how did I live these moments? have I had to face death? how would I want to be remembered? what would my spiritual "last will and testament" contain?

Joshua: what evils are present in my life that need to be eradicated, either in me or around me? what forms of justice and injustice am I particularly sensitive to? how do I balance my efforts and turning it all over to the Lord as I live the struggle?

Judges, 1 & 2 Samuel: how is God my king? what parts of my life have I truly given over to his Lordship? what parts do I keep for myself?

Kings / Chronicles: what is my relationship with those in authority? who/what have I let lead me in the past (individuals, peer groups, ideals, etc.)? am I a good follower? what does leadership mean to me? how have I been a leader to others?

Ruth: how have non-Catholics (either other Christians or non-Christians) been significant in my spiritual journey

Tobit: what significance do angels have in my spiritual life? have I ever experienced the evil spiritual influences and powers?

Judith / Esther: how have I been rescued from disaster in surprising ways, by an unexpected person?

Ezra / Nehemiah: have I ever felt "in exile" from God? have I ever exiled God from my life? what path led to the end of that exile?

Maccabees: what place does the Church have in my spiritual life? what is my relationship with that Church? how am I a part of it? how is it a part of me?

Job: what were the great moments of suffering in my life? how do I

approach God in times of suffering? what is my personal theology of suffering?

Psalms: what kinds of music appeals to me, and what does that say about me? what pieces of music have had an strong impact in my life, and how?

Proverbs / Sirach: what key phrases / sound bites / bits of wisdom have left their impression on me? what would the motto of my life be?

Ecclesiastes: what is my ideal in life? what do I think are important to be happy? how have these things evolved? what things did I once find important but now I find less so?

Song of Songs: what place have romantic relationships had in my life, both in the past and now? how have I used God's gift of sexuality, and what place does it occupy in my life now? how is my sexuality integrated into my spiritual life?

Wisdom: how important is it to me to learn more about my faith, on an intellectual level? do I feel comfortable asking faith questions? how have I taken charge of my faith formation? where do I turn to learn more, to ask a question?

Prophets (I): who has been a prophet for me? which persons have helped me look at my life and get a handle on it? what are the best pieces of advice I have ever received? how have I been a prophet for others?

Prophets (II): on what sources do I base my moral views? how has my conscience been formed? how do I live the link between love of God and love of neighbour? what do I do when my conscience is bothering me?

Gospels: who is Jesus Christ for me? what is the place of Jesus Christ in my life?

Acts of the Apostles (I): what is the place of the Holy Spirit in my spiritual life?

Acts of the Apostles (II): how is God sending me out to do his work? what adventures / incidents have I lived as I do his work, that show me he is with me as I do his work?

Epistles (I): what kind of reading do I like to do? what books/authors have been significant in my life?

Epistles (II): what personal communications (letters, email, phone calls, etc.) have I received that meant a lot to me? why did they mean a lot to me? am I good at maintaining relationships?

Revelation (I): how I have experienced persecution in my life? have I been a persecutor, and how? how have I lived the death of others? how do I imagine the afterlife as being, and what do I base that view on? what is my relationship with the deceased? what is my relationship with the saints? "God is a judge" -- how do I react to that?

Revelation (II): have I ever faced the end of my personal world, and how? have I ever felt dead, then resurrected? what does the Second Coming of Christ mean for me? how am I living "in joyful hope"?