

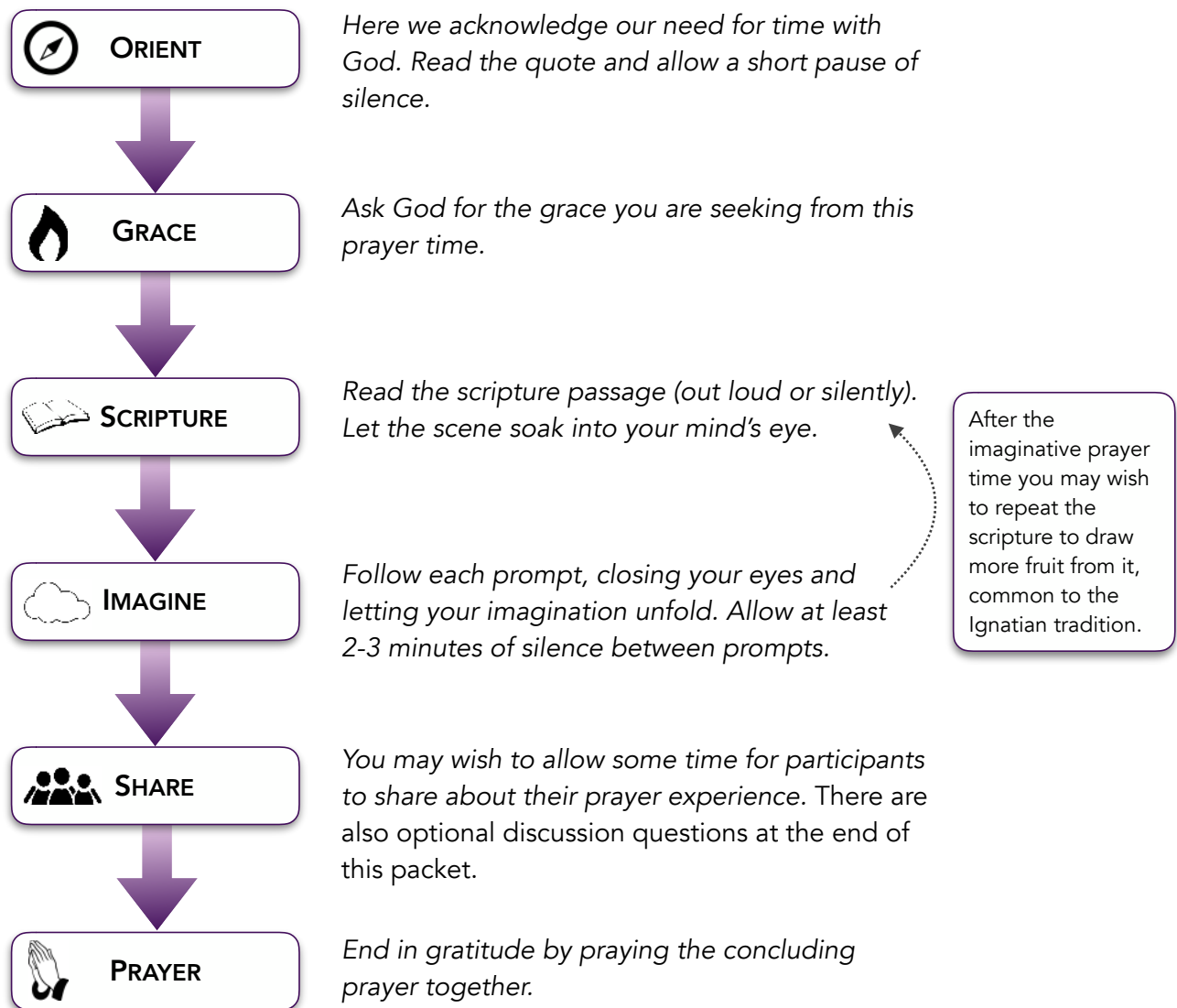


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Each week's handout sheet contains most of what you'll need to structure your gatherings. The handouts are formatted in a familiar Ignatian format. On the next page is a guide on imaginative prayer you may wish to hand out to your group. Groups more familiar with imaginative prayer may not require the prompts on the weekly handouts.

This is a suggested format, which can be adapted to the needs and desires of your group:





ORIENT:

Advent begins with a sense of waiting in darkness for the light. Saint Paul says, "Let us then throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light."

What *light* are you seeking this Advent season?



GRACE:

Ask God for the grace to feel the anticipation of Christ's coming.



SCRIPTURE: MATTHEW 24:37-44

Jesus said to his disciples:

"As it was in the days of Noah,
so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

In those days before the flood,
they were eating and drinking,
marrying and giving in marriage,
up to the day that Noah entered the ark.

They did not know until the flood came and carried them all away.

So will it be also at the coming of the Son of Man.

Two men will be out in the field;
one will be taken, and one will be left.

Two women will be grinding at the mill;
one will be taken, and one will be left.

Therefore, stay awake!

For you do not know on which day your Lord will come.

Be sure of this: if the master of the house
had known the hour of night when the thief was coming,
he would have stayed awake
and not let his house be broken into.

So too, you also must be prepared,
for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come."



IMAGINE:

Jesus paints a picture of an ancient story, the tale of Noah and the flood. Imagine Noah's friends and neighbours, going about their everyday lives, waking and going to sleep, eating and drinking, taking part in the day's labour, celebrating life's events... It's a picture of seeming ordinary life. **What are they doing? What do you hear?**

Imagine being a part of that crowd of people, among your friends and family, when the rains start falling in torrents, the water rising around you and your possessions. *"They did not know until the flood came and carried them all away."* **What do you experience?**

Now imagine yourself at home safe and in bed. You hear the front door creak open and someone steps inside. **What goes through your heart?**

Imagine now sitting before Jesus. He says to you and the others, "Stay awake! Be prepared! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come." You sit and ponder on his words. **What does this mean to you? Why does Jesus use such harsh metaphors about a flood and a thief? Speak to Jesus about what you've experienced during this time.**



CONCLUDING PRAYER:

Lord, thank you for this time with you.
Your stories bring me to a deeper place.
Help me prepare myself for that day you will come again.
Prepare me by helping me showing care for the sick,
welcome to the stranger, and dignity to my neighbour.
Prepare my heart to seek the refreshing healing of your forgiveness.
Prepare me to receive the light in the darkness this Advent season.
Come, Lord Jesus.
Amen.