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### The Contemplative Worship Leader

Paul Ryan  
*Calvin College*

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#### Recommended Citation

Ryan, Paul, "The Contemplative Worship Leader" (2017). *Symposium on Worship Archive*. 37.  
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## C17: The Contemplative Worship Leader

Calvin Symposium on Worship 2017

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### Introduction

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"There comes a time for most of us when we discover a deep desire within us to live from the heart what we already know in our heads and do with our hands" (Eugene Peterson, *Christ Plays in Ten Thousand Places*)

### Part 1

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#### Practice // Lectio Divina

But when I think that God, his Son not sparing,  
Sent him to die, I scarce can take it in,  
That on the cross, my burden gladly bearing,  
He bled and died to take away my sin;

Then sings my soul, my Savior God, to thee:  
how great thou art, how great thou art!

Words: Stuart K. Hine, 1949, © 1949, 1953, The Stuart Hine Trust, USA print rights admin.  
Hope Publishing Company. All other USA rights admin. by EMICMGPublishing.com

#### Disposition // Wonder

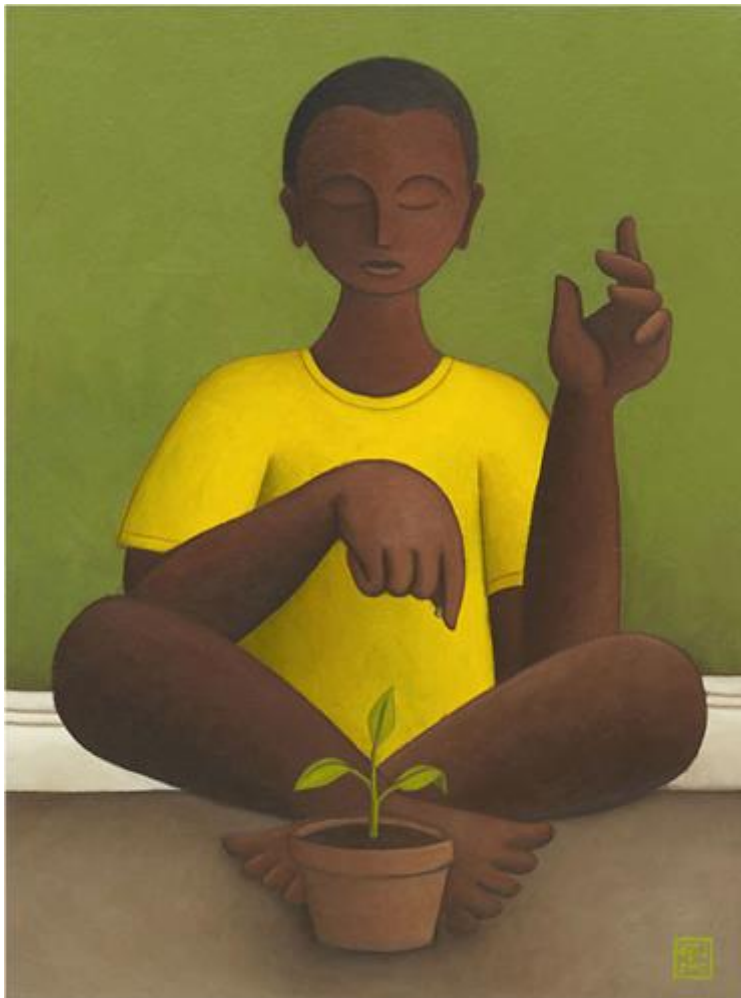
## Part 2

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### Practice // Centering Prayer

Be still and know that I am God  
Be still and know that I am God  
Be still and know that I am God

Words: Lee Herrington | Tom Fettke © 1992 Word Music, LLC (a div. of Word Music Group, Inc.)



Eric Nykamp, *Grow Where You Are Planted*, 2002

Disposition // Presence

Part 3

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Practice // Daily Examen

- ❖ Become aware of God's presence.
- ❖ Review the worship service with gratitude.
- ❖ Pay attention to your emotions.
- ❖ Choose one feature of the worship service and pray from it.
- ❖ Look toward the next worship service.

Disposition // Acceptance

## Conclusion

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“I Shall Not Want” by Audrey Assad & Bryan Brown

From the love of my own comfort  
From the fear of having nothing  
From a life of worldly passions  
Deliver me, O God

From the need to be understood  
And from a need to be accepted  
From the fear of being lonely  
Deliver me, O God  
Deliver me, O God

*And I shall not want  
No, I shall not want  
When I taste your goodness  
I shall not want  
When I taste your goodness  
I shall not want*

From the fear of serving others  
And from the fear of death or trial  
And from the fear of humility  
Deliver me, O God  
Deliver me, O God

## Lectio Divina (Spiritual Reading)

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Lectio Divina is an ancient spiritual practice from the Christian monastic tradition. In Lectio Divina, we seek to experience the presence of God through reading and listening, prayer, meditation and contemplation. Lectio Divina can be done as an individual or as a group.

Begin by choosing a section of scripture that you would like to read and pray. You can choose the text randomly or use a liturgical book like the *Book of Common Prayer*. Try not to set a goal for how much content you will cover. The goal is to listen for God and experience his presence.

### **Preparation**

Next, do what you must to quiet and prepare yourself to hear from God. If you need to find a quiet room, or sit in silence for several minutes, or sit in a comfortable chair, take whatever posture will help you prepare to receive and experience God's presence.

### **Reading/Listening**

When you sense that your heart is prepared, begin by slowly reading the passage of scripture that you have selected. Don't move quickly through any sentence or phrase. As you read, pay attention to what word or phrase or idea catches your attention.

### **Meditation**

Next, begin to meditate on the word, phrase, or idea that captured your attention. Repeat it again and again. What thoughts come to mind as you meditate on this word, phrase or idea? What are you reminded of in your life? What does it make you hope for? Meditation is no easy task. As you try to concentrate, don't be disappointed if random thoughts enter your head. As they do, offer them to God.

### **Prayer**

Now begin to speak to God. Tell God what word, phrase or idea captured your attention and what came to mind as you meditated upon it. How is God using this word, phrase or idea to bless and transform you? Tell God what you have been thinking and feeling as you've listened and meditated. Tell God how you hope this word, phrase or idea will change your heart to be more like his.

### **Contemplation**

Finish by focusing your attention on the fact that God's presence is with you. If as you try to focus on God's presence you sense a need to read the text again, or continue meditating, or to simply continue talking with God, allow yourself to do so. As you do, know that you are in the presence of God.

<https://www.rca.org/lectio-divina>

## Centering Prayer

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Centering Prayer is a method of silent prayer that prepares us to receive the gift of contemplative prayer, prayer in which we experience God's presence within us, closer than breathing, closer than thinking, closer than consciousness itself. This method of prayer is both a relationship with God and a discipline to foster that relationship.

Centering Prayer is not meant to replace other kinds of prayer. Rather, it adds depth of meaning to all prayer and facilitates the movement from more active modes of prayer — verbal, mental or affective prayer — into a receptive prayer of resting in God. Centering Prayer emphasizes prayer as a personal relationship with God and as a movement beyond conversation with Christ to communion with Him.

The source of Centering Prayer, as in all methods leading to contemplative prayer, is the Indwelling Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The focus of Centering Prayer is the deepening of our relationship with the living Christ. The effects of Centering Prayer are ecclesial, as the prayer tends to build communities of faith and bond the members together in mutual friendship and love.

<http://www.centeringprayer.com>

### The Guidelines

1. Chose a sacred word as the symbol of your intention to consent to God's presence and action within.
2. Sitting comfortably and with eyes closed, settle briefly, and silently introduce the sacred word as the symbol of your consent to God's presence and action within.
3. When you become aware of thoughts, return ever-so-gently to the sacred word.
4. At the end of the prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes.

<http://www.cpt.org/files/WS%20-%20Centering%20Prayer.pdf>

## Daily Examen

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A great way to pray is to look for God's presence in your life. More than 400 years ago St. Ignatius Loyola encouraged prayer-filled mindfulness by proposing what has been called the Daily Examen. The Examen is a technique of prayerful reflection on the events of the day in order to detect God's presence and to discern his direction for us. Try this version of St. Ignatius's prayer.

**1. Become aware of God's presence.** Look back on the events of the day in the company of the Holy Spirit. The day may seem confusing to you—a blur, a jumble, a muddle. Ask God to bring clarity and understanding.

**2. Review the day with gratitude.** Gratitude is the foundation of our relationship with God. Walk through your day in the presence of God and note its joys and delights. Focus on the day's gifts. Look at the work you did, the people you interacted with. What did you receive from these people? What did you give them? Pay attention to small things—the food you ate, the sights you saw, and other seemingly small pleasures. God is in the details.

**3. Pay attention to your emotions.** One of St. Ignatius's great insights was that we detect the presence of the Spirit of God in the movements of our emotions. Reflect on the feelings you experienced during the day. Boredom? Elation? Resentment? Compassion? Anger? Confidence? What is God saying through these feelings?

God will most likely show you some ways that you fell short. Make note of these sins and faults. But look deeply for other implications. Does a feeling of frustration perhaps mean that God wants you consider a new direction in some area of your work? Are you concerned about a friend? Perhaps you should reach out to her in some way.

**4. Choose one feature of the day and pray from it.** Ask the Holy Spirit to direct you to something during the day that God thinks is particularly important. It may involve a feeling—positive or negative. It may be a significant encounter with another person or a vivid moment of pleasure or peace. Or it may be something that seems rather insignificant. Look at it. Pray about it. Allow the prayer to arise spontaneously from your heart—whether intercession, praise, repentance, or gratitude.

**5. Look toward tomorrow.** Ask God to give you light for tomorrow's challenges. Pay attention to the feelings that surface as you survey what's coming up. Are you doubtful? Cheerful? Apprehensive? Full of delighted anticipation? Allow these feelings to turn into prayer. Seek God's guidance. Ask him for help and understanding. Pray for hope.

St. Ignatius encouraged people to talk to Jesus like a friend. End the Daily Examen with a conversation with Jesus. Ask forgiveness for your sins. Ask for his protection and help. Ask for his wisdom about the questions you have and the problems you face. Do all this in the spirit of gratitude. Your life is a gift, and it is adorned with gifts from God. End the Daily Examen with the Our Father.

<http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-examen/how-can-i-pray>