

Lectio Divina

OVERVIEW

Lectio Divina is a way of praying Scripture. It literally means “**Divine Reading**” and allows an individual or group to listen, meditate, and pray their way through short passages of the Bible. **It slows down our typically rushed readings, allowing us to chew and savor it in a personal and applicable way.** *Lectio* is not to be confused with Bible study, nor is it intended to replace Bible study. It is about *our heart*, not our head; *formation*, not instruction.

As we practice *Lectio*, **our desire is to conform ourselves to the likeness of Jesus—the Living Word of God.** It stresses the belief that Christ is truly present in Scripture, so it can act as a conduit for God to speak to us. The Bible is understood to be incarnational. As Jesus is inseparably man *and* God; the Bible is inseparably human thought *and* divine inspiration. It is in this incarnate state that the Bible speaks to us in our humanity and calls us to be conformed to Jesus’ likeness.

When *Lectio* is done within a narrative passage, it can be beneficial during reading to connect to one of the characters in the story. If you are in a group setting, and not the reader, close your eyes and imagine you are in the scene. Who do you most connect with? What happens or is said to the character which connects you to them?

KEY FEATURES

1. Recognition that **the text is a gift given**, not a problem to solve.
2. In order to receive what the text has, **it must be read slowly.**
3. It is a way of **prayer...**
 - *Before reading*—pray.
 - *During reading*—allow the reading to move you from meditation into prayer.
 - *After reading*—keep a phrase in mind so that prayerful reading becomes prayerful living.

PERSONAL LECTIO

1. Find someplace comfortable to sit and remove all distractions.
2. Take three slow, deep breaths
3. Pray: “*God, speak to me through this passage of your divine word.*”
4. Slowly begin reading:
 - a. First Reading — **Listen**
(Pause)
 - b. Second Reading — **Ponder**
(Pause)
 - c. Third Reading — **Pray**

(See the Personal *Lectio* Example below for more details about each section.)

GROUP LECTIO

1. One person reads the passage *slowly*.
2. Each person identifies a word, phrase, or character that sticks out—write it down.
3. Anyone who desires to can share the word or phrase around the group (no discussion).
4. Another person reads the passage *slowly* (From a different translation, if possible).
5. Each person identifies where this passage *impacts their life today*—write it down.
6. Anyone who desires to can share (no discussion).
7. The passage is read a third time *slowly* (Another reader and translation if possible).
8. Each person names or writes: “*From what I’ve heard and shared, what do I believe God wants me to do or believe? Is God inviting me to change in any way?*”
9. Each shares their answer.
10. Each prays for the person on their right, naming what was shared in other steps



PERSONAL LECTIO EXAMPLE

1) Find a comfortable, quiet place to sit.

Remove all distractions—put on soft, quiet music if needed.

2) Take three slow, deep breaths.

This (scientifically) releases endorphins which reduce anxiety, can lower blood pressure, and help focus.

3) Pray: “God, speak to me through this passage of your divine word.”

This is a prayer of silence. Oftentimes our prayers are ‘speaking to God’, but we want to listen to his word composed in the Bible and spoken by the Holy Spirit.

4) Slowly, begin reading...

Take time reading, do not ‘focus’ on each word, but read and listen to each word. Take a slight pause between verses to let the words soak into your heart and mind.

a) The First Reading: Listen

As you read the passage, be attentive to a word or phrase that stands out to you. Meditate on this word or phrase for a minute, then, if able, say it out loud.

Response: “Immediately Jesus knew” (v.8)

b) The Second Reading: Ponder

As you begin reading a second time, ask what connects you to this word or phrase. Think about it for a few minutes (this is not about getting lost in your thoughts, but discerning what the Spirit is communicating to you). Do not worry if you get distracted and your mind wanders off. Frame a sentence around your word or phrase.

Response: Jesus sees, hears, and knows what is going on and immediately responds to us—even if it seems that no “action” takes place immediately

c) The Third Reading: Pray

As you begin to read the passage a final time, ask Jesus what he is calling you to. What is it that you need to do, consider, relinquish, or take on as a result of what God is saying to you in this word or phrase? In the silence that follows the reading, pray for the grace of the Spirit to plant this word in your heart.

Response: As the lame man needed to respond to Jesus’ command: Get up and walk; I need to respond to Jesus’ command: Go, make disciples. Jesus, immediately set up a plan to bring life and healing to people and I am to be a part of his work in my neighborhood. I need to be more present in my context to show and reveal Jesus.

Mark 2.1-12 [NIV]

¹A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. ²They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. ³Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. ⁴Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. ⁵When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, “Son, your sins are forgiven.” ⁶Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, ⁷“Why does this fellow talk like that? He’s blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?” ⁸Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, “Why are you thinking these things? ⁹Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk?’ ¹⁰But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the man, ¹¹“I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.” ¹²He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, “We have never seen anything like this

