

Forty Weeks ~ Sacred Story



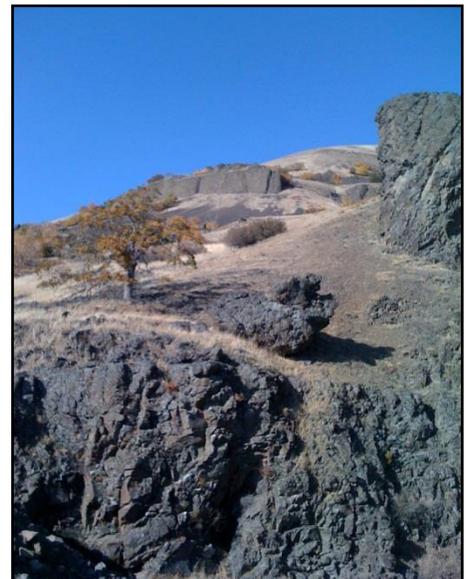
Week Nine Encouragements & Wisdom

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.

Discernment: The Main Gift God Gave To Ignatius

Ignatius woke up to the two plotlines in his life when he was recuperating from his battle wounds. He realized there were two different moods, two polarities, two spiritual temperatures—two *plotlines*—that worked on his conscience, heart and mind. One spiritual reality was inspired by God and led him to God. The other was inspired by the one Ignatius called the enemy of human nature, and led away from God.

We will take the second part of our yearlong course for weekly lessons on learning to discern the spiritual realities that shape or story—toward God or away from God. For now, I wanted to give you two short definitions of these spiritual realities so you can be on the lookout for them in your life. They will be all over your thoughts words and deeds. I want you to take one of your quiet times this week and read each of these out loud. Saying them out loud will make them more real.



Say this out loud beforehand: “I am always in a state of *either* spiritual consolation *or* a state of spiritual desolation. This has always been the case, is the case at this point in my life, and will always be the case till the day I die. They are not simultaneous with each other. I am either

in one state or the other—never both at the same time. I ask you Lord to wake me up to the states of spiritual consolation and spiritual desolation. Let me learn how to notice them present in my thoughts, words and deeds. God, wake me up to the spiritual nature of my life story.”

Spiritual Consolation

(Read Aloud) Spiritual consolation is a grace and gift from God. It is different from just feeling good or being happy. It is a spiritual reality than has the capacity to affect my emotions and psychological states. One or more of the following qualities defines spiritual consolations:

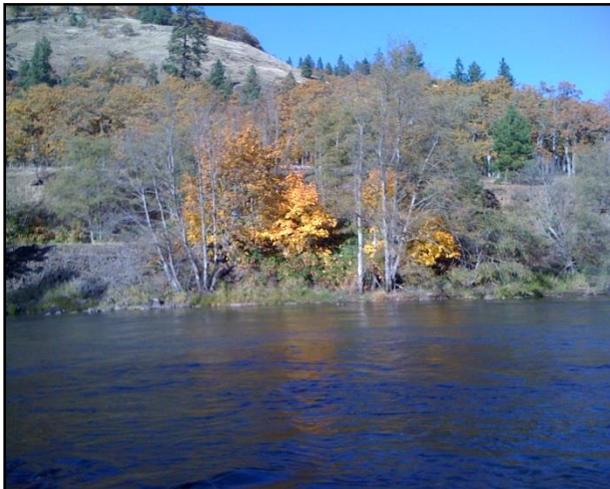
- ▶ When I have a feeling of love for God or of Jesus that makes me love life, other people and see the beauty in creation

- ▶ When motivated by a love of God, I cry because of sorrow for my faults, or because of the suffering that Jesus endured for me or, if I cry for any other reason and it moves me to have a deeper love and understanding of God’s mercy and compassion toward me and other people

- ▶ When I have an experience that increases or deepens in me **faith** in God, **hope** in God, or **love**.

- ▶ When I have an experience of joy and find myself attracted to spiritual things that lead me to want to commit my life to the things of heaven, the values of the Gospel, and the salvation of my soul and/or to help other people.

- ▶ When I find myself peaceful and quiet in an experience of God’s presence. This “presence” is when I know intellectually and/or in my heart and emotions, that I am not alone.



Spend some time reflecting upon your life in the experiences of spiritual consolation listed above. Based on the descriptive definitions listed, try to identify some *particular* experience of spiritual consolation that has happened recently. It could be very simple or very profound. What was it? When did it happen? Write down in one phrase below the remembered experience of spiritual consolation that seems most present to you.

Write Your Phrase on Spiritual Consolation in the blank space provided.

Spiritual Desolation

(Read Aloud) Spiritual desolation characterizes a spiritual state of soul. Spiritual desolation is different from emotional depression. One can be emotionally depressed but still have an inner calm and peace and an awareness of God and thus be in a state of spiritual consolation. What then, is spiritual desolation? It can be characterized by the following:

- Spiritual desolation is entirely the opposite of spiritual consolation. Your spirit feels dark and in turmoil.

- You feel more attracted or drawn by things that are of the earthly, material world than of the spiritual realm.

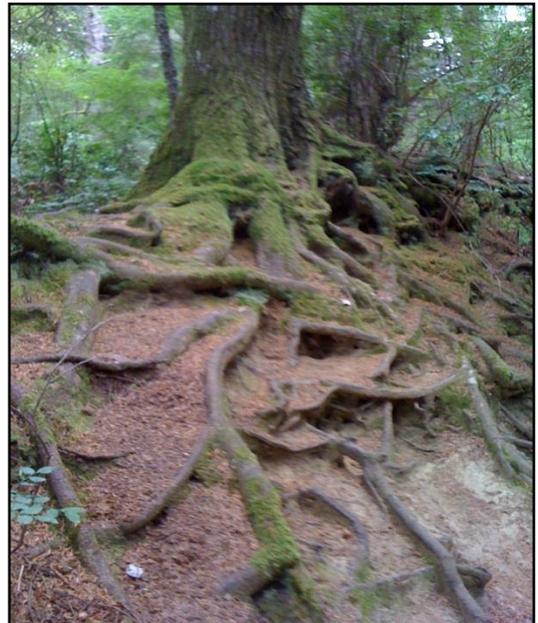
- You feel restlessness, disturbances, and temptations that create in you a lack of faith in God, hope, and love. You doubt the reality of God or the positive experiences you had in a time of spiritual consolation.

- Your spirit feels lazy or lukewarm. Your spiritual fire and energy is gone.

- Your spirit is sad and you feel separated from God as if a spiritual hole has opened in your soul.

- You can feel impatient or frustrated or annoyed by spiritual realities and positive moral values.

- You can feel that a commitment to spiritual practices is a waste of time, or if you are still doing them, you feel you are getting little if anything from your efforts.



Spend a minute reflecting upon your life in light of the definition(s) of spiritual desolation listed above. Remember the most recent experience in your life that you believe is associated with one or more of these forms of spiritual desolation. When did it happen and what was it associated with?

Write down in one phrase below the experience of spiritual desolation and what you believe it is associated with in your life.

