

## PRAYING WITH THE BIBLE: IGNATIAN MEDITATION

KAI: I'm Kai.

LIBBY: And I'm Libby. This is Catholic Central.

KAI: Libby, I have a question for you. Do you remember the big book? The book of books?

LIBBY: The Bible from our Bible episode?

KAI: How are you supposed to pray with this baby? I mean, I get reading it, but people talk about praying with it. Almost a million words. Where do you start?

LIBBY: There's a lot of ways to pray with the Bible, but today we're using a method developed by St. Ignatius of Loyola. It's called Ignatian Meditation.

KAI: I'm looking for the Bible to really speak to my life, to feel something.

LIBBY: Today we're talking about one of the coolest ways to do it.

### CATHOLIC CENTRAL OPENING TITLES

Ignatian Meditation takes reading the Bible to another level. It uses our imaginations to go beyond the surface of the story and into the experience. It's been a major prayer form of the Catholic church for centuries.

ST. IGNATIUS: My name is St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits. My prayer of meditation is not some kind of mystical woo-woo. It's a form in which one uses his or her own imagination to reflect on a Gospel passage, using the senses to make the scene come alive.

LIBBY: Ignatian Meditation is not a Bible lesson or a theological reflection. It's a whole spirituality.

KAI: I get it. It's not about this. It's about this.

LIBBY: Like meeting God one-on-one inside the Bible.

KAI: Wait, how is that?

LIBBY: The Bible is the living word and Ignatian Meditation, using our gift to imagine is a way to experience the living God.

KAI: Let's do it. Walk me through an example.

LIBBY: OK. First. Find a quiet place with the least distractions where your mind can best focus. In your own words, ask God to help you open the gates of His big book and enter in to it.

KAI: Okay so I will turn off my cellphone. Then I'll pretend we're not doing a show here, and that there are people everywhere. Go on.

LIBBY: Second, find a passage from Scripture. It's recommended to choose something from one of the Gospels.

KAI: Let's do the story of the blind man in Mark 10.

LIBBY: Okay. Now you would read the passage to yourself several times, slowly to get into it.

KAI: OK. Basically Jesus walks past a blind man who walks after him. Jesus goes, "What do you want?" Bartimaeus says, "To see." Jesus heals him.

LIBBY: OK. Now you're going to read it again, paying more attention to the details.

KAI: OK. They came to Jericho. OK. He shouts out. Oh, that's cool. He calls Jesus the Son of David. I didn't really notice that. Jesus asks him, "What do you want me to do for you?" Wow, he was

blind, so you'd think it was obvious what he wanted.  
Interesting that Jesus asks that.

LIBBY: Yes. See, you're noticing new moments in the story already.

KAI: Right and also I never realized that they're outside the walls of Jericho. That's gotta mean something.

LIBBY: This is why we read it a few times. When you feel you know it quite well, you're ready to enter in to the imaginative meditation part of it.

KAI: OK. Do I close my eyes?

LIBBY: Yes.

KAI: OK. OK, so I see a dusty road, lots of people and they're wearing sandals. There's a really dusty blind guy leaning against the wall and there's a donkey pulling a cart.

LIBBY: OK. What might you hear?

KAI: People chattering. People are talking about Jesus and whether He might be the Messiah ... a lot of arguing about that.

LIBBY: Great. What about smells?

KAI: OK. Well, they haven't invented deodorant yet, so there's that. It's hot, and there are animals everywhere, which lends to the general aroma. But there's someone peeling an orange. I smell a woman wearing sandalwood perfume, so I might go stand next to her. She smells nice.

LIBBY: This would be a good time to ask the Holy Spirit who you are in the story.

KAI: Oh, okay yeah good. Right, I might be a member of the crowd or one of the apostles. I might even be the blind man.

LIBBY: Or the donkey. Just kidding.

KAI: Hey. Everyone's getting excited because Jesus is coming this way.

LIBBY: Nice. You're really into it.

KAI: Yeah. Yeah, I can see if I were to let the story continue on, I'd see much more than what I just read.

LIBBY: Now, take the time to just hang with God and meditate on your experience. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you to the message or insight that's in this for you.

KAI: How long should the whole meditation take?

LIBBY: You could do it in five minutes or 10 minutes. It's been recommended up to anywhere between 20 and 40 minutes.

KAI: Libby.

LIBBY: Sometimes you may have experienced Jesus in a new way. You might have received counsel or you might just feel a deepening of your relationship.

KAI: Libby, what are you supposed to do if your imagination veers off somewhere?

LIBBY: Yes. St. Ignatius knew that would happen. Probably happened to him, too. When you catch yourself, gently return to the prayer.

KAI: Oh. Wow. OK. I could see how that could be a really powerful way to get much more personal and go deeper with Jesus. There are endless stories and endless ways to enter each story. It's an amazing way to actually spend time with God and his word.

LIBBY: That is the beautiful form of praying with the Bible called Ignatian Meditation.

KAI: Find a quiet place, pick a passage from the Bible, immerse yourself in the experience, ask God what the message is for you, and spend a little time with it.

LIBBY: The only way to find out if this prayer form works for you is to try it.

KAI: Works for me, but there are as many ways to pray to and with God as there are ways to deepen any relationship you have with anyone.

LIBBY: If you'd like to try this, go to [catholiccentral.com](http://catholiccentral.com), where you'll find a few guided Ignatian Mediations along with information on other forms of prayer.

KAI: Like a priest I know says, "Prayer isn't a prescription. It's a menu."

LIBBY: Until next time, thanks for watching. I'm Libby. Kai. Kai.

KAI: Where'd that woman with the sandalwood perfume go?

LIBBY: Just say goodbye, Kai.

KAI: Goodbye, Kai. Maybe she's single.