

The Process of Contemplative & Reflective Reading in a Group, As a Couple or Alone

This ancient Western Monastic practice enables the reading of texts with the heart rather than with the intellect. It can be applied to any form of text from which one seeks inspiration, understanding, wisdom and guidance.

Reading In a Group or With One Other Person

The selected text is read four times.

Each reading is done by a different member of the group so that a different voice is heard. If doing this as a couple, each person can read the text twice. (Those alone can use a journal, see below for instructions)

Reading is at a moderate pace without embellishment.

After each reading and after each sharing there is a period of silence.

The sequence

The first person reads the text.

The question in mind for the group is;

"What word or phrase in this reading strikes me?"

Each person, in random sequence, shares their word or phrase with the group without embellishment or explanation. Silence is held for few minutes to allow the sharing to dissolve into body, mind and heart.

The second reading is by another person in the group.

The question for reflection is:

"What do I sense, or feel from this reading?"

Sharing is done in random sequence but with more opportunity for elaboration. Silence is held.

The third reading by another voice (revert to the first person if reading as a couple)

The question in mind is:

"What response emerges as a result of this reading?"

Each person has an opportunity to share in random sequence their response. Silence is held.

Finally a fourth reading by another voice; (revert to second person if reading as a couple)

This time there is no question in mind. One simply rests in the words as they enter the heart.

There is a longer period of silence, of up to 10 minutes, which can be ended by a bow, or chant.

The Process of Contemplative & Reflective Reading Alone, Using a Journal

Preparation

The selected text is read four times. Take care not to only focus on your favorite themes or passages. Also be aware of presuming, if the text is familiar, that you know what it is saying. Read at a moderate pace and savor as one would a sweet. After each reading, wait for the words to find their place within you.

The sequence

The first reading

"What word or phrase in this reading strikes me?" After quiet reflection, simply note in your journal the word or phrase that has struck you.

Now look at the word or phrase you have written and notice, what thoughts, memories, emotions, attractions, aversions, opinions arise in the looking at the phrase. In the journal simply brainstorm these observations without judgment or analysis. Example: "Anxious, remember this.., am interested in..etc."

The second reading

Silence is held. In your journal complete this sentence, spontaneously without analysis;
"This passage invites me to"

Now look at the written invitation and again notice your feelings, opinions, attractions, aversions and note them in the journal

The third reading

In your journal complete this sentence, spontaneously without analysis,
"As a result of this reading I am going to..."

Now look at the response, asking yourself and writing on the following:

Can I do this?

Do I really want to do this?

Is it realistic?

Is it in accordance with my values?

How does seeing this response in writing make me feel?

The fourth reading. (Rest)

This time there is no question in mind. One simply rests in the words as they enter the heart and suffuse into your being. There is a longer period of silence, up to 10 mins, which can be ended by a bow, or chant.

The Review

When you come to the next Contemplative Reading session on your own, read the journal entry from your last session, and evaluate how the previous reading has taken root in your life.

