

Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina (Lat. sacred reading) is a way of reading the scriptures that has its roots in the early Christian monastic tradition. Saint Benedict of Nursia (c.480-547 CE) developed the practice further in his writings entitled *The Rule of Saint Benedict*, a series a guidelines for living in community with others. At the heart of Lectio Divina is the desire to help men and women grow in their relationship with the God of the scriptures through the repeated behaviors of reading and listening, meditation, prayer, and contemplation.

Practicing Lectio Divina Individually

1. **Text** – Begin by choosing a text or passage that you would like work through. Many Christians simply use the daily readings in various liturgical books, such as [The Book of Common Prayer](#) or [The Divine Office: Liturgy of the Hours](#). Others choose to work through an entire book of the bible, or a passage that personally interests them in some way. The choice is up to you!
2. **Preparation** – Find a place where you can read undisturbed. Sit quietly before you read and focus your mind on the time ahead. Ask God to speak to you through his word.
3. **Reading & Listening** – Read slowly through the text or passage aloud three times, paying attention to the words on the page, and the phrases that speak to you personally.
4. **Meditation** – Focus your attention on the word or phrase or idea that captured your attention. Repeat it aloud several times. Think about the following questions: *What is the passage saying about God? What is this passage saying to me personally? What hope is this passage giving me? Who is this passage directing me to encourage?*
5. **Prayer** – Simply pray to God about the passage and how it spoke to you.
6. **Contemplation** – Sit quietly in God’s presence, focusing on his relationship with you.

Practicing Lectio Divina As A Group

The leader(s) will read the selected passage a total of three times, with a time of reflection and brief discussion between each reading. Each reading of the passage has its own function (outlined below).

1. **First Reading** – Read through the passage slowly. The purpose of the first reading is to allow group members to listen for a word or phrase or idea that catches their attention.
2. **Reflection & Discussion** – Give the group a moment to reflect quietly, followed by a time of discussion on what word or phrase or idea caught their attention.
3. **Second Reading** – Read through the passage again. The purpose of the second reading is to allow group members to listen (again) for the word or phrase or idea and how it speaks to their personal everyday life.
4. **Reflection & Discussion** – Give the group a moment to reflect quietly, followed by a time of discussion on how the word or phrase or idea speaks directly into their lives.
5. **Third Reading** - Read through the passage for the final time. The purpose of the third reading is for group members to process and share what their possible next steps are because of what they've heard in the word or phrase or idea during the readings.
6. **Reflection & Discussion** – Give the group a moment to reflect quietly, followed by a time of discussion on what their possible next steps are in response to the word or phrase or idea that caught their attention.
7. **Prayer** – Close your time in prayer.

Odds & Ends

Participating In An Ancient Church Behavior

Since Lectio Divina is built around reading scripture, you and your group will be participating in an ancient church behavior: listening to the scriptures as they are read. When the letters of the New Testament were written, they were essentially letters of correspondence between the apostles and their churches. When these letters arrived, they were read to the entire community as a means of instruction and encouragement. So next time you read through the letter to the Romans, imagine being there as Phoebe first read those words, and what that must have been like!

This Is Not A Study

Lectio Divina is not a study, though you and your group will certainly learn things along the way. There are no workbooks, participates' guides, fill in the blank sheets, or DVDs to watch. Learning objectives? None. God is the one who decides what you and your group will learn through this experience. All that is required of the group is that they are postured and ready to engage with God and His word.

Preparation

There is little to no preparation needed. In practicing Lectio Divina we put aside the need to know what we're doing before we do it, and instead just experience the scriptures as they come to us. **This goes for the leader as well.** Feel free to look through the leader guide prior to your gathering, but it is not necessary (or recommended) for you to read ahead, or that you make study notes beforehand.