

Sacred Rhythms

Spiritual Practice of Contemplative Scripture Reading

Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina, a Latin phrase pronounced *lex-ee-oh di-veen-ah* and translated *divine* or *sacred* reading, is an approach to Scripture that opens us to a life-transforming encounter with God within the biblical text. It refers to an ancient practice of the early Christians, and it is a slower and more reflective reading of the Scriptures that allows God to address us directly, according to what he knows we need. The practice of *lectio divina* is rooted in the belief that through the presence of the Holy Spirit the Scriptures are alive, active, and God-breathed. This was true when they were first inspired and written and it is true today.

Select a short Scripture passage to read. Perhaps from your daily reading or from Sunday worship. Other suggestions: Psalm 23; Psalm 27:1-5; Psalm 63:1-4; Isaiah 43:1-4; Isaiah 55:6-9; Matthew 14:22-32; Luke 10:38-41; John 10:1-6, 7-10, 11-18; John 12:1-8; Ephesians 3:14-19

- **Prepare:** Take a moment to become quiet. You may want to close your eyes as a way of eliminating distractions and focusing inward. Let your body relax and allow yourself to become consciously aware of God's presence with you.
- **Read:** Turn to the Scripture passage and begin to read slowly, pausing between phrases and sentences. You may read silently to yourself or you might find it helpful to read aloud and allow the words to echo and settle into your heart. As you read, listen for the word or phrase that strikes you or catches your attention. Allow for a moment of silence, then repeat that word or phrase softly to yourself, pondering it and savoring it as though pondering the words of a loved one. This is the word that is meant for you. Be content to listen simply and openly, without judging or analyzing.
- **Reflect:** Once you have heard the "word" that is meant for you, read the passage again and listen for the way in which this passage connects with your life. Ask, "*What is it in my life right now that needs to hear this word?*" After reading, allow several moments of silence to explore thoughts, perceptions, and sensory impressions. If the passage is a story, perhaps ask yourself "*Where am I in this scene? What do I hear as I imagine myself in the story or hear these words addressed specifically to me? How does this story connect with my own life experience?*"
- **Respond:** Read the passage once again, and listen for your own response. In the moments of silence that follow this reading, allow a prayer to flow spontaneously from your heart. At this point you are entering into a personal dialogue with God. You might also listen to see if God is inviting you to act or respond in some way to the word you have heard. You might find it helpful to write your prayers or to journal at this point.
- **Rest:** In this final reading you are invited to return to a place of rest in God. You have given your response, and now you move into a time of waiting and resting in God's presence. This is a posture of being yielded and open to God.
- **Resolve:** The culmination of the *lectio* process is resolving to live out the word that you have received from God, committing to carry this word with you each day and to live it out in the context of daily life and activity. As you continue to listen to the word throughout the day, God will lead you into new ways of understanding what it means to have the word "life" in you.