

Enlarging Devotional Experience

Our environment is saturated with resources for liberating larger life.

Among traditional forms of private worship, devotional reading is particularly suited for greater exposure to the advantages of our environment. When we read devotionally, we ask “**What is God trying to say to me through this material?**” or “**What insights can I get into truth more fundamental and ultimate than is provided through other forms of reading?**”

Devotional reading is done with both a Godward and a personal reference. The reader is intent upon finding the deepest and most important illumination about the most fundamental issues of life, and relating these meanings specifically to his or her own life.

Uppermost in the reader’s mind is not a scholarly problem to be solved, or an imaginary tale to unfold, but a deeply authentic personal message to hear, an action to take.

The concept of devotional reading can be expanded to other kinds of sensory and extrasensory stimuli. God is trying to say a great deal to us through forms of devotional seeing other than the printed page, as in sunsets, chapel windows, or children’s faces. There can be devotional listening to music or laughter or sermons. We can have eyes and ears in our hands as we touch the Rosary, a baby’s hand, or the bark of a tree. We might even think of devotional smelling of incense or flowers.

Beyond physical sense experience, all our sensibilities can be involved, including our emotional, intellectual, and spiritual capacities. In experiences of love, intuition, creative thinking, or aesthetic response, the whole person can be devotionally alert to the guidance of God.

We are still asking, “**What is God trying to announce to me about more ultimate meaning?**”

For developing a devotional approach to selected experiences, we need to cultivate a deeper involvement, to be intensely aware of what is happening. Also, we need to select experiences more carefully. If we try to deeply experience everything, we experience nothing fully. The cluttered life leads to confusion and mediocrity.

Use experiences as pointers to deeper meanings. Ask a series of questions behind the questions, moving from “**What is this?**” to more ultimate reflections like “**What is the plan of God?**” We see nothing completely for what it really is until we see it in its total context, which is to say until we relate it to God.