

IMAGINATIVE PRAYER 3

PAUL'S FIERY FURNACE

ACTS 19:23-41

This spiritual practice was created by St. Ignatius in the 1500s. His desire was to find a way to experience the presence of God and did so by entering the biblical narrative with his imagination. Imaginative prayer brings the Bible narrative to life in our mind and offers an opportunity to engage in a new experience with the Word. Hebrews 4:12 describes the Word of God as active and alive. There are occasions when coming to Scripture in a new way reveals something vibrant that we may have missed through our normative practices. Below you will find the steps to lead your group through this experience.

STEP ONE

Select one person to read Acts 19:23-41 or play an audio version from someone's phone. During this reading find a comfortable position to sit and close your eyes. The process for listening will be given next. If you are reading the passage, do so *slowly and carefully*.

STEP TWO

As you listen to the Scripture, keep the following in mind:

- Feel free to have a way to make notes - some people find it helpful to jot things down as they go.
- Imagine yourself entering into biblical times. You may become a person or animal in the story or an object along the way.
- Use all five of your senses to engage fully with what it would be like to be there. Notice what you see, smell, hear, touch and taste as you're in the story. Notice sounds other than voices. What do you hear in the distance? Is there something you can taste, touch or smell? As the story is read, become a part of it as best you can.
- Notice the facial expressions of people in the story. Notice who you are near and who is far away from you in the story. Notice who you are drawn to and who repels you. Notice tones of voices as you hear the voice, not of the person reading, but of the actual people in history.

STEP THREE

The reader should instruct everyone to open their eyes at the end of the story and note some things that affected them. Then process these questions together:

- Is there anything anyone would like to share with the group that happened as you became a part of the biblical story?
- Who were you in story?
- What did you see?
- What did you touch?
- Where did you find yourself in the story?
- Who was close to you and who was far away?
- Whose facial expressions did you see?

**If you did not get anything out of this practice or found it really challenging, that is ok. Some practices work better than others for different people.

NEXT

Process this experience as a group. Are there ways God is trying to activate you or your group? The "Activated" Group Process questions on page 6 may be a helpful guide as your group engages with this material and with God