

# THE LITURGICAL SCRIPT OF THE CHURCH

## INTRODUCTION

“All things are yours,” Paul declared in I Corinthians 3. He was inviting believers in that new and fledgling church to take advantage of all the resources that God had given to them.

It was a tempestuous and contentious church. Believers there had divided into factions, and each faction championed a particular leader, to the exclusion of others.

There was the Apollos party, no doubt the intellectuals in the church who always wanted more doctrinal instruction. There was the Peter party, the traditionalists who wanted to keep the Christian faith rooted in ancient Judaism and its practices. There was the Paul party, the innovators who wanted to experiment with anything that would help them grow the movement. Finally, there was the Jesus party, the super spirituals who assumed they were somehow truer and closer to Jesus.

Not that Apollos, Peter, and Paul—and certainly not Jesus—were the cause of the problem. That was not at all the case.

Paul would have none of it. He might have been tempted to favor those who chose to follow him. But he set his vision on something higher. Earlier on in the letter he explained that God had given the church resources, which in this case meant leaders and teachers who contributed different gifts to the church. For example, Paul planted the seed of the gospel and Apollos watered it with Christian doctrine. But God gave the growth because God wants believers to grow up and become mature.

The church today has far more resources than the church in Corinth had. The reason is simple. We have 2,000 years of history, which contains a vast assortment of writers, preachers, artists, musicians, and so much more. “All things are yours,” Paul wrote. The “all” in this case is vast and rich beyond measure: Julian’s *Showings*, Michelangelo’s “David,” the Cathedral of Chartre, Bach’s “St. John’s Passion,” the autobiography of St. Augustine.

And more. So much more.

The Office of Church Engagement has produced a series to introduce you to a taste of this banquet of riches: the hymnody, art, literature (and more) of the Christian tradition. We are calling it the Liturgical Script of the church, liturgy

having to do with the “work of the people.” In this case, the contributions people have made to the Christian movement over the centuries. A taste, yes. But a taste of rich and nourishing food. A banquet indeed!

Each series consists of video presentations, some of which feature visuals (e.g., a work of art) and audios (e.g., a piece of music). Each presentation is accompanied by a study guide, which can be used for personal enrichment or, even better, as a resource for a small group or class. The study guides contains an introduction, a short reflection, small group questions, additional resources, and a spiritual practice.

We have 2,000 years of richness at our disposal. We do not have to limit ourselves to the last 50 years or to one particular branch of the Christian movement. “All things are yours,” Paul wrote to the church in Corinth.

He was writing to us, too.

## **THE STRUCTURE**

Each topic in the Liturgical Script of the Church track has been developed by individual pastors, teachers, etc., which means that your experience with each topic will be unique. While all follow the same general structure, some of the study guides emphasize a more in-depth spiritual practice, others expect more reading and study, and still others provide more robust guidance for small group discussion and resources to dig deeper. In the case of the Literature or Theology topics, it’s important to decide how much reading will be expected and how many gatherings you might devote to longer works. In each case, it is important for the group to review the available to content and decide ahead of time what a consistent rhythm of gathering, watching videos, and engaging with the study guides will look like. All of the content can be adapted however you like to match your small group’s rhythm of gathering.

Here is one example of how you might structure your time:

1. Watch a video (separately or as a group) and take notes in your study guide.
2. Spend some quiet time with the personal reflection prompts (when provided).
3. Over the following week, begin to practice the spiritual exercise and spend a bit of time digging into the homework (which may include reading a Bible passage, reading a small section of commentary, or exploring similar poems or paintings).

4. Meet as a small group using the provided questions.
  - a. Pray for each other
  - b. Check in. You may also want to provide some space for additional insights or review from the last meeting.
  - c. Re-watch or do a short review of the video lecture.
  - d. Share insights from the homework or spiritual practice.
  - e. Explore the provided questions.
  - f. Pray for each other

If your group would like to move at a slower pace, consider gathering twice per lecture. This may be particularly helpful for study guides with more robust homework, spiritual practices, or longer texts to read. Overall, the goal in this study is not just to learn more information about Christian art, literature, hymns, etc. Rather, by engaging with the “work of the people” you should come to know, trust, and follow Jesus in ordinary life and do so as a community of disciples that know, trust and love one another.

If your group needs more guidance on facilitating a small group or recruiting participants for a study like this, check out our [Guide to Small Groups](#) and the [Start-Up Guide for Churches](#). Both can also be found on our website [www.whitworth.edu/academy](http://www.whitworth.edu/academy).

## THE CURRICULUM

### Track A

#### The Bible

- Session 1 – How to Read the Bible
- Session 2 – Creation & Covenant in Genesis
- Session 3 – Freedom From & Freedom For in Exodus
- Session 4 – Insiders & Outsiders in Ruth
- Session 5 – Religion to Relationship in Jeremiah
- Session 6 – Expect the Unexpected in the Gospels
- Session 7 – Radical Inclusivity in Acts
- Session 8 – The New Testament Letters

#### Art

- Session 1 – Cathedral Architecture
- Session 2 – Michaelangelo’s Adam & Eve
- Session 3 – Campin’s *Mérode Altarpiece*

- Session 4 – Leonardo’s *Last Supper*
- Session 5 – Masaccio’s *Holy Trinity*
- Session 6 – Caravaggio’s *Entombment*

### Theology

- Session 1 – Athanasius’ *On the Incarnation of the Word*
- Session 2 – Augustine’s *Confessions*
- Session 3 – Luther’s “The Freedom of the Christian”
- Session 4 – Underhill’s *The Spiritual Life*

### Church Year

- Session 1 – Rhythms
- Session 2 – Life, Death, Resurrection, Ascension
- Session 3 – Feast Days
- Session 4 – Ordinary Time

## Track B

### The Psalms

- Session 1 – Psalm 100
- Session 2 – Psalm 104
- Session 3 – Psalm 105 & 106
- Session 4 – Psalm 22
- Session 5 – Psalm 37

### Literature

- Session 1 – *Godric* by Frederick Beuchner
- Session 2 – Selected Poems by Rainer Maria Rilke
- Session 3 – Short Stories by Flannery O’Connor (‘The Misfit’ and ‘Ruby Turpin’)
- Session 4 – *The Pilgrim’s Progress* by John Bunyan

### Poetry

- Session 1 – John Donne’s Holy Sonnets
- Session 2 – Phyllis Wheatley and Anne Bradstreet
- Session 3 – Czeslaw Milosz & Marilyn Nelson
- Session 4 – T.S. Eliot’s *Four Quartets*

## Spiritual Disciplines

- Session 1 – Breath Prayer
- Session 2 – Ignatian Examen
- Session 3 – Lectio Divina
- Session 4 – Rule of Life

## Hymns

- Session 1 – Why Sing?
- Session 2 – Of the Father's Love Begotten
- Session 3 – My Shepherd Will Supply My Need
- Session 4 – Lo! He Comes With Clouds Descending
- Session 5 – A Weary Couple
- Session 6 – Taize