

LESSON 29: There and Here



REFERENCE

Page 134 [FANTASY MEDITATIONS]



WHAT YOU NEED

- (2)(4) TSM: 'There and Here'

AIM

- To expose the learners to new ways of praying through meditation

OUTCOMES

- EXP Learners dispose themselves to encounter God through a fantasy meditation.
- DAP Learners appreciate the value of using a range of prayer forms to develop their relationship with God.

TEACHER'S NOTE

This lesson makes use of a fantasy meditation. When preparing the lesson you need to decide how closely you want to follow the given script. However, if you decide to introduce changes of your own, you need to work on this carefully beforehand, as losing your way in the middle of the exercise can spoil the experience for all. Note that the italicized remarks on the Lesson Materials page are not to be read to the class. They are provided as a help for you in the feedback part(s) of the lesson.

LESSON OUTLINE

1 Introduction

Introduce the class to the idea that this lesson aims to provide an inner experience. They should therefore put *everything* away in order to minimise the chance of being distracted, and thus remain focused.

2 Fantasy Meditation

Settle the class, perhaps by asking the learners to quieten down and to focus on their breathing. When all are quiet and relaxed, follow the meditation given in Part I of the Lesson Materials page 'There and Here'. Read gently, and slowly, but loud enough for all to hear. Remember to give enough time, wherever necessary, to the learners to imagine what needs to be imagined. Stay standing (or sitting) in one spot as walking around will distract them.

3 Feedback

- Ask who enjoyed the experience.
- Ask learners if anyone would like to share a part of their experience.
- Ask if anyone has any questions or comments.

4 Experiences of God

Give the learners a second experience of fantasy meditation, but this time drawing their attention to God. Use the text in Part 2 of the Lesson Materials page.

5 Conclusion

Thank the learners for their participation. Remind them that there are many prayer methods. Remind them (if they are using logbooks in this process) to record their experiences with particular methods. While this helps them to remember a wide range of prayer-forms, it also enables them to become aware of their own individual prayer preferences.

OTHER IDEAS

6 Developing the Power

Use the following suggestion to help learners develop their ability to fantasise successfully:

“If you think you are not able to use your fantasy at all, try this: Look at some object in front of you for a while. Now close your eyes and see if you can visualise that object mentally. Notice how many details you are able to capture. Then open your eyes and look at the object again and notice what it is you missed in your mental image. Close your eyes again and see how many details of your object you can recapture, how vividly you can see it . . . You can try something similar with your imaginative sense of hearing: listen to a few bars of music played on a recorder . . . recapture them mentally . . .replay the tape and notice what you missed ... It is thus that you will gradually develop your power to fantasise.”

(Anthony De Mello. 1980. *Sadhana: A Way to God*. Anand, India: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, p 61)

MATERIALS

TEACHER

- Anthony De Mello. 1980. ‘There and Here’ from *Sadhana: A Way to God*. Anand, India: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash p 59-61



Lesson Materials



There and Here

Part I

There is an unsuspected and untapped source of power and life in our fantasy. I want to show this to you through an experiment before I introduce you to the use of fantasy in contemplation.

Close your eyes. Take up a restful posture. Quieten yourself for a while through one of the awareness exercises. For all fantasy work it is important that your mind be quiet and rested and peaceful . . .

Now withdraw in fantasy to some place in which you experienced happiness in the past . . . Once you have chosen the place, spend some time recapturing every detail of the place . . . Use each one of your imaginative senses for this: see the objects in that place, the colours, hear every sound again, touch and taste and smell if that is possible, till the place becomes as vividly present as possible to you . . .

What are you doing? . . . What are you feeling? . . .

After being in this place for some five minutes come back to the present, to your existence in this room in which we are now . . . Notice as many details of your situation here as possible . . . Notice, especially, what you are feeling here . . . Stay with this for some three minutes . . .

Now return to the place to which you had withdrawn in fantasy . . . What do you feel now? . . . Is there any change in the place or in your feelings? . . .

Return again to this room . . . and keep moving back and forth, between that place and this room, noticing each time what you are feeling and any change in feelings that occur in you . . .

After a few minutes I shall ask you to open your eyes and end the experiment, and to share your experience with us if you wish.

NOT TO BE READ

In the sharing that follows this exercise most people tell me they feel refreshed and strengthened. They retire in fantasy to some place where they have experienced love or joy or deep peace and silence in the past . . . When they recapture the scene in their imagination they are also able to recapture the emotions that they originally experienced in that scene.

The return to the room/...

Lesson Materials

THERE AND HERE (cont)

The return to the room where they actually are often proves painful . . . But as they keep moving back and forth between the place of their fantasy and the room, they bring back with them from the fantasy place a good deal of the positive emotion they experienced there. They come back refreshed and strengthened. And, strange as it may seem, their perception of present reality becomes sharpened. Far from serving as an escape from reality, as many people fear when they withdraw into their fantasy world, this withdrawal has helped them to plunge more deeply into present reality - to perceive it better and to come to grips with it with renewed vigour.

The next time you feel tired and bored try this experiment and see what it does for you. You may be one of those people who have rarely used their power of fantasy and find it difficult in the beginning to imagine anything vividly and so you will need some practice before you can get the full benefits of this invigorating exercise. But if you persevere you will eventually succeed.

Make sure, when you try this experiment next, that you genuinely fantasize and not just remember the scene or event. The difference between fantasy and memory is that in fantasy I actually re-live the event I remember. I am no longer conscious of my present surroundings. As far as my mind and consciousness is concerned, I am actually in my fantasy place. Thus, if I am fantasising a scene on the sea-shore I imagine that I hear once again the roar of the waves, I feel again the sun beating on my bare back, I feel the touch of the hot sand under my feet . . .and, as a result, I experience, once again, all the feelings that I had when that scene first took place.

Part 2

Let us now spiritualise the experiment I gave you above and get you to draw some spiritual profit from it.

Close your eyes and quieten yourself for a while . . .
Now withdraw in fantasy to any place where you experienced God in the past. . .

Follow the same procedure I suggested in the previous experiment . . .
move to and from that place and this one . . . See if you can recapture something of the spiritual experience you had in the past and bring with you into the present some of the spiritual power that that experience gave you.

LESSON 30: Spiritual Reading



REFERENCE

Page 135[SPIRITUAL READING]



WHAT YOU NEED

- (2) Spiritual reading materials
- (2) LSM: 'Spiritual Reading'

AIM

- To introduce learners to spiritual reading, and to encourage them to practice it

OUTCOMES

- KUI Learners recognise the enrichment to spiritual life that spiritual reading brings.
- DAP Learners incorporate spiritual reading into their devotional practice.

TEACHER'S NOTE

You will need to assemble a wide range of spiritual reading for this lesson, including short books, pamphlets, articles from suitable magazines, newspapers, and journals. See the recommendations in *CORD*, p 135 where the emphasis is placed on 'short reads'. Apart from your own resources, you could also approach colleagues, learners, and friends to recommend some good reading. Perhaps they will be willing to let you put these on display. If your school is fortunate enough to have a good library, then the librarian may be able to help you choose material suitable for this age group.

But, what qualifies as spiritual reading? A short answer to this is any reading that nourishes the spirit, or that guides us in living as full, and fulfilled, human beings. Scripture obviously qualifies, but the emphasis in this process should be on other kinds of inspired literature. Two small samples are provided on the Lesson Materials page 'Spiritual Reading'.

If possible, set up an attractive reading corner in the classroom, or, if possible, use a venue without desks and chairs, apart from what you need for display purposes. Use cushions, a mat, or other decorative objects that create an area of comfort. You could also ask learners to bring to bring things from home. Display the spiritual reading you have been able to collect so that learners are able to see the range – they will have the opportunity to look at it, and to select an item (or two) to browse through. You might also bring a CD/cassette player and some soft, instrumental music.

LESSON OUTLINE

I Introduction

Ask the learners to arrange themselves in groups of three. Ask them to:

- discuss what kind of books/magazines/literature they like to read, and why?
- quickly share a favourite/significant story or article from a book or publication with the group.
- discuss the benefits of reading.

2 Display

Go to your display and, one at a time, hold up samples of spiritual literature. You might like to add the two samples provided on the Lesson Materials page 'Spiritual Reading'. Each time, ask if any of them are familiar with it. Elicit responses. Give them a bit of background to some of the material.

3 Reading Corner

For the bulk of the class time they choose some material from the display and sit on their own to read it. They should treat the classroom as a library and respect quietness.

4 Feedback

Ask them if they enjoyed their reading time. Elicit some comments.

5 Conclusion

Encourage them to take time out for themselves and to read some material of this nature.

OTHER IDEAS

6 Short Review

You could ask the learners to write up a short review of the material they have read.

7 Occasional Reading

From time to time, during the course of the year, read a suitable extract or article concerned with an aspect of spirituality. Sometimes you might be able to have a short class discussion around the themes or issues dealt with in the text.

MATERIALS

LEARNER

- CIE. 2005. 'Spiritual Reading'



Lesson Materials



Spiritual Reading

The Heart of the Matter

And the Lord God said:

I myself will dream a dream within you –
Good dreams come from me you know...
My dreams seem impossible,
not too practical,
not for the cautious man or woman –
a little risky sometimes,
a trifle brash perhaps...
Some of my friends prefer to rest more comfortably,
in sounder sleep,
with visionless eyes –

But, from those who share my dreams
I ask a little patience, a little humour
some small courage, and a listening heart –
Then they will risk,
and wonder at their daring ...
run - and marvel at their speed...
build - and stand in awe at the beauty of their building ...
You will meet me often as you work
in your companions who share your risk ...
in your friends, who believe in you enough
to lend their own dreams
their own hands, their own hearts
to your building ...
In the people who will find your doorway
stay a while, and walk away, knowing they, too,
can find a dream.

There will be sun filled days,
and sometimes it will rain - A little variety!
both come from me
So, come now – be content –
It is my dream you dream
my house you build ...
my caring you witness ...
my love you share –
and this is the heart of the matter. (Anon)

There I grow again/...

Lesson Materials

SPIRITUAL READING (cont)

There I grow again

The Great Barrier Reef stretches 1,800 miles from New Guinea to Australia. Tour guides regularly take visitors to view the reef. On one tour, the guide was asked an interesting question. "I notice that the lagoon side of the reef looks pale and lifeless, while the ocean side is vibrant and colourful. Why is this?"

The guide gave an interesting answer; "The coral around the lagoon side dies early because the water is still and stagnant, with no challenge for its survival. However, the coral on the ocean side is constantly being tested by wind, waves, storms with surges of power. It has to fight for survival every day of its life. As it is challenged and tested, it changes and adapts. It grows healthy. It grows strong. And it reproduces." Then he added, "That's the way it is with every living organism."

That is how it is with people. Because we are removed from nature working in air-conditioned offices, living in concrete buildings, technology driven and seeking safety from the cycles of nature, we suffer from a false sense of control. When we are challenged and tested, we come alive. Just like coral pounded by the sea, we grow. Physical demands can cause us to grow stronger. Mental and emotional stress can produce tough-mindedness and resiliency. Testing can produce strength of character, faith, gratitude and a peace that surpasses all understanding.

So if you feel the winds of change and the waves are up and down, just tell yourself, "There I grow again."

Sometimes the Lord calms the storm
Sometimes He lets the storm rage and calms His child. (Anon)

LESSON 31: Discernment



REFERENCE

Page 135[SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT]



WHAT YOU NEED

- (1) Recorded speech or song
- (4) LSM: 'Discerning the Spirit'

AIMS

- To help learners reflect on the need for discernment
- To invite learners to identify occasions in their lives where they discern the action of God

OUTCOMES

- KUI Learners know what discernment means
- SKL Learners are able to identify the action of God in their lives.

TEACHER'S NOTE

BACKGROUND

Discernment of Spirits: The 'discernment of spirits' is a term that recognises:

- that the Spirit of God is at work in the lives of people - and so in situations where human error is possible;
- that, under the guidance of the same Spirit, it is possible to determine which of these experiences lead towards God and which lead away from God.

It is our Christian expectation that we will be guided by the Spirit, and so naturally we look for and value 'religious experiences' - what we see as the Spirit at work in our lives. But such experiences are often ambiguous. I can be so subjective or so excited in my enthusiasm for what I have experienced that I can overlook or disregard the need for discretion, for critical reflection on what has occurred, or for assessing whether this or that is in harmony with the content of Christian faith.

Our history is littered with sad examples of people who have valued the intensity of an experience more than the All-wise God who may have approached them through that experience; they give their experience priority over God and God's mysterious dealings with them. They have - in their excited enthusiasm - sometimes led individuals or entire communities astray. It is 'discernment of spirits' that helps us to distinguish - in the ambiguity of the experience - what is of God and what is not.

This sense of ambiguity is found in our earliest experiences as a Church gifted with the Spirit. Paul advises: "Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise the words of prophets, but test everything; hold fast to what is good; abstain from every form of evil." (Thessalonians 5:19-22). And later on, the first letter of John counsels: "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; for many false prophets have gone out into the world." (1John 4:1)

They are reminding us that all these events or experiences need to be tested prayerfully to determine their authenticity. Paul, in fact, included 'the discernment of spirits' in his list of important charisms given for the 'common good' of the community (1 Corinthians 12:10).

(Peter Gagen & others. 1997. *God's Love Poured Out... Prayers and Reflections*. Brisbane: Catholic Adult Education, p 31-32)

LESSON OUTLINE

1 Speech or Song

- i Begin by asking the class to listen to a recorded speech or song. Choose one that is likely to touch the learners in some way. As far as speeches go, you might choose one of Mandela's speeches or Martin Luther King's "I have a dream". If the speech is long, play a section of it.
- ii After the selection has been played, ask learners the following questions:
 - Can you describe the mood or feeling the piece created in you? (Joy? Peace? Happiness? Sadness? Anger?) How did it affect you?
 - Looking deeper, can you identify or judge the quality of spirit in the speaker/singer?

2 Place

- i Learners attempt to name the kind of spirit that seems to dominate in one of the following places. (You might allocate each one to a different group.)
 - your own home
 - the school cafeteria
 - some place where youth gather regularly
 - a bus station or similar place
 - the congregation at a typical Sunday Mass
 - a party or dance you attend
 - a busy downtown street
- ii They then consider the following questions:
 - Would you say the spirit you identified is in harmony with or in contradiction to the Spirit of Jesus? In other words, is the Spirit of Jesus present or absent?
 - If the situation seems to have several kinds of spirit' involved, which tends to dominate? '

3 Discernment

What you have been asking the learners to do in the preceding exercises is to discern. Unpack the meaning of this term for them. Here is a dictionary definition you could work with:

The power or faculty of the mind by which it distinguishes one thing from another; power of viewing differences in objects, and their relations and tendencies; penetrative and discriminate mental vision; acuteness; sagacity; insight; as, the errors of youth often proceed from the want of discernment.

<http://onlinedictionary.datasegment.com/word/discernment>

4 Personal Experience

- i Ask learners to recall experiences, such as being approached by a 'friendly' stranger, where they were not quite sure of the person's intentions. How would the ability to discern the spirit of the person have helped in making a response?
 - ii Ask learners to share experiences, where, on reflection, they were able to identify the action of God.
 - iii Invite them to read the Lesson Materials page 'Discerning the Spirit'.
 - iv Conclude by asking them to reflect again on the experiences they identified in ii, apply the criteria given on the Lesson materials page.
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OTHER IDEAS

5 Decision-Making

Ask learners how they make their important decisions. Do they ever ask God to help them with these decisions? Brainstorm the ways that God talks to us in response to our requests. Ask them to write down all the decisions that they need to make now in their lives (subject choice, who their friends should be, girlfriend/boyfriend questions).

Invite them to pray for guidance in making a particular decision, and for the ability to discern God's response. Ultimately, if we have discerned correctly, we should feel a sense of peace, even if the answer is a hard one to accept.

MATERIALS

LEARNER

- Peter Gagen & others. 1997. 'Discerning the Spirit' in *God's Love Poured Out... Prayers and Reflections*. Brisbane: Catholic Adult Education, p 32



Lesson Materials



Discerning the Spirit

Paul responded to different situations in the young churches by pointing to various criteria for "discerning the spirits":

- **judging the fruits of an action** (Galatians 5:19-23)

"...By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness of and self-control." (Galatians 5:22, 23)

So for example:

- **peace** (1 Corinthians 14:32,33 Romans 8:6;14:17)

"... for God is a God not of disorder but of peace. " (1 Corinthians 14:33)

- **love** (Philippians 1:9,10; Ephesians 4:14,15; 2 Corinthians 6:4-7)

" and this is my prayer that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight to you determine what is best. " (Philippians 1:9)

- **judging the effect in building up the Church** (1 Corinthians 14:4,12,26)

" ...Let all things be done for building up. " (1 Corinthians 14:26)

These were all helps to "living in the Spirit" or being "guided by the Spirit" in the development of the whole Christian life. As Paul summed it up:

"If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, competing against one another, envying one another."
(Galatians 5:25, 26)

And this follows upon the basic, fundamental understanding of discipleship:

"For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God." (Romans 8:14)

Jesus is the perfect embodiment of Christian discernment and his Spirit makes it possible for us to continue his way of discerning - vulnerable as we so often are to the possibility of error and the possibility of failure in recognising and following the Spirit.

LESSON 32: Bringing Nature Indoors



REFERENCE

Page 136 – 137[NATURE]



WHAT YOU NEED

- (2) Nature items
- (2) Magnifying glasses
- (3) LSM: 'Haiku'

AIM

- To build an appreciation for nature and a sense of the awesomeness of God

OUTCOMES

- DAP Learners have a deep appreciation for nature as a reflection of the awesomeness of God.

TEACHER'S NOTE

If the outing in Lesson 5 was not feasible, then this lesson will help you in some way to achieve the same objectives. Instead of going out to nature, you bring it to the class. This can be done in a number of ways. See the suggestions in *CORD*, p 136 (fourth bullet). In the lesson below we take up the suggestion to bring to the class interesting items from nature. You could collect these yourself or ask the learners to bring an item of their choice to the class.

LESSON OUTLINE

1 Introduction

To sharpen the learners' sense of awareness begin with the following exercise:

- i Quieten the class, removing any cause for distraction
- ii Silently and alone, ask learners to listen to the sounds inside and outside the classroom, and make a list. (Alternatively, they could make a list of the different colours they can identify.)

2 Presentation

- i Distribute the nature items you have collected, ensuring that each learner has one.
- ii If possible, supply each learner with a magnifying glass. (If learners are sitting at group tables, you could supply one per table and ask learners to give each a turn with it.)
- iii Give the class a good ten minutes to study their object closely, noting anything of unusual interest they might like to share.

3 Expression

- i Introduce the learners to the idea of *haiku*, a traditional poem form in Japanese literature. A description and some examples of the form are given on the Lesson Materials page 'Haiku'.
- ii Encourage learners to try writing a *haiku* on the object they have just studied.

4 Feedback

- i Ask who enjoyed the experience.
- ii Ask learners if anyone would like to share a part of their experience?
- iii Ask if anyone has any questions or comments?

OTHER IDEAS

5 Video

Show a documentary film on video that deals with an aspect of nature.

6 PowerPoint

If you have access to the internet and a data projector, you could make up your own slide show, featuring any number of natural wonders like planets, stars and galaxies, or microscopic images of living organisms.

MATERIALS

LEARNER

- <http://volweb.utk.edu/Schools/bedford/harrisms/haiku.htm> Haiku
- <http://www.isop.ucla.edu/shenzhen/2002ncta/cunningham/Webpage-HaikuPoems.htm>
Haiku examples



Lesson Materials



Haiku

Haiku is a poetic form and a type of poetry from the Japanese culture. Haiku combines form, content, and language in a meaningful, yet compact form. Haiku poets, which you will soon be, write about everyday things. Many themes include nature, feelings, or experiences. Usually they use simple words and grammar. The most common form for Haiku is three short lines. The first line usually contains five (5) syllables, the second line seven (7) syllables, and the third line contains five (5) syllables. Haiku doesn't rhyme. A Haiku must "paint" a mental image in the reader's mind. This is the challenge of Haiku - to put the poem's meaning and imagery in the reader's mind in ONLY 17 syllables over just three (3) lines of poetry!

© <http://volweb.utk.edu/Schools/bedford/harrisms/haiku.htm>

HAIKU EXAMPLES

As the wind does blow
 Across the trees, I see the
 Buds blooming in May

Falling to the ground,
 I watch a leaf settle down
 In a bed of brown.

The beaches waves hit
 Sounding of flooding water
 Soothes aches all over
 -Tiffany, age 13, L.A.

Silence around us
 Our watchful eyes hear the world
 Hands do the talking
 -Jennifer, Virginia

Rain falls, seeds sprout/...

Lesson Materials

HAIKU (cont)

Rain falls, seeds sprout
Continues life from something
Small but strong, it grows.
-Sarah, age 14 Cape Cod, MA

I like spring water
It makes me feel good inside
It takes my breath away.
-LaQuita, age 10, Georgia

Branches stretching out
To grab the sunsets colours
Night is approaching.
-Lisa H., age 11

White light shining through
patterns along the blank wall
brightening my day.
-Sandra, age 14

© <http://www.isop.ucla.edu/shenzhen/2002ncta/cunningham/Webpage-HaikuPoems.htm>