

PRACTICE 3: DWELLING

30 - 45 MINUTE - Dwelling

Introduction

This version of the Lectio is designed to engage the imagination as much as possible, and lead to a deeper embodying of the text. The texts are by nature religious and obviously Christian, but it is essential to emphasise that they can be experienced and enjoyed by pupils and staff of different faiths, questioning faith, or no faith background at all.

The Meaning of the Bible

To begin with, set the scene for the exercise. Pupils are being invited to dwell with and listen to a text from the Christian bible. It is important to acknowledge immediately that this might not be everyone's tradition or faith. Nonetheless, the Bible is the most published book in human history, and it contains a vast amount of wisdom, understanding, thinking and challenge about what it is to be a human being. People throughout history have found answers, through the Bible, to many or most of the deepest questions of what it means to be a human being.

It is also important to remember that Christians do not always agree on how to read the Bible, partly because it has so many styles and genres: where some people read poetry, others read fact; where some people read history, others read fiction; where some people read exaggeration, others read truth. We are not going to be dealing with these questions in this session. Instead, they are invited to dwell/listen with this text bringing only themselves and their imagination.

The Impact of the Bible

It is also worth remembering that whatever one's stance in relation to the Bible as a text, it has undoubtedly influenced Western culture over many centuries more than any other body of texts. Whether this be in literature, art, philosophy, theatre, poetry, natural sciences, music, architecture, and law, to name a few. If we approach the text with openness, we will surely have something to receive.

Other Contemplative Bible Resources

On a practical note, for the reading of the text, the leader can either read the text themselves or use another resource to do that for you. The **Pray As You Go App** has a huge selection of texts which can work well, though you might need to be careful about which ones you select. Similarly, the Methodist Church has created an on line resource called '**Take Time**' which offers good quality recordings of biblical texts in the Ignatian tradition with 5/10/15 minute readings of a large number of texts.

It is also worth noting that the '**Godly Play**' resource adopts much of the thinking of this Ignatian tradition of entering the text imaginatively. If you have someone who is trained in Godly Play who can offer this, then this is certainly to be welcomed. However, it should be noted that it does require a skilled practitioner for this to work well.

The Practice

1. The children enter the church building. The leader explains the main thrust of the introduction in an age-appropriate way.
2. The children are given their own **instruction sheet in the shape of the cross**, and the leader explains what will happen and how
3. The Leader explains that in this case they **will CHOOSE the time and the place**, and will then suggest ways of ENTERING such as taking shoes off, kneeling, finding a comfortable place
4. After assessing the area to be used, the children are **invited to ENTER** it in the way they have decided to, on their own and in their own space, wherever possible.
5. After a minute or two of time to settle and become peaceful, the children are led to the next stage, which is to **ASK for a gift**. The leader then clarifies this in terms of searching for what you really need in life. What is it you are aching for today? This is crucial to do, because it is about acknowledging the reality of your own context before approaching the reality of the text.
6. Before the text is read out the children are invited to enter the text **with their imagination** as fully as possible. They should use all their senses in the imagining.
 - a. What could you **hear**, what sort of **sounds** might there be in the text: natural sounds of wind, sea, birdsong, insects, animals and manmade sounds of tools, conversation, cooking, transport etc.? How would the individuals in the text sound if you could hear them speak?
 - b. What would it **feel** like to be in the text: what textures might be involved in the story, how might your skin feel, and how might you expand this to encompass the whole range of human feelings as emotion? How do you feel when certain people speak or do things?
 - c. What would it **smell** like to be in the text: can you smell food, nature, animals, humans? Are the smells pleasant or not?
 - d. What can you **see** in the text: are the surroundings of the context urban or rural, can you see sky or clouds, what are people wearing and what do they look like, what might you notice in the text if you were there in person in the room or at the scene?
 - e. What can you **taste** in the text: are there flavours around, drink or food that has been offered? St Ignatius asked us to chew on the text like a cow chews on grass to detect what tastes good for you in these words.
7. The text is then **read out loud for the first TIME**, very slowly and the children are invited to imagine being in it engaging all their senses: what would it be like to be there? How would you feel? What might you think and how might you react?

LEAVE A GOOD PAUSE (at least a minute) AT THE END OF THE READING

8. **Read the text for the second TIME**. The children are invited to experience it again as if they were there, but the emphasis now is also to notice which words, phrases or expressions capture their attention. What tastes good about the text, or where are your thoughts drawn?

LEAVE A GOOD PAUSE (at least a minute) AT THE END OF THE READING

9. **Read the text for the third TIME**. This time ask the children to try to focus on one word or phrase which seems particularly important or significant to them.

LEAVE A GOOD PAUSE (at least a minute) AT THE END OF THE READING.

10. Invite the children then to have an imaginary conversation with Jesus or a close friend, parent or mentor about what they noticed most from the readings. This is sometimes called the **'HEART TO HEART'** as one person shares with the other what is on their heart as a result of the reading.
11. The children are asked to **LEAVE** respectfully; they can either use a Christian technique such as bowing, crossing themselves or saying a prayer, or they can simply name to themselves the thing that was true good or helpful about the experience.
12. Children are encouraged to write down what they noticed or wondered about in a **JOURNAL** or piece of paper. They might also like to respond to what they noticed and felt by drawing a picture of what it **meant to them** to become part of this story
13. The children then leave the space.