

# Sunday 5th October 2025 - How To Read The Bible: Ignatian Imagination

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Preacher: Laura Edwards

[ 0 : 00 ] This morning we are going to continue in our series on how to read the Bible and we're going to explore Ignatian imagination.

! He's known for founding the Jesuits but also renowned for his use of spiritual exercises. So you might hear the wider term Ignatian spirituality. And what's unique about this is it uses an approach to prayer and reading the Bible that engages our imagination and senses. So Ignatian himself, previously a soldier, came to value this while he was convalescing in bed from a battle wound.

And as he read the stories of Christ he pictured himself being a pilgrim, heading to Jerusalem and placing himself among the stories and journeys happening.

[ 1 : 19 ] However, Ignatius wasn't the first to discover this way of using imagination. And in medieval times it would have been common to reflect in this way.

So for monks who couldn't read, they would have passages read to them multiple times and they would return to their cells to pray and let them unfold in their minds.

In fact, it's thought that Ignatius was inspired by meditations in a book from the 14th century from Ludolf of Saxony.

And actually the book cover on the right, it's translated into English and we can get that now. Although the cheapest I could see was about £80 for it, so I haven't got it yet.

But we know that Ludolf writes, if you want to draw fruit from these scenes of the mystery of Christ's life, you must offer yourself as present to what was said or done through our Lord Jesus Christ with the whole effective power of your mind.

[ 2 : 30 ] And he continues, many of these are narrated as past events, so you must meditate on them as though they were happening in the present moment.

Read then of what has been done as though they were happening now. Bring before your eye past actions as though they were present. So this form of contemplation takes the then of Jesus' story and it makes it now present and relevant to us.

And it can enable us to meet Jesus in a very real way. For both Ludolf and Ignatius, they don't want us to just think about Jesus, but to experience him, to meet him, for him to fill our senses.

And I think their wisdom can be just as relevant today as it was back then. But I also appreciate that there might be people sitting here thinking, well, I don't have a very good imagination, I really struggle to picture things, I might struggle to picture a gospel scene, I might lose concentration, or actually this just really isn't my thing and I don't think I would enjoy this.

And that's okay too. We are all different, we are all unique, and we all engage with God and the Bible. There's not just one way.

[ 4 : 02 ] But it's also worth noting that it's not just the visual sense that's engaged. Ignatius suggests that there's sight, hearing and feelings that are often stimulated through these spiritual exercises.

And you might find that one is more dominant for you. But the reality is, we're usually always using our imaginations, even if we don't realise.

When we read a book or an article, when we read a food recipe, we might walk through the steps in our mind, making a whole meal in our mind before we've actually done it.

So I came across this spirituality back in 2018. And I was facilitating a retreat for children's and youth workers.





And so now we're going to watch the video clip. And we use the video clips in church as it's another way of engaging with our visual senses.

So we're going to have a watch and see if there's anything similar or different to how you imagined, remembering there's no right or wrong way of this. Then they came to Jericho.

As Jesus and his disciples, together with a large crowd, were leaving the city, a blind man, Bartimaeus, which means son of Timaeus, was sitting by the roadside begging.

When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout, Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me. Many rebuked him and told him to be quiet, but he shouted all the more, Son of David, have mercy on me.

[ 24 : 20 ] Jesus stopped and said, Call him. So they called to the blind man, Cheer up, on your feet, he's calling you.

Throwing his cloak aside, he jumped to his feet and came to Jesus. What do you want me to do for you? Jesus asked him. The blind man said, Rabbi, I want to see.

Go, said Jesus. Your faith has healed you. Go. Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.

Go. So if you found this morning helpful, if you would like to do it again, there's lots of things online to help you.

There's lots of scripts you can listen to that you can just pop on at home, close your eyes and sort of get into that space. I've popped a few examples up there.

[ 25 : 40 ] There's the IgnatianSpirituality.com. The Pray As You Go app I find particularly helpful. They do a daily meditation and prayer, but also there's lots of resources on there as well, including some of these imaginative reflections.

And the same for Lectio 365. That's another good one. The other way of doing it is to choose a Bible passage, read it two or three times until you're familiar with it, and then find a quiet space to meditate on.

Some passages lend themselves really well to this kind of thing, and it's usually ones where Jesus is involved in conversation or something is happening. So when Jesus calls his disciples, when the woman anoints Jesus' feet, Zacchaeus the tax collector, when Jesus walks on water, when Jesus heals Jairus' daughter and the bleeding woman, healing in Simon's house, and when Jesus raises Lazarus.

And I'm sure there's lots more, if you might have a favourite Bible passage, that you would like to meditate on. So just to draw all of this together, there are lots of different ways to engage with the Bible.

But using your senses and imagination has been a technique used for centuries. And we can trust that when Jesus says, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened, that when we spend time engaging, that he will meet with us.

[ 27 : 21 ] Amen. Amen.