

Forty Weeks ~ Sacred Story



Week Twenty Six Encouragements & Wisdom

E & W reflections are additional helps for your Sacred Story prayer journey. Reflect on them ahead of your prayer exercises for the week or outside of your fifteen-minute prayer windows during the week.

Deepening My Understanding of Sacred Story Daily Disciplines

This week for E&W we want to look briefly at each one of the daily support disciplines linked to *Sacred Story* fifteen-minute prayer. This will help us more productively incorporate them into our daily life.

The exercises linked to *Sacred Story* fifteen-minute prayer and Sacred Story prayer itself, are simple and take very little time. Although the time is minimal, the discipline they require to remain “conscious” requires constant effort. This is *spiritual exercise* after all.

✘ Prayer upon waking—Attune to the day ahead and invite God’s help

This should take about fifteen to thirty seconds. After you wake up, lay in bed and pre-vision the day ahead. What does it hold? Are you anxious or energized about the day ahead? What specific issues/persons/events etc. are causing the anxiety and/or energy? Ask God to help you deal constructively with the anxieties or challenges and/or give thanks for the events/persons that inspire energy. Ask God to keep you aware as the day progresses. Using the special name you identified, offer the day to God.

If you so desire, on Sunday morning you can do a brief pre-visualization of the week in the same way you do for a single day. You might consider looking ahead to any special feast days or saint’s anniversaries that week. Ask for their intercession for your Sacred Story at the beginning of the week and on their feast day.

✘ Exercises during the day—Awakening to your life

*Each one of these should take no more than fifteen seconds. Consciously note **the most significant** events that inspire aggravation (anger, upset, fear, or temptation) or joy (gratitude, hope, faith). Every day holds many of these events. You want to consciously attend to the ones that seem most notable by the strength of the reaction they incite in you. At the time these notable events transpire, take about ten seconds to: 1) turn to God in your heart and using your unique name, ask to understand why the event gripped you negatively or positively; 2) ask for graced insight to understand if the event is linked to something from the past that needs exploration/healing. Then go on with your day.*

*The more you engage this consciousness exercise in the day, the more readily you will remember these events at the time of your fifteen-minute prayer reflections on Creation, Presence, Memory, Mercy and Eternity. **Every single event** that happens in the day is in some way linked to one of these five pillars and your Sacred Story. But please note: **Do this exercise for notable events only** (two or three times daily at most!). You will know which to attend to because they will grab you by the gut or the heart.*

✘ Sacred Story day journal—Note two significant events of the day

*This should take no more than one minute. Before going to bed, jot down the **two** most notable events of the day—one **negative (depleting hope)** and one **positive (increasing hope)**. All you need do is note two events. Write a short phrase to remember both what it was and your reaction to it. Here are some examples:*

“Depleting Hope” examples

- 1) Office meeting—very dispirited about things working out in the future
- 2) Letter from Joyce—very hurt that she excluded us from the event
- 3) My moral indiscretion on Saturday—how come I never seem to improve?

“Increasing Hope” examples

- 1) The incredible sunset Tuesday—thank you God for your creation!
- 2) Saturday’s confession—cried because of the priest’s hopeful words
- 3) Bob’s medical news—Thank you God for hearing our prayers!

✘ Prayer upon retiring—Attune to your heart, invite God into your dreams

This should take about fifteen seconds. When your head hits the pillow, scan your heart for your spiritual mood as you go to bed. Are you hopeful and peaceful or tired and discouraged or somewhere in between? Make a note and then turn and address God with the unique name you discerned asking God to watch over your sleep and be present in your dreams.

✘ Week's end journal—Listen for trends, patterns, links

This should take about ten minutes. Read your journal comments from the week. Take notice of any patterns or trends. Did the same person emerge more than once? Can you discern patterns in the events depleting hope or increasing hope? Does a certain type of failure occur at “predictable times?” Jot down any patterns you discover. Then write the two most significant “depleting hope” and “increasing hope” events from the week. Here is a sample of this weekly journal:

“Patterns” examples with suggested insights/actions

- 1) *Fear of being criticized always precedes my gossiping about others (perhaps I need to ask God's help on why I fear being criticized and examine what in particular I fear. I will also pray to hold my tongue in check to see what I can learn from this discipline)*
- 2) *Every time I meet Carol or someone who reminds me of Carol I get angry (I need to ask God to help me to forgive Carol)*
- 3) *I have constant anxiety around regular confession for fear the priest will think I am not a good person (I need to learn not to let fear control my decisions)*
- 4) *Three times my boss appeared in my journal (do I need to make a decision?)*
- 5) *I seem more negative than positive about God's love for me (I need to challenge this feeling and affirm God's love by focusing on gratitude)*

Strongest “Depleting Hope” example

My moral indiscretion on Saturday—how come I never seem to improve?

Strongest “Increasing Hope” example

Saturday's confession—cried because of the priest's hopeful words

Sample note to myself: *“My two examples above seem to be connected. I fear that I never seem to improve yet I also felt great hope when I went to confession. I will trust the feelings of hope and not the fear.”*

✘ Month's end journal—Listen for trends, patterns, links

This should take no more than fifteen minutes. Read over your weekly summaries and do the same winnowing process with them as you did for the individual weeks.

✘ Be renewed with monthly Reconciliation—You will be powerfully graced

This should take one hour total between preparation and confession. Spend thirty minutes reading over your journal summaries and writing a one page letter to Jesus. Use the same pattern as your Whole-Life Confession. Do not write more than one page! Discipline yourself to speak to the Lord the most essential things for which you need his help and forgiveness and no more. Take your letter to Reconciliation and make your confession. Keep your letters and use

them for prayer. You will see your growth and begin to understand much better the outlines of your own Sacred Story and that of Jesus as well.

