



DIOCESE OF ARLINGTON

YOUTH, CAMPUS, &
YOUNG ADULT MINISTRIES



ENCOUNTERS



ENCOUNTER SACRED SCRIPTURE

“The word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword ...” (Hebrews 4:12). Encounter Sacred Scripture like never before! Get to know God’s word; apply its relevance to your daily life. There is something welcoming and cozy about sitting around a campfire with a family or group of friends. While enjoying the warmth and fellowship of a campfire, explore the meaning and depth of Scripture and allow it to fuel your personal prayer life. This Encounter consists of five Scripture studies which revolve around stories of fire from the Scriptures. Use this Encounter to teach young people how to read Scripture, apply it to their lives, and continue a regular practice of spending time with God’s word!

This document provides a general overview of this experience, however, please go to www.tinyurl.com/sacredbible on your portable device (or scan the QR code below) for links to the full experience.



WHAT IS SACRED SCRIPTURE?

Sacred Scripture is that part of Divine Revelation that God wanted written down for us and for our salvation. In Sacred Scripture, we come to know the will of God and his plan for us. God, an incredible mystery in himself, has chosen to reveal himself to us! He has been revealing himself to man since the beginning of human history! This is what we call Divine Revelation. Sacred Scripture is the word of God, put down into writing in the language of human authors. We call Scripture the word of God, and indeed it is! But do you know who also is the Word of God? Answer: **Jesus!** Jesus is the fullness of God's Revelation. He is indeed the Word, through whom all things were made (John 1) – consubstantial (of one substance) with the Father!

HOW DID THE BIBLE COME ABOUT?

The Bible didn't just drop out of Heaven the way we have it now. It developed over time. The message of the greatness of God and his interaction with his people in Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Moses and the prophets, was passed on over time in a great oral tradition, before being eventually written down. (There were some writings about God and his people in circulation before and after Christ that were not included in the Bible.) How was the official list of the books of the Bible determined? Answer: by the decision of the early Church. The regional Church councils of Hippo (393 A.D.) and Carthage (397 A.D.) confirmed the 46 books for the Old Testament. This would later be solemnly affirmed at the Council of Trent in the 16th century. The official list of the books of the Bible is known as the **canon** of the Bible or Sacred Scripture.

TRANSLATIONS

The original language of the Bible is Greek and Hebrew. But since most of us are not Greek and Hebrew scholars – we must therefore read a translation of the Bible. Not all translations are alike! Some do a better job conveying the original text and meaning of the Bible than others. There are two general approaches when translating the sacred text – one is to focus more on a literal translation of the text word for word (known as a literal translation); while the other is to focus more on making sure the meaning of the text is accurately conveyed (known as a dynamically equivalent translation). It's a bit tricky – because a point being made in the ancient Greek or Hebrew – might not sound right when simply translated word for word into a modern language. This is a task of translators of the Bible – to provide a faithful rendering of what the original text is saying while attempting to make a readable translation. Here is a helpful Bible Translations Guide from Catholic Answers: <https://www.catholic.com/tract/bible-translations-guide>. This is an approved list of translations from the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB): <https://tinyurl.com/bibletrans>.

THE SENSES OF SCRIPTURE

One passage of Scripture often has multiple meanings. These meanings or senses are called the literal and the spiritual. The spiritual sense is further divided into the allegorical, moral, and anagogical (or eschatological). The literal refers to simply what the words convey according to “sound interpretation” (CCC 116). The allegorical refers to the meaning of the text in Christ, or what the passage tells us about Christ. The moral sense of Scripture teaches us how to live our lives. The anagogical sense speaks of the final destiny of man in Christ, and in the fulfilled Kingdom of God. For more on the senses of Scripture - check out this article: <https://tinyurl.com/biblesenses>.

LECTIO DIVINA

Lectio divina is a centuries-old method of praying with God's word. Lectio divina literally means a divine reading. It is a prayerful reading of Scripture – a reading of Scripture in which we delve deeply into the meaning of the word, while meditating on the passage.

To begin this “divine reading,” select a passage – perhaps an instance in the life of Christ, or an episode from the Old Testament. It is helpful to take a few deep breaths, calm yourself, prayerfully repeat the name of Jesus, and invoke the presence of the Holy Spirit.

There are four general stages of lectio divina.

- 1) **Lectio** (read) – read the passage 1-3 times (usually a passage not more than 10 verses long). Focus on a word or phrase.
- 2) **Meditatio** (meditate) – seek understanding, engage thought, imagination, emotion, and desire. Allow the Holy Spirit to give meaning to the text. Perhaps reflect on: why does this word or phrase stand out? What is the Truth of this passage.
- 3) **Oratio** (pray) – enter into dialogue with God. Share your thoughts with him; seek to understand his will.
- 4) **Contemplatio** (contemplate) – spend time in silent prayer, fixed on Christ himself.

Lectio divina affords us an opportunity to “Be still, and know that I am God,” as Psalm 46 teaches us. St. John of the Cross tells us “seek in reading and you will find in meditation; knock in prayer and it will be opened to you in contemplation.”

BUILDING A CAMPFIRE

As any scout or survivalist will tell you and any quick online search confirms, there are dozens of ways to build a fire. Different methods are used based on weather conditions, terrain, fuel availability, etc. We'll just focus on one tried and true method...the log cabin fire. More detail on fire building may be found at the encounters website: www.tinyurl.com/sacredible.

Keys to a good fire:

- God, family and/or good friends, chocolate, marshmallows, and graham crackers!
- Be certain to pick safe spot to build your fire and that the conditions are appropriate.
- Build small teepee of twigs and kindling around tinder. (Tinder are small items that will start your fire quickly such as wood shavings, dry bark, dry grass, dry lint, etc.)
- Place 2 largest logs on either side of teepee and then lay next 2 largest logs perpendicular (and on top of) the first logs.
- As you ascend, each layer should be composed of the next 2 smallest logs and the log direction changes – perpendicular to the previous layer.
- Carefully light the tinder at the bottom of the teepee.
- Be sure to have a bucket of water nearby to quickly extinguish the fire in an emergency and always ensure that all coals and flames are extinguished when you are done. Never leave a fire unattended. Leave no trace!



Bible Study: The Burning Bush — Exodus 3

Let's focus on the story of the burning bush from Exodus 3. To better comprehend this story, we must understand the larger context of this episode in the history of salvation. The Bible can, in some respect, be summed up in the following sentence: "The Bible is the story of God's people moving from slavery to the freedom of the children of God."

Before we begin, let us start with prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to enlighten our minds and hearts to understand his word.

Opening Prayer: Holy Spirit, teach us how to pray. Open the eyes of our heart. Free us from the blindness caused by our sin. Free us from the slavery of sin that conceals your word. Gives us a heart aflame with your love and your truth. Help us to see and to understand your word as living and true. Come, Holy Spirit, enkindle in us the fire of your word. Come, Holy Spirit, come. Amen.

Discussing our experience with fire:

- When we build a fire, we often refer to it as one single fire. Is an ever-changing fire the same fire or many unique fires? What happens when the fire stops changing?
- Each fire is unique — there has never been a fire that is exactly like any other fire that has ever existed.
- Earth is the only *known* planet where conditions, including oxygen levels, will allow fire to occur.

Who can share one of their most memorable campfires?

Read Exodus 3: 1-15

Points for understanding:

We are all probably familiar with the story of slavery in Egypt. Abraham was called out of his land to a 'foreign land' — modern day Israel. Joseph, one of the sons of Jacob (a descendant of Abraham), was sold into slavery by his brothers and brought to Egypt.

A severe famine struck the land of Israel and the brothers traveled to Egypt to find food. They rediscovered their brother Joseph whom they thought was dead. There is much more to the story, but this is how the descendants of Abraham ended up in Egypt.

The beginning of Exodus says that a new king came to power who despised the Hebrews, enslaving them through hard physical labor. God chose Moses to be the instrument through which He will save His people and set them free. There are many elements to the story, but we will focus on why God set them free.

Why did God want to set His people free? Free for what?

So that they will be free to worship – worship God Himself — the one true God. Let's look at a passage from the Gospel of John – Chapter 4:19-23. Jesus meets a Samaritan woman at a well. Take a moment and read this passage. Jesus here focuses on the Father's desire for 'true worshipers' who will worship Him in spirit and truth.

Elsewhere in the Gospel of Luke, Zechariah, father of John the Baptist, rejoices that they will be "free to worship him [God] without fear" all the days of his life (Luke 1:74). This prayer is rooted in the burning bush story of Exodus – and in the vital importance of the People of God being able to worship God in freedom and truth! This is a key to life. We are, by nature, worshipping beings.

What does it mean to worship God in spirit and in truth?

What are some things that people 'worship' today that are not God? How do all these worldly things eventually let us down?

What is the primary way that Catholics worship God? (Answer: in the Mass and through the Eucharist)

Final Question: What is one thing you learned in this study? Or, one thing you want to hold onto?

Closing Prayer: From St. Paul's second letter to Timothy:

Let us pray: "For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline." – 2 Timothy 1:6-7.

Lord, we thank you for this gathering and for the fire of Your love. Give us your grace and your life so that we will be a people aflame with your love. We ask all this through Christ your son. Amen.

This is an overview of a longer Bible study found at www.tinyurl.com/sacredbible. Check out this and four other Bible studies at the Encounter's website.