

## **Creative Meditations Using Stations**



My first encounter with creative meditations in the form of stations was in 2010, when we came to Spain to do the Leadership Development Course (LDC). On our first full day together, after an impressive welcoming breakfast, we had an hour or so to go around a number of stations that had been set up for us. I experienced it as a powerful way to reflect, have time with God, bring closure to certain things, and enter into the new experience that laid ahead of us.

The funny thing is, I cannot remember for sure what the theme was; I think it was either Bethany, the small village close to Jerusalem where Jesus loved to hang out, or the miraculous feeding of the multitude. Fact is, during our years with the Leadership Retreat Centre we have been part of quite a few of these meditation exercises.

I have grown to love this kind of exercise as a simple way to enhance or create a learning experience (which is what this site and training letter are all about). I now try to integrate it into most of my lecture weeks in SBS or BCC, either at the beginning, as a way to connect with the book, or at the end, as a way to reflect, digest and personalize the teaching of the week, and think of ways to apply the book. Or both. It is also a great way to do a Bible study or meditation based on a passage of Scripture, breaking the conventional mould of either lecturing or discussion.

[You can also watch this content as a VIDEO PODCAST](#)

## Why Use Stations?

Here are some benefits of using stations as part of a creative meditation and reflection time:

- It is something different, a change of pace that can break or prevent monotony.
- Everyone gets involved. Everyone is active at the same time. And everyone has the opportunity to be actively involved *in their own way*, concentrating on their individual areas of need.
- Depending on the way the meditation has been set up, several or all senses get involved.
- It caters to people whose preferred learning style is not listening to a lecture.
- It is effective. Regardless of learning style, we all learn and remember more effectively when we not just hear something, but actively get to do something with it.
- It is a great way to get people interested in your subject or a book.
- As a side benefit, you gain some information on what they already know (or not) and on how they feel about this subject.
- It is a fun way to learn.

In the remainder of this letter, I will first present a simple pathway to prepare such an exercise for a passage of Scripture. Then I will discuss how you can do the same for a lecture week on a book of the Bible.

## Creative Meditation on a Bible Passage

First a pathway for a meditation on a passage.

(1) Once you have chosen and studied your passage, list the main observations you are making. Adjust and reformulate your list until each point is succinct and can form the basis for a station. For example, in Luke 24:13-35, the story of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, a few main points are:

- They talk about the things that have happened.
- Jesus joins them, but they do not recognize him.
- “We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel” (verse 21). They are disappointed.
- Jesus calls them foolish and explains to them the scriptures.
- When Jesus breaks the bread they recognize him.

- They return to Jerusalem to tell the others.

(2) Think of a good and personal question to ask with each point. Not every point may lend itself for a question and therefore for a station.

(3) If you can think of a physical object as a symbol to be part of your station, great.

(4) Also try to come up with an action, something to actually do at this station. Possible actions can be as simple as praying or thinking about something. Sometimes it is good to let people pray or share with another participant at a particular station. Further actions could be to add to a mural or flipchart sheet, to deposit or throw a stone, to bury something, to paint or draw something and leave it behind, to write a prayer or psalm, to make a sculpture out of clay, and so forth. The more diverse and the more concrete the actions are, the better; this is where your creativity is called for. For Luke 24, the stations could look like this:

- “They were talking with each other about all these things that had happened” (verse 14). What is something that has happened to you recently and that has shook you or otherwise negatively impacted you? What is something you are struggling with right now? Find someone else, share your struggle, and pray together.
- “We had hoped...” (verse 21). Obviously, they are disappointed, but they fail to recognize that Jesus is right there with them. Think of one of your own struggles or disappointments. How might Jesus be present with you in this experience? How might God be using it to accomplish good things in your life?
- As you consider your present challenge, where in the Bible is there a passage that addresses this kind of issue? If you cannot think of a Bible passage, ask God for a direct word or impression. (It would be helpful to have some kind of card as a takeaway, so people can write down their Scripture or impression and keep it.)
- “He took the bread and ... their eyes were opened” (verse 30f). Break of a piece of this bread, take it as if Jesus himself were giving it to you, and eat it. How does this affect your perception of your situation?

(5) One category of actions include takeaways: something that the participants take with them as a reminder, often after writing their thoughts or a commitment on it. Again, this is where creativity is especially asked for.

(6) For each station, you need a sheet with instructions. I tend to use PowerPoint, because its templates offer a quick way to combine a title, a picture, and a short text in a larger font. Be sure to find and include an appropriate picture for each station.

(7) Consider how to place and distribute your stations in the space that is at your disposal. If possible, it may be helpful to use small tables. At times it may be possible to use a garden or other outside area and integrate special corners or objects into your stations (a gate, a particular tree, a neglected corner full of weeds, a composter etc.).

(8) You have to consider the number of participants. Can everyone be actively involved at the same time? It may be necessary to have some stations more than once, to work in pairs or in small groups, or to work with a meditation guide rather than stations. In the latter case, you can still have special corners and locations, but everyone will have all of the instructions in printed or digital form.

(9) Finish the exercise with a time of debriefing. Ask people to share how they experienced this particular approach. Also let them share some of the highlights of their time.

## Creative Meditation for a Lecture Week on a Book of the Bible

When you [subscribe to the monthly email version of Create a Learning Site](#) blog posts, you will receive a link to a Google Drive folder with examples for the beginning or the end of a lecture week on a book using a creative meditation.

If you are preparing stations for an application time at the end, this is quite similar to a creative meditation on a Bible passage. The difference is that your stations will not be on a single passage but on main points spread out throughout the book that need further reflection or application.

My experience in the School of Biblical Studies has often been that the written application students are expected to do at the end of their work on a particular book often gets done under great time pressure. This does not facilitate meaningful reflection or integration of what has been learned. Giving them time on the final morning of class truly is a gift. There is no pressure to finish something and the time was already reserved for class anyway. It makes space for relatively undisturbed and unpressured reflection.

When you use stations at the beginning of a lecture week, they are more geared to raising interest and bringing out what people know (or not) about a book. For this reason, I like to work with large sheets of paper, in order to collect everyone's contribution. For instance, when teaching Revelation, I like to collect on a flipchart sheet all the Old Testament references students have recognized in this book. It often stands out to me that there are not very many, even though almost every other verse in this book contains at least something that is borrowed from the OT.

A few possible categories of questions:

- How does this book make you feel (a good question for a book like Revelation or for the first really big book)? What in this book appeals to you?
- What are important or repeated words and phrases in this book?
- What is something in this book that surprised you?
- What are things in this book you don't understand? What are controversial topics touched upon in this book?
- A friend is writing a study guide for this book and he asks you if you have any ideas for a cool and attention grabbing title (for the book, not the guide). What would you suggest?
- What information and clues have you found in the book that help us to answer a question like: who is the author, when was the book written, the reason it was written, etc.?
- What or who is your favourite ... in this book? Why?

## Clear Instructions

As you introduce the exercise, make sure that people understand what you expect them to do. For a devotional exercise or a time of application, it is probably not important to visit all the stations; people are better off spending their time where God truly ministers to them. It is easier if the stations can be done in any order, but if not, you will have to make this clear.

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Half an hour is probably the minimum time you need to count in, but it may well take longer, depending on the number and nature of the stations. At some point during the exercise, you may want to check with people how they are doing, and then announce a time to finish. Be sure to have some time for debriefing and sharing at the end.

As mentioned before: when you [subscribe to the monthly email version of Create a Learning Site](#) blog posts, you will receive a link to a Google Drive folder with examples of a creative meditation using stations for a book (Genesis, Isaiah, 1-3 John).

What has been your experience with this kind of creative meditation? Any additional suggestions? [Leave a comment!](#)

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