

TOOL: Lectio Divina

Prayerful reflection three times a day • Daily



Introduction

Lectio Divina is an approach to scripture that is different from **studying** scripture. *Lectio Divina* (Latin for “divine reading”) is a form of prayer, reflection, and meditation. The goal of *Lectio Divina* is to cultivate friendship with Christ through repeated readings of scripture. A small section of scripture is chosen and read several times. Between each reading, there is a different question of focus or attention to hold before God. It is a way of listening to the texts of scripture as if we were in conversation with Christ and Christ were guiding the conversation.

This tradition of reading and prayer flows out of a Hebrew method of studying the scriptures. It was part of the devotional practice of the Jews in the days of Jesus. It was reclaimed in the Christian monastic tradition practiced in 200–300AD and has been made more regular in Catholic and Protestant communities as a way to move through a rational reading of the text to an encounter with Christ’s Spirit.

The goal: Growing in relationship

Growing in relationship with God is a process like any other relationship. We need to begin by listening and entering into dialogue with God’s word with the faith-filled belief that God’s Word is “Spirit-breathed” and Christ’s Spirit is present with us. As the dialogue unfolds, we will discover different ways of being in relationship – different moments of being with God. There are seasons of friendship where we listen to one another and ponder the meaning of each other’s words. There are moments of responding and dialoguing. There are also seasons where we are with one another when no words need to be said. In the same way, a relationship with God is also made up of many moments and in many seasons. *Lectio Divina* is a way of engaging Scripture in the many seasons of life.

Pause and consider

- What stood out to you from what you just read?
- What obstacles might you encounter as you embrace this practice (logistical, emotional, intellectual)?

Practice

Guidelines for Lectio Divina

Like any practice, meeting with God in Lectio Divina might feel awkward, forced, and clunky. Continue with it, and surely these rhythms will feel not only natural but life-giving. There are no “shoulds”, “oughts”, or “musts.” As one continues to practice, the focus is learning to listen with “the ear of your heart”. In a posture of trust, allow your focus to unfold, allowing God’s presence to take the lead through the words of scripture. This begins with the audacious belief that God is eager to be with us and to share with us the inner peace and freedom we desire. You can practice Lectio Divina by yourself or in community.

The steps of Lectio Divina

Preparation: Choose a passage for your time. The passage should not be long; a handful of verses is sufficient. Close your eyes and take some deep breaths. Recognize that God is here with you in this place. Get into a comfortable position in which you can be alert. As you breathe in, remember that the Spirit of God gives you each breath as a gift. As you breathe out, release the anxieties and concerns that you brought with you to this time. Breathe in and breathe out....

Moment One: (Lectio) Read the scripture passage for the first time. Listen with the “ear of your heart”. What phrase, sentence or single word stands out to you? Begin to repeat that phrase, sentence or one word over and over, allowing it to settle deeply in your heart. Simply return to the repetition of the phrase, sentence or one word, savoring it in your heart. [Pause for 2-3 minutes.]

Moment Two: (Meditatio) How does this passage seem to touch your life today, perhaps in what you feel, see, hear, or sense? Reflect, relish the words. Let them sit with

you. Let an attitude of quiet receptiveness permeate the prayer time. Be attentive to what affects the Word has on your heart, mind, and soul. [Pause for 2-3 minutes.]

Moment Three: (Oratio) Respond spontaneously as you continue to listen to a phrase, sentence or word. You could share a prayer of praise or thanksgiving, or a request may arise. Offer that prayer, and then return to repeating the word in your heart. [Pause for 2-3 minutes.]

Moment Four: (Contemplatio) Rest in God. Simply “be with” God’s presence as you open yourself to a deeper hearing of the Word of God. [Pause for 2-3 minutes.] When this time ends, you may end with words of gratitude, the Lord’s Prayer or a short prayer to Christ.

Possible passages

John 15:9-16	Exodus 3:11-14	Matthew 6:25-34
Luke 12:22-31	Matthew 5:14-16	John 20:11-18
Colossians 3:12-17	Matthew 5:19-21	Acts 2:1-13
Isaiah 6:1-8	Luke 13:18-19	Matthew 14:13-21
Luke 10:38-42	Ezekiel 36:26	Luke 2:41-52
Mark 10:46-52	John 8:2-11	Matthew 3:13-17
Matthew 8:28-34	Matthew 8:13	Exodus 3: 1-6
Genesis 32:22-31	Jeremiah 1:4-10	John 1:1-15
		Mark 6:7-13

Debrief your experience

After practicing with this tool, debrief your experience with you Praxis Group. Below are some questions to process together:

- Check in on life. (Where are you experiencing Christ’s presence this week? What burdens are you carrying?)
- What did you learn from this practice?
- Describe your experience with this practice. (What feelings came up, what went well, what got in the way? How has it impacted your relationship with God?)
- What is the next step for you?