

Listening

Prayer Tool: How to do the Lectio Divina

What?

The Lectio Divina is a simple method of praying and meditating on scripture. This prayer tool will show you how to practice it individually, and in a group.

Why?

“The Word of Scripture should never stop sounding in your ears and working in you all day long, just like the words of someone you love... Do not ask, “How shall I pass this on?” but, “What does this say to me?” Then ponder this word long in your heart until it has gone right into you and taken possession of you.” Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Bible reference:

“Blessed is the one... whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night” Psalm 1:1-2

“Faith comes from hearing the message, and the message is heard through the word about Christ.” Romans 10:17

A quick introduction to the Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina is a Latin phrase meaning ‘divine reading’. This is a form of meditation on the word of God that trains us to listen to His whisper speaking personally to our hearts, allowing His word to become one with us.

Lectio Divina is a reflective and repetitive way to read the Bible, that is not so much focused on becoming informed by the text but rather being transformed by it. It does not replace the other types of Bible reading - rather Lectio Divina adds depth and value to all other forms of Bible reading, facilitating a movement from our hearts to more active ways of wrestling with scripture.

Here we are reading purely in the devotional sense – reading for relationship with God more than a type of mental assent to learn more about God. We read the passage not so much as a student seeking to master the subject but as a son receiving a love-letter from a deeply committed and adoring Father.

Lectio Divina is therefore rather feeding on what we already know. If we think of a cow chewing on the cud, we are as close to discovering the way of Lectio Divina as may get: meditating on the scripture, we salivate on a divine word or phrase, tasting and savouring, then regurgitating and savouring some more, before we swallow the word finally into our being, trusting the process of digestion will bring strength and nourishment to our bodies.

Do it: How to do the Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina is described in four main phases:

- 1. Lectio: Read and Listen.** Bite into the candy bar.
- 2. Meditatio: Meditate. Explore it.** No question is off limits. What did the author mean? How does it make me feel? What does it mean to me?
- 3. Oratio: Pray and respond.** A place of intercession and repentance.
- 4. Contemplatio: Rest in God's word.** A space of silence, resting in God's presence.

However, this can be adapted in different ways. Here, there are six simple steps:

Lectio Divina is also an effective and trusted tool to use for group listening and there are also tips under each step on how to facilitate this in a group setting

1. Read

Pick a passage. To begin with, choose any of the Psalms or a passage in one of the Gospels. After inviting the Holy Spirit to come and guide you, read the passage slowly, out loud if you can. Read it twice with one minute of silence in between.

Group: Ask a couple of different people to read the passage with a minute of silence in between.

2. Relish

We could use the word 'reflect' here also, but relish describes more what we're aiming for at this stage. Meditating on the passage you have read, savour one word or phrase that you have noticed more than others during your reading. Write this word down and begin pondering what God might be saying to you through this. How is this word speaking to your life?

Group: After a moment of resting in the passage, encourage the group to simply say the word/phrase they noticed - nothing more and nothing less. As they do, simply encourage them to ponder what God might be saying to them or the group (but at this stage no-one speaks out anything more than one word or phrase.)

3. Re-read

Read the passage one more time.

4. Respond

Speak out in prayer what you sense God is saying to you. Tell Him how you feel encouraged, challenged by what He is saying to you and ask that the seed of His word in your heart would develop deep rooted truth that would lead to fruitfulness in your life.

Group: Allow space for people to pray out short prayers, speaking out what God is saying through the particular passage.

5. Rest

Simply take some time to allow God to wrap you in His love, and let the word He has given you rest on you

Group: Encourage the group to simply rest in God's presence together.

6. Resolve

Finish by articulating one way you might be able to live out the word that has penetrated your heart in your daily life

Group: share with one another how God is speaking to you personally or as a group and what an appropriate response might be. Notice if there are some common threads coming through as people share.

Books on the Lectio Divina

- Opening to God: Lectio Divina and life as Prayer – David G. Benner
- The Sacred Year – Michael Yankoski