

An abstract painting with vibrant colors and thick brushstrokes. The composition is dominated by a large, horizontal band of bright orange and red in the center. Above this band, there are layers of yellow and light blue. Below the orange band, there are deep blues and dark blues, with some white and light blue strokes. The overall effect is one of intense energy and movement, with visible texture from the paint application.

PRAYING WITH YOUR IMAGINATION

Ancient Practices Series

Created by Megan Koch

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DiscipleshipPath.com provides an outcome-based pathway for one on one discipleship. This guided journey through the basics of the Christian faith is a mix of original and curated content created by the church for the church.

DiscipleshipPath.com was created by pastors Phil Wiseman and Megan Koch at Table Church in Des Moines, IA. You can contact them directly at hello@tablechurchdsm.org.

Table Church exists to invite people to the way of Jesus. We pursue God, create belonging, do justice, and make disciples. Find more discipleship tools at tablechurchdsm.org/resources.

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PRAYING WITH YOUR IMAGINATION

The Practice of Seeing

"For it is not knowing much, but realizing and relishing things interiorly, that contents and satisfies the soul." — Ignatius of Loyola

The Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius is a classic Christian text compiled from the 16th century. Ignatius created this strategic, practical journey out of his own ministry as a priest and founder of the Jesuit order. These practices were created as a practical "pathway" to encourage priests to encounter Christ and become more like him. These exercises are an invitation to be formed and perfected by interaction with Jesus. It is only by doing something *with* Jesus that we move from knowing *about* him, to knowing Jesus *himself*.

When we know Jesus, we come to know ourselves rightly. He shows us who we really are. A disciple who truly understands who he or she is will never settle for less than the full life in Christ they are offered right now. Disciples live in alert understanding of the present Kingdom of God right here, right now. This sounds very grand, but it is indeed possible, and even *expected* for you as a follower of Jesus. This kind of life is rooted in the regular practice of becoming still, quiet, and obedient to the promptings of the Holy Spirit. When Jesus speaks, respond. When Jesus gives you a command, do it. When Jesus invites you to enjoy your life, take him up on it. You're a disciple.

Ignatius inspired a practice of imaginative, interactive prayer; prayer that exchanges holy words and pictures back and forth between us and God. This is prayer that engages our full sacred mind and imagination in participating in prayer and Scripture *with* Jesus. This is prayer that invites Jesus to *show and speak*, to take us by the hand and pull us in to what he is doing. Perhaps you've already practiced *lectio divina*, or "divine reading". This practice is traditionally known as *visio divina*, "divine seeing".

Wonder if it's ok to pray with your imagination? After all, isn't it all just in your head? Consider this: if you've ever had the enemy try to use your thoughts and imagination to carry you away, or had a nagging voice remind you of everything you're trying to let go, you know your mind is a very active place, and your thoughts are indeed deeply connected to your life with God. If the enemy of your heart targets your imagination, you can know it's all an attempt to corrupt a core place the Maker of your heart speaks. Just ask Jesus to shut down all the lesser voices so his words, and his pictures, rise to the top.

THE PRACTICE

The *Anima Christi* is an ancient prayer nestled deeply in the Ignatian tradition. Practice engaging all your senses as you read this prayer.

Read it to know it, then invite Jesus to show himself working this prayer out in you and with you. Surrender and engage all your faculties in giving yourself over to it. See what he does. Ask Jesus to do something to you, and he will.

Anima Christi

Soul of Christ

Soul of Christ, sanctify me.

Body of Christ, save me.

Blood of Christ, inebriate me.

Water from the side of Christ, wash me. Passion of Christ, strengthen me.

O Good Jesus, hear me.

Within Thy wounds hide me.

Suffer me not to be separated from Thee. From the malignant enemy defend me. In the hour of my death, call me.

And bid me come to Thee.

That, with Thy Saints, I may praise Thee. Forever and ever.

Amen.