

# Living Jesus: A Spiritual Practice for Discovering Our Context

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**A**s we grow in discipleship, we are invited to see more clearly the sacred intersections that form us and inform how we see and respond to ourselves, others, and the world. Ongoing spiritual transformation continuously calls us to become more conscious of what restricts a free and faithful response to Christ's mission in and around us.

We begin to realize our context is the place where God's Spirit is revealed and enfolded. Our context can create blind spots that keep us from realizing the fullness of God's vision for ourselves, others, and creation.

In Ron Harmon's article (page 20), "Looking Back to See What Lies Ahead," he suggests:

*Context is challenging because even when we attempt to understand the rest of the story, we bring our own story with us. This story, a collection of our life experiences, forms our interpretive lens and shapes how we see and interpret events.*

This spiritual practice is an opportunity to bring our interpretive lenses into prayer, asking for the Spirit's guidance to help us see what is shaping our perception of ourselves, others, and our Christian story. You may engage this prayer as individuals or communities.

1. Settle into the reality of God, present with you now and in all conditions. Pay attention to your breath as you start to quiet within. Take as much time as you need to gradually enter prayer.

2. Ask for the Spirit to reveal to you the lenses through which you see and interpret events in your life, faith, and world. Pray for the freedom to become aware of what restricts our vision so we can live consciously and faithfully in response to God's call. We also give thanks for the influences that have deepened our capacity to receive and embody the heart of the gospel for the sake of the world. We recognize that our life experience both blesses and impedes the ways we understand and interpret reality.

3. Prayerfully consider the intersecting realities that have been shaping you consciously and unconsciously. Slowly move through the list below, feeling the weight of each one, noticing how strongly they have shaped you, and how they intersect with each other. Bring any resistance or insight into your prayer, continually asking the Spirit to help you see more clearly.

- Race/ethnicity
- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Geographic location
- Education
- Family
- Heritage
- Language
- Age
- Occupation
- Culture
- Ability
- Socio-economic status
- Religion
- Political Ideology
- Community

4. Once you have prayed through this list for yourself, return to the list a second time and ask the Spirit to help you become aware of those who are different from you in each area. Notice how these sacred others might interpret events differently. Pray that your heart may widen and soften to the worldviews of others. How is God revealed both in diversity and unity?

5. Finally, bring everything you have been discovering in prayer before God to hold in silence. Record any insights, questions, or inner stirrings that arise. Notice how your context shapes the way you respond to the question, "Are we moving toward Jesus, the peaceful One?" Notice how awareness of the context of others impacts how you respond to this guiding question.

6. Give thanks for God, who seeks to "become flesh in every new context." (David Bosch) Amen.