



# Tools for Transformation

## Gospel Contemplation

Simply put, Gospel Contemplation is imagining yourself in a gospel scene and encountering Jesus there. It involves reading a passage of scripture slowly a number of times until you have become saturated with the scene – until you can begin to imagine the scene coming to life in your mind’s eye just as if you were there. It is useful alone or in groups of virtually any size. This is not a method of bible study, nor of exegesis. Rather, the purpose is to give space for the Holy Spirit to fill these scenes and to be with you in whatever way God deems best in the moment.

Imagination is that power within each of us which equips us to make present what is not present. Imagination is intimately connected with our senses which take in the data coming to us from our environment. Enmeshed with our cognitive powers, imagination is essential to our grasp of meaning. Below is a quotation from the book, *Vita Christi*, written by the fourteenth-century Carthusian monk, Ludolph of Saxony. Ignatius of Loyola based his use of imagination in Gospel Contemplation on this book.

*“If you want to draw fruit from these scenes, you must offer yourself as present to what was said or done through our Lord Jesus Christ with the whole affective power of your mind, with loving care, with lingering delight; thus laying aside all other worries and cares. (Hear and see) these things being narrated, as though you were hearing with your own ears and seeing with your own eyes, for these things are most sweet to him who thinks on them with desire, and even more so to him who tastes them. And though many of these are narrated as past events, you must meditate them all as though they were happening in the present moment; because in this way you will certainly taste a greater sweetness... Then you will feel how full of wisdom and delight they are.”*

*J. Veltri, S.J., Orientations, V2, Part B*

## A Prayer Exercise in Imagination:

- Find somewhere with minimal distractions (turn off your cell phone).
- Choose an action passage from one of the gospels (suggestions below).
- Ask to know Jesus in an intimate way.
- Read the passage several times, slowly and reflectively, until it becomes familiar. Each time you read, focus your imagination on what you are reading. Notice as many details as possible until your imagination is saturated with the gospel scene.
- Place yourself in the scene - wherever you feel drawn - and simply let the prayer unfold. See the characters. Listen to what they are saying. Watch what they are doing.

*(Suppose, for example, that you have read about Jesus quieting the storm on the lake. You might imagine the wind howling, the boat pitching, the disciples struggling with the oars. You may even find yourself in the boat with them helping out - or you may find yourself to be one of them. Listen to what is said, interact with others in the story, in whatever ways you find yourself as part of the event that is present to you.)*

- At the end of your time of prayer, take a few minutes to reflect on what took place during the prayer. What senses, thoughts or emotions were evoked during your time of prayer? Speak to God from your heart - ask what his "word" or invitation to you may be.

### Gospel Stories to try:

Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand:	Mark 6:30 - 44
Healing of Bartimaeus:	Mark 10:46 - 52
Call of the Disciples:	Luke 5:1 - 11
Jesus Walks on Water:	Matthew 14:22 - 33
Jesus Calms the Storm:	Luke 8:22 - 25
Zacchaeus:	Luke 19:1 - 10