

How to Fall in Love with God. Suggestions of St. Ignatius

Introduction

Some key points:

1. For proper prayer, you must have a quiet place and prepare your body and your mind.
2. Prayer is what God does IN YOU as you open yourself to God.
3. You open yourself to God
 - a. By calling to mind God's presence in your spirit, the room, your meditation material
 - b. For prayer use Scripture--God's word;
 - c. For prayer use your experiences --God's activity in your world
4. During prayer be present to God's word or God's presence in your experience.
5. Toward the close of your prayer time, begin to talk to God as you have experienced God in your prayer. Thank God for any insight, for revealing more of His love for you; for redeeming any part of your past, for this prayer time. Talk to God as you would a friend, encourages St. Ignatius.
6. It always good to keep a journal of your important prayer times.

#1 Recall the good things in your life.

Find a place of quiet. Bring to consciousness the presence of God. You might use a crucifix or a favorite religious picture. You might use a family photo or a nature print to focus upon.

Divide your life into decades, or if younger, into 5 year time slots. Recall the good things that happened to you and for you during each of those time periods. Jot down the main happenings.

Then go back and examine each in some detail. Relish the goodness, the happiness, the love, the new knowledge there. Perhaps there was rescue or healing,

How did those good things occur? Who was responsible? How much love came to you in these events? How did they nurture you, or refresh you, or heal you?

Can you see that ultimately they came from a loving God? Does this reflection make God's love even more concrete? Can you realize, at least intellectually, that God's spirit of love and justice supported you every step of your life even to this moment?

End this reflection with a prayer of thanksgiving or the *Glory Be*.

Nothing is more practical than finding God, that is, than FALLING IN LOVE.

In a quite absolute, final way what you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything. It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning, what you do with your evenings, how you spend your weekends, what you read, who you know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy and gratitude.

Fall in love. Stay in love, and it will decide everything.

Attributed to Pedro Arrupe S.J.

(Recall what you thought and felt during prayer.)

(See introduction to #1)

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#2 Gently look at the harder events of your life.

Find a place of quiet. Bring to consciousness the presence of God. You might use a crucifix or a favorite religious picture. You might use a family photo or a nature print to focus upon.

Divide your life into decades, or if younger, into 5 year time slots. Recall the more difficult things that happened to you during each of those time periods. Jot down the main happenings.

Now gently go back to those events. Look at them as objectively as you can. What happened? What was the result then? As you look back, do you see any good coming from that event? Are you wiser? Are you more compassionate? Were you forced to respond and grow in some way that now you see is an asset to you and others?

Gently look at the people responsible for some of the harshness of the events. Were they desiring to hurt you? If so, were they in their “right mind”? Caught in addictions? Inside their personal inadequacy? Can you begin to understand, even to forgive?

Where was God in these events? You are a survivor. Where did your inner strength come from? Who reinforced it? What positive activities helped you to grow despite these negatives events? Has healing come? Can you be grateful? If healing has not yet fully come, might you be able to turn to the Sacred Heart of Jesus or to his loving mother Mary for help and consolation? Have you shared your “secrets” with anyone? If not, can you entrust them now to Jesus or to Mary?

Might you be able to see, at least intellectually, that Jesus was helping you to carry your cross? Or like Simon of Cyrene, you were asked to help carry the cross of Jesus? Quietly, gently talk to Jesus, or the Father, or Mary the Mother of the Church, or any favorite saint or a relative now with God.

Close with the Our Father or Hail Mary.

(In a diary NOTE what you have learned anew or more deeply. Note your feelings as well.)

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#3 How have you been guided through your life?

Find a place of quiet. Bring to consciousness the presence of God. You might want to use a crucifix or a favorite religious picture. You might use a family photo or a nature print to focus your prayer.

Divide your life into decades, or if younger, into 5 year time slots. Recall the main **decision points** of your life. Jot down the main happenings.

How did you get into your particular family? How did you get into “that good school” or have that great teacher? Who or what gave you an idea for your career or state of life? How did you find the one who was to become your spouse?

Who told you that you had a gift for _____ and offered to develop it or sent you to one who could? Who recruited you for your dream job? How did you wind up in that organization that has challenged and nurtured you? Who reminded you that God wanted to be in your life? How were you able to “find the desire of your heart”? Who or what is “below” the desire of your heart? Can you see the gentle inner promptings, the timely interventions or suggestions that steered you into a path for life? End with Psalm 139 which celebrates God’s loving guidance.

(In a diary NOTE what you have learned anew or more deeply. Note your feelings as well.)

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#4 God IS Beauty, Truth, Light and Love.

Find a place of quiet. Bring to consciousness the presence of God. You might want to use a crucifix or a favorite religious picture. You might use a family photo or a nature print to focus your prayer.

Once you are aware of God's presence, begin to review all the gifts you have received from God in exercises 1-3, the gifts of your life--your creation, your redemption, your times of being forgiven and forgiving, your growth, your successes. Ponder how much love is behind those gifts to you; how God gives you what God is and possesses. God shows love in deeds. What might you desire in return?

A second consideration is to remind yourself of the most beautiful landscape you have ever experienced. See it. Smell it. Feel the wind, coolness or warmth. Let the beauty in. As you gaze on the beauty, realize that God is behind, below and within that beauty because God IS beauty's source. All beauty comes from God, and all the beauty that you have experienced in your life is God's good gift to you personally. See, feel, touch how much God loves you. How might you respond?

Similarly present to yourself a time when you encountered the most loving and nurturing person in your life. Can you see and feel that this person was a vehicle to you of all God's love and nurturing? How might you respond to God who has given all to you? Love is shown in deeds.

(In a diary NOTE what you have learned anew or more deeply. Note your feelings as well. You might also write out a goal or a new pattern to put in your life.)

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