

A PATTERN FOR OPENING MEETINGS
USING *THE UPPER ROOM*

Listening for God's personal word to us within the words of the Bible is an ancient Christian practice. These steps adapt the ancient pattern called *lectio divina* ("sacred reading") for use in a group, basing the reading and reflection on the day's meditation in *The Upper Room* magazine. Allow about 15 minutes for this devotional time.

- Step 1: Ask hearers to prepare themselves, to get comfortable and quiet. If the group is large, before reading begins, invite people to form groups of three or four.
- Step 2: Invite hearers to listen for the word or phrase from the scripture reading that attracts them, stops them, gets their attention. Read the scripture passage suggested for the day. Read the passage again, more slowly the second time. Direct hearers to reflect in silence on "their" word or phrase. Then invite them (within their smaller groups if the group is large) to speak aloud their word or phrase, without further comment.
- Step 3: Read the suggested passage again, asking hearers to consider how the passage links to their life. Following the reading, allow two minutes of silence for reflection.
- Step 4: Read the verse of scripture quoted above the day's meditation and the "story" or body of the meditation. (You may ask a volunteer to do this.) Then ask listeners, "How do you connect with this writer's words or experience?" Allow a minute or two for silent reflection. Invite persons to voice in a sentence or two (no more) the connection they make.
- Step 5: Ask, "Where do you sense in all this an invitation from God for your life in the next few days?" After a minute of silence, invite persons in their small groups to mention the invitation they hear. (Or anyone may "pass" at any time.)
- Step 6: Invite persons within the small groups to pray for one another in turn, each person praying for the person to her/his right, that they may be empowered to respond to God's invitation. They may pray silently or aloud.

Read the "thought for the day" from the magazine. Close your time together by inviting people to mention prayer requests. You may pray the prayer printed for the day, adding the group's specific concerns, or pray, "O God, we come to you, entrusting to your great love these people and concerns. Be with us now, that we may hear your voice in our words to one another and faithfully do your work in the decisions and plans we make. Amen."

To learn more about spiritual formation resources, visit our website, www.upperroom.org.

MEETING STARTERS
THE UPPER ROOM, SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2005

Use this list of topics to help you in using *The Upper Room* to lead devotionals for meetings. You could also use the meditation published for the day the group meets. Meditations from the September/October 2005 issue are listed below by the name of the group for which they might be appropriate.

Bible study: 9/8, 9/28

Building Committee: 10/31

Capital Fund-Raising Committee: 10/1, 10/31

Christian Community: 9/13, 9/14, 10/25

Children's Council: 10/19, 10/24,

Covenant Discipleship Groups: 9/8, 9/28, 10/3

Covenant Prayer Groups: 10/21

Education, Work Area on: 10/16

Evangelism/witness: 9/10, 9/12, 9/23, 9/25, 9/26, 10/10, 10/14, 10/25

Family life ministries: 9/18

Finance committee: 9/16, 10/1, 10/9

Gifts/Talents: 9/19

Healing ministry: 9/4, 9/6, 9/13, 9/14, 10/30

Hunger ministry: 9/3, 9/7, Prayer Workshop

Local missions, work area on: 10/13

Mission/outreach, work area: 9/3, 9/7, 9/15, 9/19, 10/13, 10/15, 10/17, 10/20, 10/21, 10/23

Pastor-staff Relations: 9/12, 10/2, 10/20

Prison ministry: 9/9

Singles: 9/20, 10/3

Special situations (Tragedy/grief, Death): 9/11, 9/24, 10/6, 10/19

Spiritual formation: 9/2, 9/3, 9/4, 9/5, 9/6, 9/18, 9/22, 9/27, 9/28, 9/30, 10/1, 10/3, 10/5, 10/28, 10/30

Stephen Ministry: 9/1, 9/2, 9/6, 9/13, 9/14, 9/20, 9/21, 9/24, 10/3, Prayer Workshop, 10/17, 10/20

Stewardship: 9/16, 9/19, 9/26, 10/2, 10/9, 10/15, 10/17, 10/18, 10/23

Young marrieds group: 10/16

Youth Council: 10/16

Youth Meeting: 9/4, 9/17, 10/16