

SPARK!

MARCH 2020

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

by Brian Singer-Towns



saint mary's press

touching hearts. enlivening minds.

PRAYING WITH SCRIPTURE

PRAYER ON OVERDRIVE!

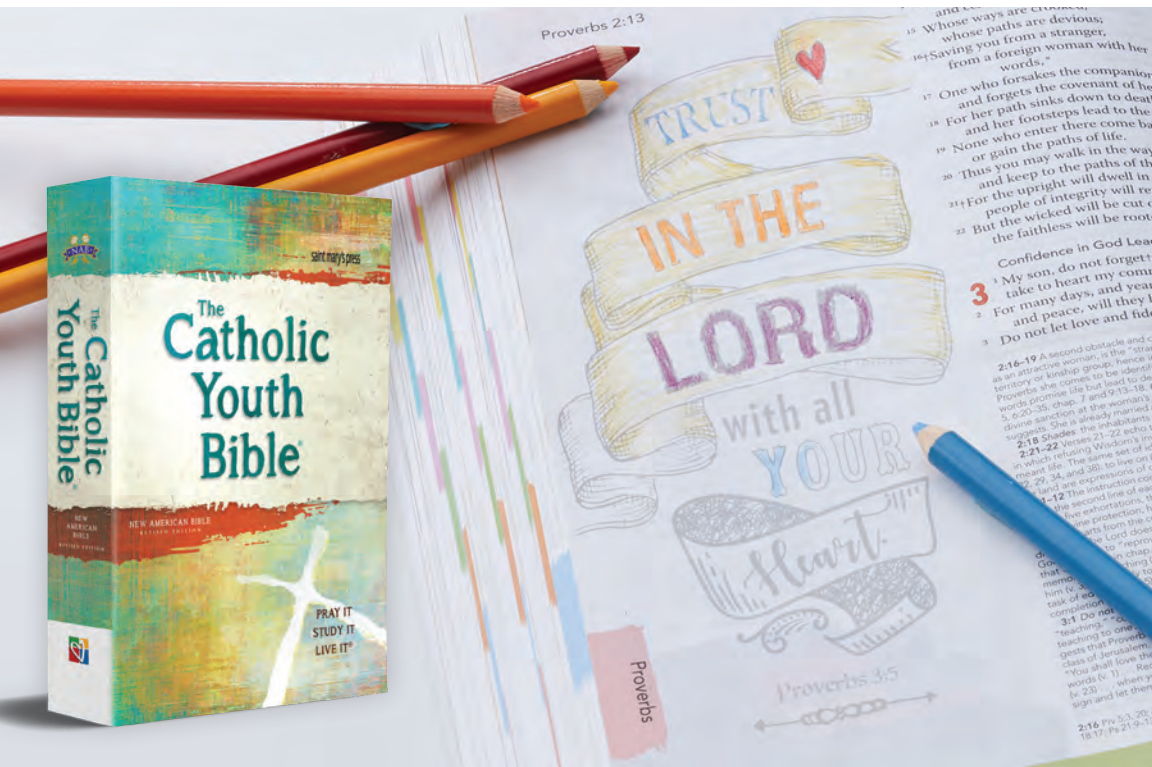
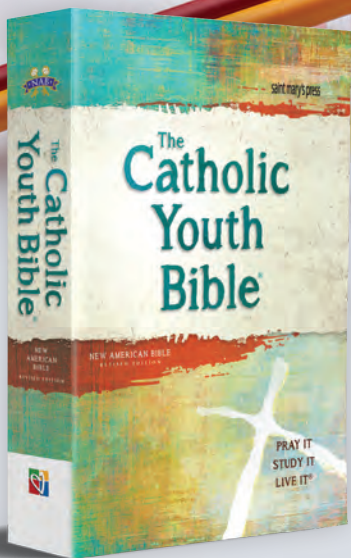
I'm naturally skeptical about anything that sounds too good to be true.

So, I wouldn't blame you for being a little skeptical when I tell you that praying with Scripture is a great way—maybe the best way—to amp up your own prayer life and your students' prayer life. Here's why.

1 The Bible is God's living Word.

For those of us with eyes and ears of faith, God speaks to us through the words of Scripture. I am constantly amazed at how a familiar passage of the Bible speaks to me, no matter how many times I've read it before.

Attitude is everything, of course. I have to quiet my heart and my mind to let those words sink in. I have to be open, curious even, in anticipating that something in the passage will speak to me.



2 Lectio divina is at the core of catechesis.

A primary teaching of the Church is that all catechesis should be based in Scripture and be “an authentic introduction to *lectio divina*” (*General Directory of Catechesis*, 127).¹

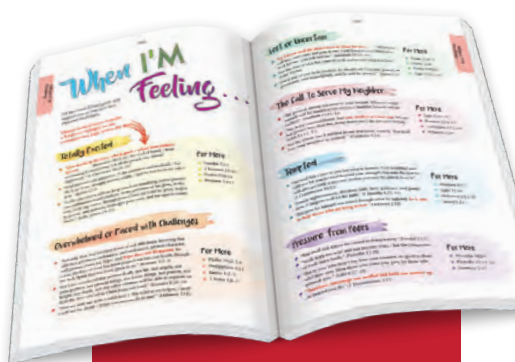
Lectio divina has four movements: (1) a reverential reading of a passage of Scripture (*lectio*), (2) a time to reflect on the meaning of the passage (*meditatio*), (3) a prayerful response in reaction to what we’ve heard (*oratio*), (4) a period of prayerful silence (*contemplatio*).

The first two movements start with us “listening” for God. The final two movements are our response to God. Is that not prayer? So, when you use some type of *lectio* as a form of catechesis, you will be engaging your students in one big experience of praying with Scripture.

3 No matter what our need, Scripture helps us pray.

Sometimes I struggle to know just what I’m feeling. Occasionally, life overwhelms me. But whatever my need, I can bring it to prayer with Scripture. The stories and teachings of Christ in the Bible encompass every human emotion and need: joy, despair, grief, loneliness, confusion, gratitude, serenity. In its words, we find God’s consolation, strength, encouragement, and love.

Many Bibles have lists of passages that speak to certain feelings and experiences. But it can work just as well to open your Bible and just start reading, trusting the Spirit to lead you. Saint Paul speaks to this trust in the Spirit: “We do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit itself intercedes with inexpressible groanings” (Romans 8:26).²



**The Catholic Youth Bible[®]
has a special section
designed for this purpose:
“When I’m Feeling.” Check
out page 1770 (NABRE).**

¹ *General Directory of Catechesis*, number 127 at, www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cclergy/documents/rc_con_catheduc_doc_17041998_directory-for-catechesis_en.html#top. Copyright © Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

² *New American Bible*, revised edition © 2010, 1991, 1986, 1970 Confraternity of Christian Doctrine, Inc., Washington, D.C. All Rights Reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the copyright owners.

CREATIVE IDEAS FOR

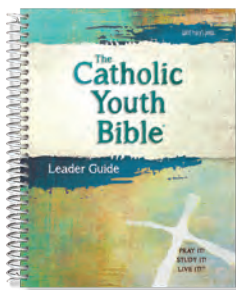
Having a creative variety of *lectio* approaches will help you to engage all the personalities and learning styles in your group—even those young people who just seem bored with Scripture.

1 Proverbs Challenge

(see *The Catholic Youth Bible® Leader Guide*, page 22)

The Book of Proverbs is filled with wonderful, pithy, and sometimes humorous wise sayings. Invite your group to pray with the Proverbs over the course of a week or two, repeating this process:

- Assign a chapter of Proverbs to individuals or groups of two or three. Ask them to read the proverbs in that chapter and to choose one or two that speak to them. (*lectio and meditatio*)
- In prayer, invite them to share the proverbs they chose and what those proverbs mean. (*oratio*)
- Conclude with a period of silence. (*contemplatio*)



The Catholic Youth Bible® Leader Guide
\$34.95, #4218
978-1-59982-950-0

2 Introvert & Extrovert Journal Prayer

As an extrovert, I sometimes need help in sorting out what I think about something. I need to say it out loud and talk about it with a group of people. Introverts find it helpful to first have time to think about something by themselves. Here's a way to honor both personalities:

- After prayerfully reading a passage (*lectio*), invite your group to divide into those who want to talk about its meaning and those who want to quietly journal about its meaning. (*meditatio*)
- After some time, ask the "talking" group to briefly journal about what they think the passage is about.
- In prayer, invite volunteers from both groups to share something they wrote in their journals. (*oratio*)
- Conclude with a period of silence. (*contemplatio*)



SCRIPTURAL PRAYER

3 Visio Divina

This approach appeals to the visual and artistic learners in your group.

- Find a beautiful or intriguing art piece based on the passage. Google Images is very helpful for this!
- Share the art piece with your group. Ask them to share their first impressions. How does it make them feel? What was the artist emphasizing? What techniques did the artist use?
- Invite them to read the passage from Scripture. (*lectio*)
- Discuss the art piece in light of the Scripture passage. How did the artist represent the passage? (*meditatio*)
- Continue with a prayerful response and contemplation. (*oratio and contemplatio*)



Breakthrough!® The Bible for Young Catholics also has beautiful art paintings that are perfect for *visio divina*. Check out page 1711.

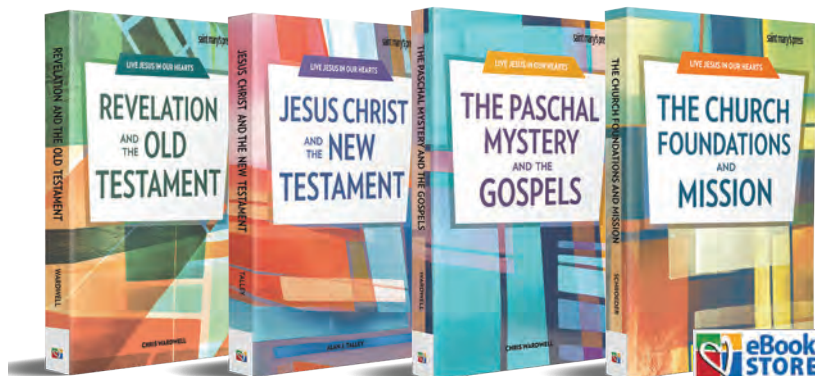
4 Prescriptions

This activity is a great way to help young people see the value of turning to Scripture for strength and support. When finished, each young person will have their own “prescription” bottle filled with Bible passages they can turn to in hard times.

- Individually or in small groups, have the young people search their Bibles for passages (or verses) they find inspirational for people going through times of sadness, suffering, or grief.
- Ask them to write down the citations (or complete verses) of the best passages they find.
- Collate these citations or verses into a one-page document, with space to cut them apart, and make a copy for each young person.
- At your next meeting, hand out the copies with scissors. Direct the young people to cut the passages apart, fold them up, and put them into an empty prescription or vitamin bottle (which you have collected in advance).
- On each bottle, attach a sticker with the following instructions: “Prescriptions. Take one and read when you are hurting, lonely, or sad.”

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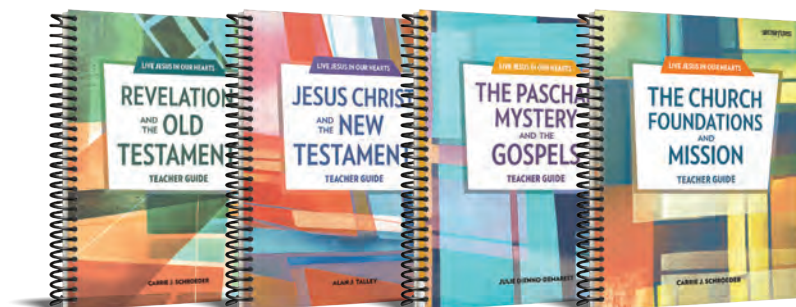
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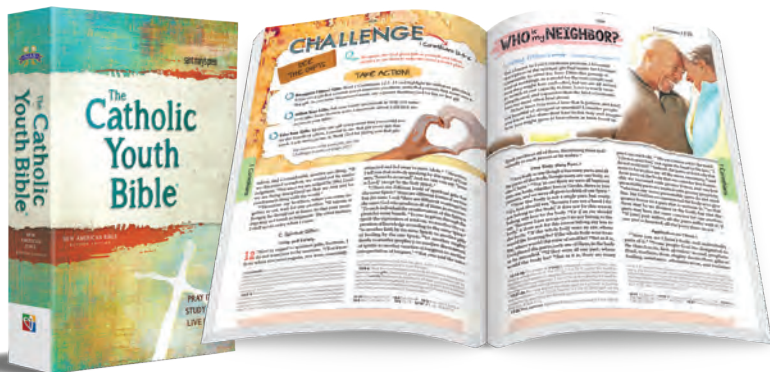
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