

Forty Weeks ~ Sacred Story



Week Thirty Four 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.

In our initial Seattle project at two thirds through the Forty Weeks, some of our participants offered reflections on the spiritual benefits received through Forty Weeks *Sacred Story* prayer. The reflections cover many different and important themes:

Awareness and Attention to Reality
Finding Balance in Life
Concern for Others
Spiritual Growth
Difficulties Encountered
Gratitude and Healings
Intimacy and Friendship with God
God's Love and Mercy
Peace and Hope
The Structure and Routine of Prayer
Appreciation of the Sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist
Growth in Self-Understanding

For these next weeks, please find your encouragement and wisdom in reflecting on the spiritual benefits received in praying with *Sacred Story*. This week's reflections cover **Intimacy and Friendship with God**. As you listen to these reflections, be amazed at how powerfully God is working in all of our lives. The Good News is much more powerful than the bad. Remember, God is healing the world one life at a time while he writes our sacred story.

INTIMACY/FRIENDSHIP WITH GOD

1. First, I'm learning a good way to pray and I'm starting to have frequent conversations with Jesus. Second, I have realized the origin of certain anxieties and anger. Third, I'm hopeful that my new connection with Jesus and the new prayer routine will help me get past these negatives in my life.

***RESPONSE:** Conversing with the Lord is a good way to stay alert and conscious. Keep moving in the same direction, and the Lord will slowly and surely work through those negatives for your healing and salvation.*

2. I find myself praying more frequently every day. I find that I am more conscious of my sins and failings. I have greater gratitude for the blessings given to me. I look forward to my 15 minute sessions.

3. (I am) becoming closer to God.

4. Closer relationship to God, removal of barriers (my sinful response to past wounds that I was not aware of). Greater gratitude and desire to praise, worship and glorify God in a manner that delights God.

***RESPONSE:** Gratitude is a significant sign of God's presence in your life.*

5. (I am having) a closer walk with Jesus and the Holy Spirit. (This is creating) a slight easing of my fear of God.

***RESPONSE:** Keep praying and that fear will abate even more. The easing of fear is a sign that you are doing the right things and should continue.*

6. I am more aware of Christ present in my daily life, every moment. I am never alone helps me when I get fearful about the future (usually in regards to one of my children).

***RESPONSE:** Fear is not a gift of the Holy Spirit. Fear of the Lord is, but not fear of the future.*

7. This has given me a greater sense of the presence of God and a way to explore my feelings in a helpful way.

8. I have definitely had a deeper sense that God is present with me NOW, and that He has a hand in all things. I haven't been majorly challenged since starting Sacred Story, so I don't know if this closer awareness of God in my life will translate to real faith and hope. We'll see. I do feel more patient, though, with the family issues, hoping that God will heal all wounds. I picture God permeating my life, like water, finding every empty space, filling it with His Graces. I am hoping that He's doing this for my family, also. One thing I wonder about, if someone doesn't believe, can He still permeate their lives, also? (I know He can, but what's the benefit, if they aren't aware, or actively reject Him?)

***RESPONSE:** God is working at all times in every heart to draw us into God's love. When we pray for others, God uses our loving intentions and directs that love to the persons and issues of our concern. No prayer ever goes unused or falls into the cracks. God loves those who actively reject Him and will seek them out till the day they die (Lk. 15: 3-7).*

9. Sacred Story has helped me to bring God into my daily consciousness and start to have Him be the center of my life, instead of all the earthly things that cause so much distraction and disruption.
10. (I have found) a deeper one-on-one relationship with God and (am) learning to pray to Jesus and the saints directly - I've always prayed to God the Father.

***RESPONSE:** St. Ignatius, as he grew, developed unique relationships with the Father, Son, Spirit, Blessed Mother and I assume many saints. You are awakening to the spiritual world.*

11. (I have a) deepened relationship with God.
12. I am becoming more aware of the "why" of my actions and the events in my life. I feel like I can really talk to my Loving Father. Though Sacred Story I have developed some friendships with others who want to share their faith. I just feel so much closer to God. I have been given some tools to foster the closeness to God. I have a few requests or questions: 1. How can we extend this experience beyond the year, with others? 2 . If we can form a group of people from our parish who want to further their knowledge about our experience, what reading material would be helpful?

***RESPONSE:** You can extend this experience by continuing to pray Sacred Story daily. You can also invite others to visit the website and learn the prayers and spiritual lessons you have been taught. I would strongly encourage those who feel called to meet with others in the parish on a regular basis. Creating a faith sharing group will help you grow in your practice of Sacred Story prayer. Keep your meetings focused, regular, and brief, just like the prayer; and you can be better guaranteed of success. Please visit the website for the weekly lessons and offer your reading suggestions for others. We will make these suggestions available to others.*

13. WOW! This has been the best spiritual journey of my life. I feel that it has opened my eyes to God in everything and I am more enthusiastic, peaceful, grateful, happy, and thankful to God and the Sacred Story. I pray all the time now, all day, and thank God for everything all day long. I remember CREATION, PRESENCE, MEMORY, MERCY, AND ETERNITY as well all day long which gives me an even deeper closeness to God. I cannot even fathom how much more this will change the rest of my life as it has already changed me, but I know it is just the beginning! I am eager to continue this for the rest of my life and I look forward to seeing, feeling, praying and the faith, hope, and grace of what is to come. Thank you all so much!

***RESPONSE:** Yes, it will carry you for the rest of our life. You may have down times in the future.*

Just remember they will pass. Now you are being carried in a special way to learn the lesson: "Keep on this path and I will be with you always."

14. I would say that Sacred Story has put my life into a spiritual perspective. It has greatly deepened my relationship, my faith and trust in God. It has given me a much deeper reverence and trust in prayer and its power.

RESPONSE: *What more could anyone ask for? Pray that others discover this prayer as well. Be active in introducing others to the gifts of faith, hope and love you have discovered.*

15. After getting involved with the Charismatic movement, I learned how to pray throughout the day, anytime and anywhere, but Sacred Story has added another dimension to my prayer life. I have been open to a greater sense of peace, a spiritual freedom, and a sense of the presence of God always with me. A sense that He really is interested in helping me set a daily schedule.

16. I am much quicker to turn to God as the difficulties and irritations come in my life. I know He is there to help.

RESPONSE: *"Behold, I am with you always, till the end of the age" (Mt. 28:20).*

17. The understanding that I cannot solve my problems by myself.

RESPONSE: *And what a great comfort to know that you don't have to solve all the problems yourself! Thanks be to God!*

18. Rely on GOD to find solutions to problems. Trust in him.

RESPONSE: *Ditto above!*

19. Sacred Story challenges, stretches, inspires, and educates me in knowledge of God and myself. DEEP STUFF! Best of all, I'm growing more in love with Jesus each day! I sing to Him, "create in me a clean heart!" Who I am in Christ; God's love and forgiveness; the work of Holy Spirit at opportune times; "connections!" (Sacred Story's) constant encouragement mirrors God's loving heart - that's for sure. Thanks! GRATITUDE AND HEALINGS!

RESPONSE: *Amen! Amen! Amen!*



