

Provisions

“until Christ is formed in you”



Long Look; Deep Listen

a soul care resource from LifePoint Resources

Since the creation of the world
God’s invisible qualities—
His eternal power
and divine nature—
have been clearly seen,
being understood
from what has been made,
so that men are without excuse.

Romans 1:20



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Seeing the Artist in the Art

Many things welcome us into the artistry of Thomas Kinkadee, but recently we discovered another secret layer of his creativity, something previously missed in our hurried glances at his work.

(Even if he isn’t your favorite artist, you’ll appreciate what he does.) He often hides his family’s initials, names, and images in his paintings – and he sometimes paints himself in the scenes. How fascinating and **intriguing to look carefully enough to find what most people miss.**

In his *Paris, City of Lights*, you can find Kinkadee himself seated on the sidewalk painting with one of his daughters watching him. The café bears the name of his wife, and she is there, hailing a cab with their youngest daughter in her arms. All these **hints about what he loves most** are subtle; none of them will ever dominate the landscapes and the village scenes. **The** heartbeat of the artist is carefully, delicately, and intentionally woven throughout the ebb and flow of the visual story he gives us with his paintbrush.

Those amazing touches are easy to miss unless you pause long enough to focus on the details. And these precious acknowledgments are easier to spot when you enter the scene and experience the wondrous reality that is reflected in the painting. If you can take the time to set aside the distractions and noise around you, if you pause to let the peace and quiet and light of the painting settle over you then you will find **the hidden treasures that tell you what is at the heart of the artist.**

The artist’s love for his family is evident in these details but also easily seen is his love for the Master Artist who gave him his talent. This artist wants his art to **draw attention to the One who invented beauty and life and light, the Artist behind the painter.**

In fact, that is God’s plan. We have been given creative gifts to notice and express God’s loving presence and goodness. **God, the master artist, paints Himself in every expression of beauty** and every example of rescuing power. In beautifully understated ways, God quietly draws our attention to things that bring peace and joy to our uniquely created souls—in ways that are meaningful to us, just for each of us. **If only we are looking!**

Unfortunately, many of us walk by the beauty of art and miss the Artist. We glance at the mural, the stained glass, the carved granite, the woven tapestry, or the framed canvas and only see the work of a gifted human.

The Practice of Long Look; Deep Listen

God invites us into the secret places, into all the loving intimacy that the rushing crowd misses. We accept God's invitation when we practice a Long Look; Deep Listen (sometimes called Visio Divina, a sacred seeing or praying with our eyes). When we look slowly and listen deeply, we encounter God's clear declarations of love, those **enduring echoes of the good and beautiful Kingdom of Heaven with God in our very midst.**

Pursuing a Long Look; Deep Listen (Visio Divina) encourages the practice of seeing God's love messages scattered throughout the art and objects that reflect God's creation. Art and nature can **open our hearts to enjoy** the indwelling Spirit of God.

What if we allowed our visional encounters to draw us into intimacy with God? How could we do that?

Watch for the Artist's appearances within a piece of artwork or in nature. Watch for the subtle, yet undeniable touches that proclaim how much God values you, loves you, and invites you into everything the Trinity creates and orchestrates. **Gaze long enough to see God in the art.** Linger long enough to be reminded of who God is.

STEPS to LONG LOOK; DEEP LISTEN

- 1- **Big Picture:** In a quiet place, pause and linger as you look at art or nature.
- 2- **Little Details:** Notice the small things that God is calling to your attention.
- 3- **Come closer/Be curious:** Explore what you see with lots of questions.
 - What part of God is reflected in this?
 - What word describes your emotional response?
 - How does this reflect who you are - and where you are in relationship to God?
 - Ask God: What do You want me to see in this that reveals what I really desire? What do You want me to remember as I give this a long look? What are You inviting me to?
- 4- **Personal Invitation.** Listen for God's answers and respond to specific invitations related to what you have seen and heard.

**"All beauty is only reflection.
And whether I am conscious
of it or not,
any created thing
of which I am amazed,
it is the glimpse of His face
to which I bow down!
Looking is the evidence
of the believing."**

Ann Voskamp, *1,000 Gifts*

**The heavens declare
the glory of God
and the sky above
proclaims
His handiwork.
Psalm 19:1 ESV**

... sacred seeing, praying with our eyes, beauty created by God and man invites us to pray

... celebrating God in creativity *Steve Macchia*

... pay attention to how God comes to us through our eyes, through the "speech" of divine and human creation. *Adele Calhoun*

... I am eager to miss no message of grace in the ballet of beauty or in the cramp of struggle of this incredible gift of life. *Ted Loder*

... sets our interior stage for a soulful connection with our Maker where intimate communion is possible. *Kathy Keary*

Recommended Resources: "Invisio" Reflection Cards by Unhurried Living <https://www.unhurriedliving.com/invisio> ,
"Solarium: A Dialogue in Pictures" by CRU <https://crustore.org/product/soularium/>

The purpose of spiritual practices is to make space for the Holy Spirit to do transforming work so that Christ may be formed in us.

The point is an ever-increasing union with God—loving God for God's sake—overflowing the banks of our hearts for the sake of the world.

We hope that these quotes, prayers, ideas, and resources will help you practice the way of Jesus.