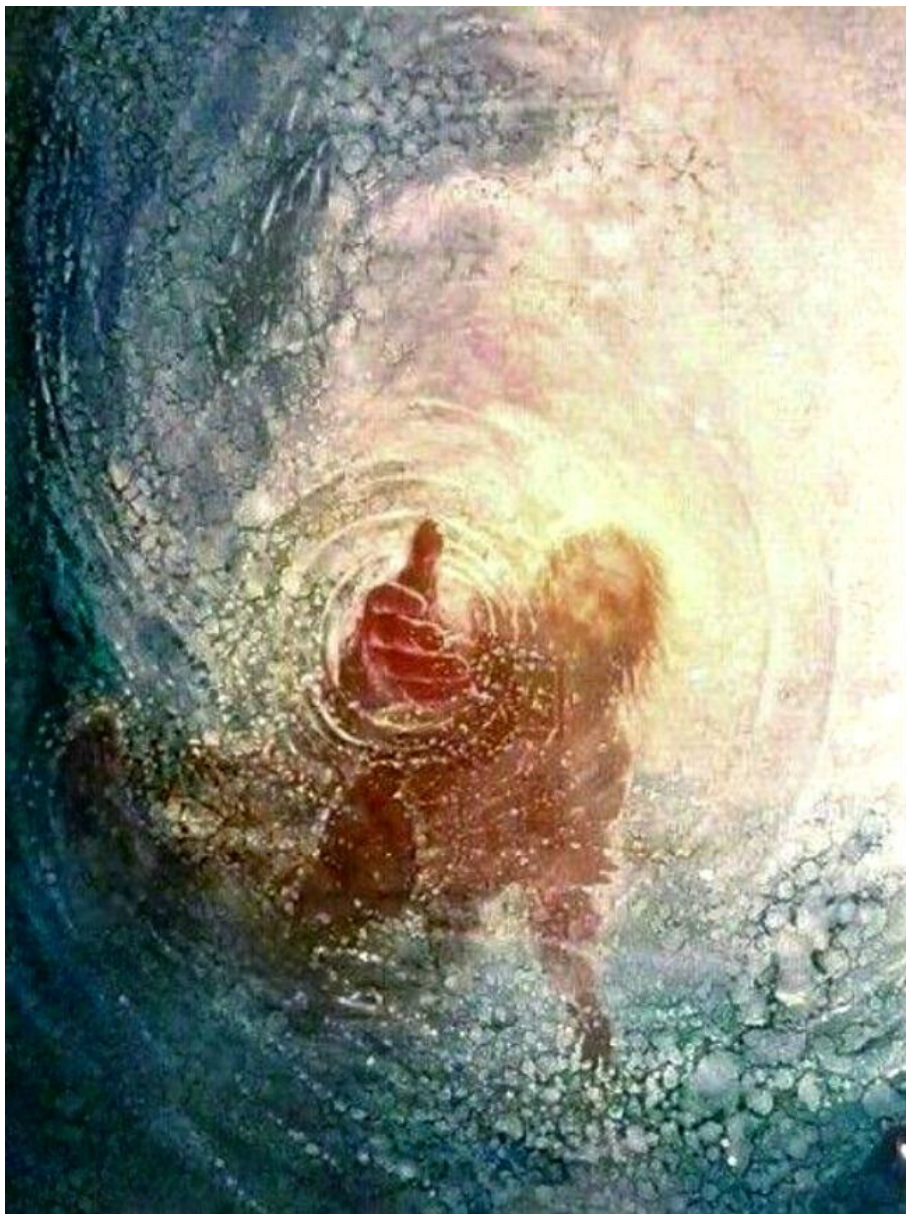


D.I.Y RETREAT GUIDE

Knowing God, Knowing Self

[Not for Beginners and the Faint of Heart 😊]



Introduction: Knowing God, Knowing Self

Welcome to this one-day retreat! We invite you to create the time and space to be with God as a “generous commitment to friendship with God, to form us in Jesus Christ” as you spend time getting to know God and know yourself better.

In his book *Knowing God*, J.I Packer tells us that “We can know a great deal about God without knowing Him.” There is a difference between “knowing about God” through gathering information, and “knowing God” where we encounter him intimately as he reveals himself to us through his Word. In this season many webinars, online courses, Zoom bible studies, podcasts have become available to us online, often overloading us with information about God. However, do we really know God or just know about God?

But what does it mean to “know God”? John Calvin at the beginning of his writings in *The Institute of the Christian Religion*, talks about Double Knowledge - “Nearly all wisdom we possess that is to say, true and sound wisdom, consists of two parts: The knowledge of God and the knowledge of ourselves. There is no deep knowing of God without a deep knowing of self and no deep knowing of self without a deep knowing of God.” Therefore, you can’t have one without the other. If you want to know God, you need to know yourself. Blaise Pascal warns us that “if we know God without knowing our own wretchedness, we will fall into pride, while if we only know ourselves without knowing God, we will become despair. Thus, knowing Jesus Christ strikes the balance because He shows us both God and our own wretchedness.” We can know Jesus through the Gospels.

This retreat invites you to deepen your knowledge of God and Self, through various meditations of Peter’s encounters with Jesus in the Gospel stories. As you accompany Peter in his journey of knowing God and knowing himself, would you also draw near and allow God to encounter you through these passages.

As you begin this retreat, may you echo Augustine’s prayer in the *Confessions*,
“Grant O Lord that I may know myself that I may know Thee”

Preparing for your retreat

This guide is designed for those who are familiar with quiet contemplative retreats and desire to spend a longer time in retreat with the Lord. While the schedule provided is based on a one-day retreat (about 8 hours), you may use the materials leisurely over a 2-3 days weekend retreat, or even over four 2-hour sessions if you’re unable to carve out longer stretches. Take it slow and savour your experience with God. Feel free to stay with a passage or a reflection longer if the Lord is inviting you to do that.

If you’re able to, do go somewhere nice and quiet where you can be away from home, routines or distractions. If you’re sharing space with others, try to find a quiet spot where you will be least interrupted or distracted. What makes a space sacred is the intention and desire of the person entering it – to retreat from normal life to be with God and God alone. Put your phone on silent mode if you’re not able to turn it off. Resist the temptation to check your email, social media and phone. Let your family members know you’re on a retreat so that they won’t disturb you.

Bring along with this guide your Bible, journal and writing & drawing materials. If you’re going outdoors remember to pack your sunscreen, sunglasses, mask and hand sanitizer. Please refrain from bringing a laptop, handphone, tablet, recreational reading, anything that will distract you.

Schedule for a One-day Retreat

9.00 am	Opening Session Once you've settled in, read through the "Introduction: Knowing God, Knowing Self" that will explain the theme and focus of this retreat. Then proceed to the "Prayer Exercise: Arrival," which is designed to help you to 'arrive' and enter into your retreat experience prayerfully and contemplatively.
9.30 am	Prayer Period #1: The Call
10.45 am	Prayer Period #2: Jesus, Peter and the Waves
12.00 pm	Lunch & Rest
1.00 pm	Personal Prayer #3: Peter's Denial
2.30 pm	Personal Prayer #4: Do You Love Me?
4.00 pm	Review of Retreat This final part helps you to review your retreat experience based on the insights you discovered and the refreshment you received earlier. End your retreat with a spirit of thankfulness and praise to God. Ask God for his blessings as you move back into your daily tasks.
5.00 pm	End of retreat

Please note: There will be two parts for each prayer period. We encourage you to begin the prayer period meditating on the selected passage using the "Imaginative Prayer" method (Appendix 1) by following the 'Guidelines in Praying Scripture' (Appendix 2). Invite God to speak into your soul through the prayerful receiving of his word. Don't rush but make this a spacious encounter with God. Journal your reflections. After that, you have the option of deepening your prayer on the same passage using a creative spiritual practice by engaging with an image, poem, reflection questions, written prayers or simply drawing. These creative processes help us to connect with our hearts as we pay attention to its inner movements, and help us to express our emotions and thoughts creatively and with greater clarity. As these practices may be new to some of you, approach them with an open heart and open mind, prayerfully asking the Holy Spirit to lead and guide you.

Prayer Exercise: Arrival

Sit in a comfortable position, close your eyes and take a few slow deep breaths.

Be aware that God is present in you and with you.

Take some time to notice...

... Thoughts that currently occupy your mind. (People or things that you have left undone or set aside to be able to enter into this retreat)

... Feelings and emotions that you carry. (Worry, anxious, sadness, fear, peace, joy etc)

... Sensations your body is holding. (Tiredness, stiffness, burdened, stress, pain etc)

Take some time with God to present to Him what you notice within you. Invite him to meet you in the midst of all you are feeling and experiencing.

What do you want to say to Him?

What does He want to say back to you?

Write down your desire or hope as you begin this retreat:

***Father,
I trust you today to hold the people I love,
to attend to the things I have left undone,
and to meet me in my place of worry, doubt or fear.
I turn my eyes and ears toward you and
I look for how you want to love me today.
Amen.***

If you feel tired or exhausted physically, you may want to take a rest or nap now, and allow your body to recover in order to be refreshed to pray.

Prayer Period #1: The Call

Use the **'Guidelines on Praying Scriptures'** (Appendix 2) to guide you in this scripture meditation using your senses and imagination.

Take your time to read **Matthew 4:18-22** slowly and thoughtfully, paying attention to the details in this story until you are familiar with it.

"As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." At once they left their nets and followed him. Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him."

Journal your review of prayer:

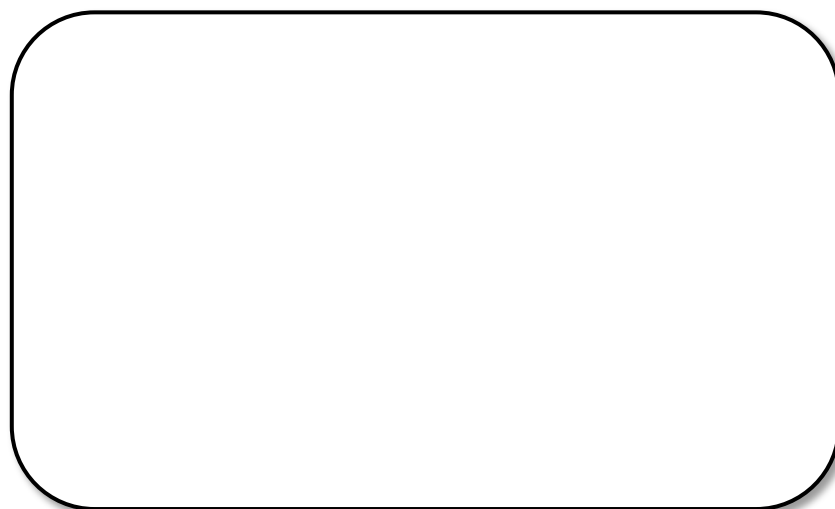
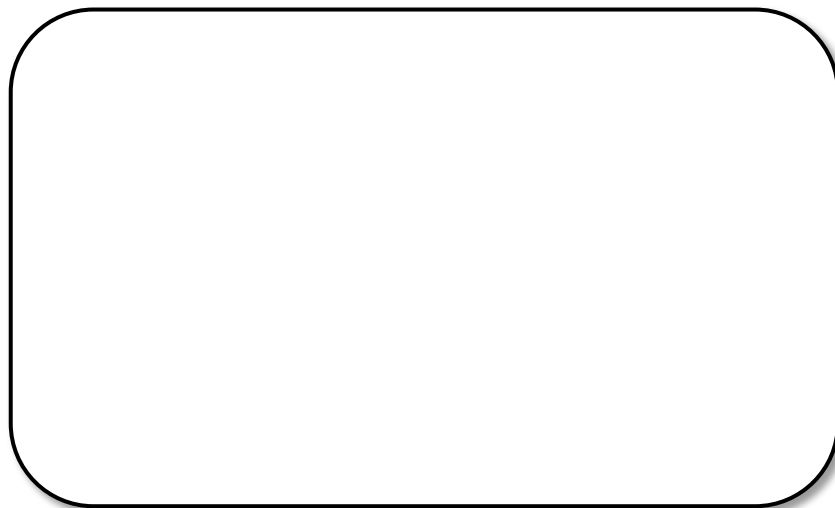
Deepening your prayer:

Recall the time when Jesus called you to “follow him” as you began your faith journey?

1. What was it that drew or attracted you to Jesus?

2. What was it that hindered you from following Jesus?

Draw 3 snapshots of your relationship with God (who is God in relation to you), at 3 points in your life: conversion, currently and the future (what you hope it can be).





Look at the 3 snapshots, what have you become aware of?

Wherever you find yourself now in your faith journey, may the words of this prayer express your desire you continue following Jesus.

Lord Jesus,
Help me to know you, to love you, to follow you
Help alleviate my fears
And fan the embers of trust within me
Give me strength to say yes to your invitations
The courage to continue my journey with you
Remind me that you are
The Way
The Truth
And the Life
And apart from you there is no life
But with you,
And with you alone
Is fullness of life,
Life everlasting.

~ Larry Warner, Journey with Jesus

Prayer Period #2: Reflection: Jesus, Peter and the Waves

Use the **'Guidelines on Praying the Scriptures'** to guide you in this scripture meditation using your senses and imagination.

Take your time to read **Matthew 14:22-33** slowly and thoughtfully, paying attention to the details in this story until you are familiar with it.

"Immediately Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead of him to the other side, while he dismissed the crowd. After he had dismissed them, he went up on a mountainside by himself to pray. Later that night, he was there alone, and the boat was already a considerable distance from land, buffeted by the waves because the wind was against it. Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake, they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear. But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid." "Lord, if it's you," Peter replied, "tell me to come to you on the water." "Come," he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. "You of little faith," he said, "why did you doubt?" And when they climbed into the boat, the wind died down. Then those who were in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God.""

Journal your review of prayer here:

Deepening your prayer:



'Stronghold' by Sieger Koder

You are invited to contemplate on the visual above to deepen your meditation on the passage.

Gaze

Allow your eyes to rest and gaze gently on the image.

Reflect

What in the image attracts you or draws your attention? What about it draws your attention?

Notice any feeling, memory or thought arising for you out of this? Allow space for these to unfold, simply noticing your experience and being present to what is stirring in your heart.

Respond

As your prayer deepens, be open to what the Holy Spirit is showing you. How are the feelings, thoughts, desires and meanings evoked by this image connect with your life? What invitation from God is there for you? How do you want to respond?

Turn to Jesus now, in your heart, and respond to Him.

Rest

In the remaining few minutes of your prayer simply rest in the graces and love of God for you.

God of uncertainty you call to us across the storm.
We long to come to you but fear to step on unsure ground.
Help us to trust your strong hand that holds us in our weakness.

Amen

~ Gemma Simmonds

Prayer Period #3: Peter's Denial

Use the 'Guidelines on Praying the Scriptures' to guide you in this scripture meditation using your senses and imagination.

Take your time to read **John 18:12-27** slowly and thoughtfully, paying attention to the details in this story until you are familiar with it.

"Then the detachment of soldiers with its commander and the Jewish officials arrested Jesus. They bound him and brought him first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jewish leaders that it would be good if one man died for the people. Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus. Because this disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard, but Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple, who was known to the high priest, came back, spoke to the servant girl on duty there and brought Peter in. "You aren't one of this man's disciples too, are you?" she asked Peter. He replied, "I am not." It was cold, and the servants and officials stood around a fire they had made to keep warm. Peter also was standing with them, warming himself. Meanwhile, the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching. "I have spoken openly to the world," Jesus replied. "I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret. Why question me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said." When Jesus said this, one of the officials nearby slapped him in the face. "Is this the way you answer the high priest?" he demanded. "If I said something wrong," Jesus replied, "testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?" Then Annas sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest. Meanwhile, Simon Peter was still standing there warming himself. So they asked him, "You aren't one of his disciples too, are you?" He denied it, saying, "I am not." One of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him, "Didn't I see you with him in the garden?" Again Peter denied it, and at that moment a rooster began to crow."

Journal your review of prayer here:

Deepening your prayer:

THE DENIAL STRATEGY

(A Poem Based on John 18:12-27)

I will not deny you
I will fight to the death
a severed ear
a testimony to my resolve the depth of my commitment

the others, cowards

I follow
(at a distance)
plotting a daring rescue

the others, long gone
but I am here
with Jesus
awaiting the right moment
to leap into action

“Are you one of his disciples?”
sensing her ruse to unmask me
to foil my plan
I strategically deny being a disciple

two others ask the same
each of my strategic denials
grows in intensity
my plan will not be thwarted
my identity must remain hidden

the cock grows
my façade fades
my grandiosity gutted
my self-deception and cowardliness
mock me

~ Larry Warner, Seeing Jesus with New Eyes

Reflection:

1. As you contemplate on the poem above, which part do you most identify with? (Peter's commitment to stay loyal but failing; or his following at a distance out of fear; or his lying and denying Jesus for self-preservation; or being overwhelmed with guilt and regret over your mistakes and failures?)

How have you been tempted in these ways in your faith journey?

2. Sometimes we start off well in our commitment to follow God but along the way we get distracted by various challenges or temptations that lead us away from our original path. Ask God to show you if you have gotten off track, drifting from a good beginning to what is no longer a God-honouring path. Remember, this is about awareness, not condemnation. If you discover you have become misdirected, ask God to help you make a course correction or even to start a new journey.

Prayer Period #4: Do you love me?

Use the **'Guidelines on Praying the Scriptures'** to guide you in this scripture meditation using your senses and imagination.

Take your time to read **John 21:15-19** slowly and thoughtfully, paying attention to the details in this story until you are familiar with it.

"When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my lambs." Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep." The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you." Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. Very truly I tell you, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!""

Journal your review of prayer here:

Deepening your prayer:

1. Imagine you are Peter in this conversation with Jesus, what in your life competes with your love for Jesus?

2. Who are the 'sheep' in your context that you are invited to care and show God's love to?

3. How is Jesus inviting you to partner with him in the work he is already doing even with your shortcomings?

Write a prayer to God

Ending your retreat: Review of the Day

As you journeyed with Peter through his encounters with Jesus today, what have you become aware of or discovered about yourself and God?

Just as how Peter grew in his knowledge of God and Self through his encounters with Jesus, looking back from the time when Jesus first called you to follow him to where you are now, what has changed or grown in you with regards to your:

a. knowledge of self? (feeling, attitude, perception, relationships etc)

b. knowledge of God? (how have you experienced God in your journey with Him)

As you consider all that you have experienced today,
What might God be inviting you towards?

What gifts are you bringing away with you from this retreat?

Spend some time to just be with the Lord in silence as you hold all these gifts before him.

Closing Prayer

Thanks be to thee, my Lord Jesus Christ,
for all the benefits thou hast given me,
for all the pains and insults thou has borne for me.
O merciful redeemer, friend and brother,
may I know thee more clearly
love thee more dearly,
and follow thee more nearly,
day by day.

AMEN.

~ Richard of Chichester

Sources:

Larry Warner, *Journey with Jesus* (IVP Books: 2018)

Larry Warner, *Seeing Jesus with New Eyes* (Harper Collins: 1997)

Rev Dr Chew Tow Yow , *Guidelines to Praying Scripture*

Praying with Imagination (Appendix 1)

For centuries, Christians have used imagination as a way of encountering God in prayer. Our minds are filled with stories, images, and memories which the Holy Spirit can use to bring us into a deeper intimacy with Jesus. Praying Scripture with imagination allows the Spirit to guide us into places of insight about ourselves and God.

Imaginative prayer is a form of prayer in which we imaginatively immerse ourselves in a Gospel story as an active participant. *"We begin to enter the story and make it our own. We move from detached observation to active participation. Using imagination also brings the emotions into the equation so that we can come to God with both mind and heart."* (Richard Foster)

"Imaginative prayer is Spirit-infused, God-directed use of your imagination that gives you the ability to experientially enter into the stories, symbolism and images of the Bible. It empowers you to hold the now with both the past and the future, and to see and embrace the seen (physical) and the unseen (eternal). The Spirit-fused imagination moves you from sterile head knowledge to life-transforming, heart-healing, biblically informed ways of being and of doing life. It is as we embrace and employ the use of our God-given, Spirit-infused imagination that we can enter the wonder and mystery of God and God's Word. As we use this method, we are trusting in God and will be evaluating the images that arise based on God's revealed truths found in the bible." (Larry Warner)

A gospel story can be contemplated in a number of ways. Imaginations differ. Some have strong visual imagination and can thus "see" scenes vividly as if they were watching a movie; some have good auditory imagination and can thus "hear" in their head and heart all that is being said and done in the story; some have vivid kinesthetic imagination and can thus "feel" the story through inner sensations in a way that is difficult to describe. If you're new to this, it may take time for you to learn to receive information through your senses. We need to let God use the imagination we have and not bemoan the imagination we don't have.

Imagination is a gift from God, and Jesus is still inviting us to encounter him face to face in the Word. After all, Jesus is the Living Word, breathing, moving and inspiring and revealing. So trust the Spirit to be with you as you freely and creatively wonder with God. Let go of boundaries and constraints. Lay down your fears of doing it wrong. This isn't about 'right' and 'wrong'. This is about encountering God in the depths of our emotions, in the depths of our spirits. It's like peering into a deep well. You see the water, but you also glimpse images of yourself on the surface of the water. You see reflections of your hopes, fears, desires, and longings mirrored back to you. Trust God to meet you there in the depths. Trust the spirit to reveal truth about who you are and who God is.

Guidelines for Praying Scriptures (Appendix 2)

Preparation (5mins)

Begin with a time of slowing down to prepare your heart, mind and spirit to come before God. You can do this by getting into a comfortable position and being still. Be aware of the present moment by taking slow deep breaths and allowing your mind to slow down, letting go of thoughts and worries. Notice your feelings and release the tension in your body. Pray for God to help you to focus on Him during the Prayer Period

The Prayer Period (30 mins)

1. Read through the gospel passage a few times until you understand the main points and are familiar with the details.
2. Recall the passage by imagining and allowing the scene to unfold in your mind. In your imagination, enter the Bible scene by placing yourself as a participant in the story. You may be an onlooker or you may be involved in the action, but put yourself in that place and time.
3. Use your senses to notice all that is happening in and around you:
 - Who are the people in this scene? Watch their actions and expressions.
 - What do you hear? Listen in on their conversations or the sounds around you.
 - What do you feel? Sense the atmosphere and movements around you.
 - What do you taste or smell? Interact with Jesus and the people in the scene.
4. You may repeat this prayer and take the places of different persons in the biblical scene.
5. When you've finished, let your mind move slowly back from the past to the present.

Reviewing your prayer period (10mins)

As you reflect upon your experiences during the prayer period,

1. What struck you most?
2. Did an image, word, action or feeling stand out or resonated with you in the experience? What does it mean to you? What might God be inviting you towards?

Speak to the Lord. Talk to Him concerning the matter the biblical scene has evoked in your heart. If you have nothing to ask of Him, then just rest in Him and allow Him to refresh you. Enjoy God! Praise and worship Him quietly. Respond to Him as He reveals Himself to you.

(Adapted from Guidelines for Praying Scripture, Rev Dr Chew Tow Yow)