

Lectio Divina (Spiritual Reading)

Lectio Divina is the ancient art of spiritual reading. It dates from the time of the desert fathers and mothers in the 3rd and 4th centuries AD. This particular way of reading the bible formed an integral part of their lifestyle in the monasteries or *monastic* communities.

The ultimate purpose of Lectio Divina is to cause spiritual formation, for us to become the people that God intended us to be in the first place. The daily practice of Lectio Divina takes us into his transforming presence through reading the scriptures, praying, meditation and contemplation.

It is not about having an enlightened or ecstatic experience every time you practice it. It is about coming to God and his word with the intent of wanting to be changed by him. This often happens in a simple, quiet and unexplainable way.

Lectio Divina is not for you to get a word or prophecy for someone else. It is a very personal and intimate time between yourself and your creator.

Lectio Divina for individuals

Begin by choosing a part of scripture. It can be a story from the gospels, you could work your way through a certain book in the Bible or it can be a random piece of text. The goal is not to get through a certain quantity of scripture, the goal is inner transformation.

silence (silencio)

Prepare yourself by finding a quiet place free from distractions and interruptions. Relax in a comfortable chair and just be silent for a few minutes, you could practice *centering prayer*, focus on your breathing or say a simple prayer asking God to guide you through his Spirit.

reading / listening (lectio)

Slowly read the passage of scripture (aloud if you want to) whilst focusing on the words and phrases. Do not move too quickly and pay attention to any word or phrase that catches your attention.

meditating (meditatio)

Take that word or phrase that caught your attention and meditate on it. Take the text into yourself. Roll it over and over in your mind so that it becomes a part of you. Let the phrase integrate with your own world of fears, passions

and memories. Be very aware of what thoughts, emotions and memories come up. If random thoughts should pop into your head, simply hand them over to God.

prayer (oratio)

Then simply talk to God about this word or phrase. Tell him what you experienced and give to him whatever happened during the meditation, what you have found in your heart. Tell him how you would like to be changed from this word, phrase or idea.

contemplation (contemplatio)

Finally just come and rest in God's simple, loving presence. Again you could practise *centering prayer* if you want to. Try to connect with the image of God that exists inside of all of us. If you should feel the need to read the text again or pray some more then do so.

Lectio Divina should be practiced everyday, preferably for 30min in the morning and again for 30min in the evening.

Lectio Divina for groups

The selected text is read three times, by the leader or three individuals. After each reading a time of silence is given for reflection. Each member then briefly share, in only a few words, what *they* experienced. Again the purpose is not to give prophecy or a word etc to any other member.

first reading

Everyone is to listen for a word or a phrase that grabs their heart and should begin to take that word or phrase *inside* themselves. Repeating it and meditating on it.

second reading

This time the purpose is to 'hear' or 'see' Christ in the text. How is Christ the Word touching your life *today*? What does this phrase or word mean for you *today*?

third reading

This time the purpose is for the group members to focus on what they are to *do* or *become*. When we experience God's presence it changes us and it calls us out to action.

Recommended Reading:

Eat this Book – Eugene Peterson

Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening – Cynthia Bourgeault

Open Mind, Open Heart – Thomas Keating