

Day 9 Tuesday 9th February: Imagine Climbing a Tree



Praying with the imagination: Last week on day 3 we used an Ignatian imaginative prayer exercise to explore a passage.

Today I invite you to use the same principle but with a different passage. This approach works well with gospel or Old/New Testament scenes where there is action taking place rather than passages of teaching or poetry. Do refer back to the information given on day 3.

You can use the principles set out in the box or you might like some more guidance from page 31 to help you through.

Keeping on the theme of trees today we meet Zacchaeus as he encounters Jesus in Luke 19: 1-10

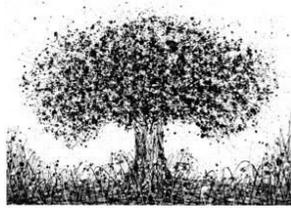
Ignatian Imaginative Reading of the Bible

1. **Take a few moments to become still and quiet.**
Invite God to work through your imagination as you pray with the passage.
Ask God for what you want (not sure? Use: "To know you more clearly, love you more dearly, follow you more nearly".
2. **Read through the text** two or three times until you are thoroughly familiar with the story. Then let the scene gradually build up in your mind's eye. Take your time, see everything that is around, hear, feel, taste, and smell.
3. **Where are you?** Take your own place in the unfolding scene. You may start as a bystander, or one of the central characters, or simply enter into the action as yourself.
4. **Let yourself be drawn** naturally into conversation with a character or another participant. Stay in the scene for as long as you have chosen to, and then draw the prayer to a close.

Other suitable passages for this imaginative approach:

Peter walks on the water	Matthew 14: 22-33
The cure of Bartimaeus	Mark 10: 46-52
Call of four disciples	Luke 5: 1-11
Jesus washes the disciples' feet	John 13: 1-17
Moses and the burning bush	Exodus 3: 1-6
The call of Samuel	1 Samuel 3: 1-10

Praying Imaginatively with Zacchaeus: Luke 19 1-10



1. **Take a few moments to become still and quiet.**

Invite God to work through your imagination as you pray with the passage. Ask God for what you want from the encounter (not sure? Use: "To know you more clearly, love you more dearly, follow you more nearly". Stretch your muscles, take some deep breaths, be comfortable.

2. **Read through the text** - sometimes it helps to read aloud

1st reading: Familiarise yourself with the story.

If you need information to help you understand, do this on the first reading.

2nd and 3rd Reading: Become familiar with the story.

Let the scene unfold: let it gradually build up in your mind's eye. Take your time, see everything that is around, hear, feel, taste, and smell.

What might the town of Jericho look like? Where does the scene take place?

What is it like to be in the crowd? What does it feel like, can you sense how close the people are? Who are they?

What are the sounds? Smells?

We know that Zacchaeus is wealthy - how does he look in relation to everyone else?

Imagine what the sycamore tree might look like: texture, height, leaves etc

3. **Where are you?** Take your own place in the unfolding scene.

You may start as one of the crowd or an onlooker. You might become Zacchaeus as he makes his decision to climb the tree.

What is it like trying to get a glimpse of Jesus?

What does Jesus look like?

As Jesus comes nearer how does your anticipation grow?

What must it have been like when Jesus stops and looks up at Zacchaeus.

What is it like for Jesus to see you?

4. **Let yourself be drawn** naturally into conversation with a character or another participant - a member of the crowd, with Zacchaeus, with Jesus.

Why has Zacchaeus come today - what was his hope?

What do you want to say to Jesus?

Stay in the scene for as long as you have chosen to, and then draw the prayer to a close.

Note down your reflections: it may be just one word, an observation, a memory, or an image. Maybe you have noticed something new or maybe something has spoken directly to you. Be careful and remember to use discernment to judge if what you are hearing is from God.

Luke 19 1-10 NIV translation

19 Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. 2 A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector* and was wealthy. 3 He wanted to see who Jesus was, but because he was short he could not see over the crowd. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree* to see him, since Jesus was coming that way.

5 When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, “Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.” 6 So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly.

7 All the people saw this and began to mutter, “He has gone to be the guest of a sinner.”

8 But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”

9 Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

**A chief tax collector was a senior position with some authority, Tax collectors were despised they were often Jews collecting money from Jews for the Roman regime and they were not always known for their honesty.*

Luke 19 1-10 The Message translation

19 1-4 Then Jesus entered and walked through Jericho. There was a man there, his name Zacchaeus, the head tax man* and quite rich. He wanted desperately to see Jesus, but the crowd was in his way—he was a short man and couldn’t see over the crowd. So he ran on ahead and climbed up in a sycamore tree* so he could see Jesus when he came by.

5-7 When Jesus got to the tree, he looked up and said, “Zacchaeus, hurry down. Today is my day to be a guest in your home.” Zacchaeus scrambled out of the tree, hardly believing his good luck, delighted to take Jesus home with him. Everyone who saw the incident was indignant and grumped, “What business does he have getting cozy with this crook?”

8 Zacchaeus just stood there, a little stunned. He stammered apologetically, “Master, I give away half my income to the poor—and if I’m caught cheating, I pay four times the damages.”

9-10 Jesus said, “Today is salvation day in this home! Here he is: Zacchaeus, son of Abraham! For the Son of Man came to find and restore the lost.”

**Not only did Zacchaeus climb a sycamore tree because of his size but maybe also because it would not be safe for him to walk unprotected in such a crowd - the leaves might give him some more protection. Climbing a tree is not typical for a man of his position, it was probably a shameful thing to do!*