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Entering the Narrative Prayer Exercise

This is a prayer practice that Ignatius of Loyola (16th century) introduced to the church in his *Spiritual Exercises*. How can you engage in this exercise? First, begin with prayer. Invite the Holy Spirit to help you choose a passage in Scripture that is either a story or a parable. After you have chosen a passage, ask the Spirit to enlighten the Scripture so that in your mind and heart you are able to receive God's word for you in the passage. If you are willing, invite the Holy Spirit to inspire your imagination so the passage comes alive, making it meaningful and personal.

If you have a paraphrase of Scripture (e.g., *The Message* by Eugene Peterson) it will help you to engage in this type of reflection in Scripture. You might also consider having your journal available to write what you are experiencing each moment as you place yourself in the narrative.

1. Choose a passage in Scripture that narrates a story or parable. An ideal passage would be one in which God or Jesus encounters a person or group.
2. Read the passage at least two times to become familiar with it.
3. Place yourself in the scene. Using all of your senses try to imagine this scene. What do you see? What do you hear? What do you smell? What do you sense or feel? Take all the time you need to be in the scene as if you are actually there.
4. While you are present in the scene consider all of the human characters. Is there one that you identify with? Can you envision yourself as this person? Take time to imagine what you are thinking and feeling. What do you say or do?
5. Is Jesus in this scene? Is God in this scene? What is Jesus or God doing? Is there something that either Jesus or God is saying to you?
6. Allow time for the scene to unfold. What is transpiring in you or for you?

What is God's invitation for you in this meditation? What is your response to God?

7. Is there something you will do differently in your life in response to God's invitation? What steps will you take? Give thanks to God for meeting you.
8. Perhaps you might consider sharing this with someone you trust and ask for prayer to support you in your next steps.