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Finding God in All Things, Including a Daily Commute: A Review of Opening to God

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Finding God in All Things, Including a Daily Commute: A Review of Opening to God

Abstract

"Using Lectio Divina can transform prayer—not just the doing of prayer, but the loving, trusting relationship with God."

Posting about the book *Opening to God* from *In All Things* - an online journal for critical reflection on faith, culture, art, and every ordinary-yet-graced square inch of God's creation.

<https://inallthings.org/finding-god-in-all-things-including-a-daily-commute-a-review-of-opening-to-god/?highlight=finding%20god%20in%20all%20things>

Keywords

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Disciplines

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Comments

In All Things is a publication of the [Andreas Center for Reformed Scholarship and Service](#) at Dordt University.

Finding God in All Things, Including A Daily Commute: A Review of *Opening to God*

Deb Bomgaars

July 20, 2021

Title: *Opening to God: Lectio Divina and Life as Prayer*

Author: David G. Benner

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How should Christians pray? That question is answered when Jesus gave his disciples the Lord's prayer, an excellent example of how to pray. Christians model prayers after the Lord's Prayer, including praise, thanks, requests, and asking for forgiveness. Yet, prayer often feels like obligation, except for those times when troubles occur and a short, desperate plea of "please, help me" is our prayer.

David Benner, in *Opening to God, Lectio Divina and Life as Prayer*, expands on how to pray; he explains how life is prayer and how to transform that life through conversation with God. *Opening to God* is an appropriate title—prayer as opening to God fills in the missing pieces of our feeble requests. Benner begins by discussing how to prepare for talking with God. God is there for us, but He initiates the prayer. Preparation begins by being open to communion with God. Preparation is vital because we engage in a loving relationship with Him; therefore, just as we desire to be in the presence of those we love on earth, we should also desire His presence, even if it is just presence, not words, not noise. It is liberating to imagine presence as prayer.

There are four movements to Lectio Divina prayer, four non-linear movements to pray unceasingly.

Prayer as attending.

Lectio is prayer as attending and should be the foundation of all prayer. Prayer as attending is feeling the God who is present, noticing how His loving presence is experienced daily. It is listening to the still, small voice of God. Benner uses the 'examen' as an example. At the end of the day, sit in stillness and allow your attention to roam over your day—note where you saw God and where you did not; during your reflection, ask for forgiveness, thank God and attend to God's presence. Attending prayer is feeling and knowing that God is present, moving from the examen at the end of the day to thinking about where God is present at every minute.

Eventually, God can be seen and felt and attended to throughout the day, not just at the end of it. Practicing the examen leads to a habit of seeing God in the present, not only in a review of the past.

I just completed a long day at work and am stepping into my car for the commute home, a time of transition, a time to decompress at the end of a busy day so that I can leave work behind and transition to responsibilities at home.

As I reflect on my day, usually a painful, difficult process, something about today seems different. Maybe that last meeting of the day made a difference in my attitude. A young woman in the meeting was unapologetically Christian. Every word she uttered was surrounded by faith, as if God's presence was physically next to her in the room. I marvel at her deep faith. My mind wanders around the events of the rest of the day, a normal ritual for my drive. I realize that God was present in every encounter, every situation, every email. Amazingly, I see it now, but did not see it at the time. I ask God to forgive me for not noticing Him and to give me strength to see Him more.

Prayer as pondering.

Pondering prayers are talking with God about our thoughts, wonderings, and reflections through journaling and theological reflection. Pondering or meditating prayers are conversations with God, using not only the mind, but the heart; once again, being in love and pouring your heart out to one who will never leave or manipulate, who will always love you.

A song comes on the radio, "Let me tell you about my Jesus." It is my grandson's favorite song. How can a seven-year-old understand why Anne Wilson wrote that song? His childlike faith is amazing and enviable. I sing along, worshipping my Savior—full volume. "Ain't no sinner that He can't save..."

Prayer as responding.

Responding prayers are praying with words, the prayers modeled after the Lord's prayer: Faith, Praise, Kingdom Hope, and Petitions and Intercession. Responding not only involves petitions; it is also a response to attending and pondering. Prayer is a two-way conversation, a conversation with God. Benner expands responding prayers to include other creative means such as music, walking prayers, using objects like rosaries, and service to others as prayers. Prayer is more than just a quick "thanks" before a meal—it is part of the entirety of life. Songs can be responding prayers, listening, singing, playing...maybe a favorite song that plays in your mind. Use it as prayer. Words spoken by others have meaning for everyone.

The song ends, a news break discusses breaking news about another national controversy, reflecting deep divides within the country. As usual, I am troubled; it seems like the country is leaving its Christian values and adopting a self-centered worldview. Anne Wilson is still on my

mind: "Let me tell you about my Jesus." I decide to talk to God about my concerns. I tell him about my worries and fears. He answers, "I know, I am in control, I am not an absent Landlord. I love my children." I feel peace and say thanks.

Prayer as being.

Prayer as being is contemplation. It is wordless, trusting openness to God who dwells in the center of our being. It is beyond words. It is quiet rest in the beloved. An example is the Jesus prayer: saying the same phrase as you inhale and exhale, taking God in and allowing him to fill you. Another example is a centering prayer: Select a word or phrase, ask for help in the process, turn your heart to God to be with God in love, and then use your word to re-center your being toward God if you get distracted. Do not have expectations. Let God reveal Himself to you. The response is prayer that is simply smiling at Him and feeling His presence.

I notice the scenery in a way I never saw it before. I can see God in the grass, the fields, the road. "Let me tell you about my Jesus." I want to continue to feel His presence, but my mind wanders, so I picture Him sitting in the passenger seat. He is wearing blue jeans and a T-shirt. We both sit in silence; His presence is enough. Today's commute is turning out to be more than transition—it is different. I feel His love and love Him back, finally understanding that He has been in my passenger seat all my life, waiting for me to see Him. "Let me tell you about my Jesus." My commute was not just transition; it was transformation.

I pull into the driveway and turn the ignition off. Jesus gets out, opens my car door, and takes my hand. He opens the door to my house, and I say, "Please come in, and don't ever leave."

Lectio Divina is life as prayer, and prayer as life; it is a full life of unceasing prayer, thus developing a relationship with God and finding God in all things. The presence of God will be felt, contemplated, communed with, and filled with rest. Benner's afterward, including self or group study exercises, discusses how trust is a key concept to develop within prayer. To be open to God means complete trust that He is in control, and He knows what he is doing. It is a surrender to Him. Surrender can happen during prayer—first, acknowledge an emotion, then welcome it, even if it is uncomfortable. Finally, let go...surrender it to God. Using Lectio Divina can transform prayer—not just the doing of prayer, but the loving, trusting relationship with God. Prayer is more than obligation; it is conversation with the God who has always been in the seat next to me. It is loving Him and desiring His presence.