

# Explorers in Prayer – Lesson Five Handout

## The Place of Meditation in Prayer

There's a lot of confusion about the words meditation and contemplation. They mean different things to different people, and sometimes they are used interchangeably so that they mean the same thing. The principle difference between Christian and non-Christian forms of meditation and contemplation lie in the goal a person is trying to achieve by doing it. In Christian meditation and contemplation the goal is ultimately to grow in love for, and in our relationship with, God.

### Forms of the Jesus prayer

“Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me” - Russian Orthodox version

“Lord Jesus Christ, Son of (the living) God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” - Eastern Orthodox version

Quote from *Living Prayer* by Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh.

“A woman who had been using the Jesus Prayer for fourteen years complained that she had never had any sense that God was there. But when she had it pointed out to her that she was talking all the time, she agreed to take her stand silently for a few days. As she was doing it she became aware that God was there, that the silence that surrounded her was not emptiness, absence of noise and agitation, but that there was a solidity in this silence, that it was not something negative, but positive, a presence, the presence of God who made himself known to her by creating the same silence in her. And then she discovered that the prayer came up quite naturally again, but it was no longer the sort of discursive noise that had prevented God from making himself known.”

We have already tried out another form of meditative prayer in the first session when we imagined ourselves at the scene of Jesus healing the lepers. Ignatius of Loyola is particularly associated with this form of prayer (though he didn't invent it) because he encouraged people to use it a lot when doing his 30 day retreat known as the Spiritual Exercises. In the course of 30 days the 'exercitant' uses their imagination to go through the life of Jesus as found in the gospels. As with the other forms of meditation, the goal is to grow in love for Jesus as you have some kind of experience of him through these imaginative meditations. We are going to do something very similar for homework.

**Individual Exercise:** Each day we will be doing an imaginative meditation on a portion of the Gospels. Let the meditation lead into a prayer.

Day 1 - *Luke 1: 26-38.*

Day 2 - *Luke 2: 41-52.*

Day 3 - *Matthew 3: 13-17.*

Day 4 - *Matthew 4: 1-11.*

Day 5 - *Luke 4: 13-30.*

Day 6 - *Luke 5: 1-11.*

Day 7 - *Mark 4: 35-41.*

Practice your preferred version of the Jesus Prayer when you have some free time in the week.

Read chapters 11 & 13 of the course book.

**Prayer Triplet Exercise:** One person reads John 20: 10-18 out loud. After a minutes pause the second person reads the same passage. And after another minutes pause the third person reads the passage. Spend time in silence meditating on the scripture and share what God has given to you. Let that lead into a time of prayer. Also, share how you have each got on with the Jesus Prayer.