



Lectio Divina (the Sacred Reading of Scripture)¹

Lectio Divina (pronounced LEX-ee-o dih-VEE-nuh) is a Latin phrase for the sacred reading of Scripture

History

- It is a method of reading Scripture that innumerable monks, nuns, and followers of Christ have used since the earliest days of the church.
- For both the Israelites and the earliest Christians, the Psalter (Psalms) was their songbook.
- It was St. Benedict (ca.480-ca.550) who cemented the practice in Western monasticism, and Guigo II (ca. 1115-ca.1198) who articulated the practice even further in his book *Scala Claustralium* (*The Ladder of Monastics*).

Description

- It is a method of reading the Bible in a devotional way (as opposed to literal, moral, or allegorical) - believing that, because it is God's inspired Word, it's a living and active text, that has something to say to each individual believer.
- Lectio divina assumes that, by entering deeply into the text of God's holy Word, God will be made known to us, speak to us, and shape our lives.
- It is reading the Bible with no agenda, no presuppositions.
- One needs to purposefully shed the common methods most of us use in our everyday reading (such as reading for entertainment or information).

Practice

- Find a Bible translation or paraphrase that is easily readable.
- Use a Bible without notes, underlining, or study helps - anything that will distract you from what God is saying to you *today*.
- Pay attention to your surroundings - you want quiet or silence, enough light to read but not so bright to be distracting, and no other distractions (like phones).
- Choose a time of day when you are wide awake and set aside enough time to hear from God.
- Choose a text of Scripture that you sense will be a good source of devotion for you. While all of Scripture can be used for this, as you are beginning it might be best to choose a Psalm, something from the gospels, or a short paragraph from one of the epistles.
- You might begin with a prayer requesting and expecting God's presence and direction.

¹ The following sources were used: "*Classic Meditation – Lectio Divina*" by Jan Johnson and *The Sacred Way* by Tony Jones (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005).

Structure

- **Reading** a passage of Scripture (*lectio*)
 - Read the scripture slowly, repeatedly, and aloud if possible
 - Allow the text to trigger memories and associations that reside below the threshold of awareness
 - Be calm, deliberate, gradual, and listening hard for what God has to say to you
 - Imagine what your temperament will be in heaven sitting at God's feet
 - Listen for a word or phrase that rises above the rest of text ("rings") and grabs a hold of you
 - Reading aloud helps the words and phrases resonate in the ear
- **Meditation** on that passage (*meditatio*)
 - This is the "interior intelligence" of the text - what seem to be the values, the underlying assumptions and presumptions of this passage?
 - How is my life touched today by this passage?
 - What is this passage inviting me to do?
 - As you attend to those deeper meanings, begin to meditate on the feelings and emotions that are conjured up in your inner self
- **Prayer** (*oratio*)
 - Although it is all prayer, here one deliberately asks God for illumination
 - Respond to God, telling your desire to respond to the invitation or asking questions
- **Contemplation** (*contemplatio*)
 - Silent waiting on God
 - Where your prayer moves beyond words and intellect into a place where time and eternity almost touch
 - This final step takes patience and practice, and is often the most difficult to achieve
 - It may be merely a moment of silence, peace, and rest in the midst of 10 minutes of struggle to quiet your mind

Group Lectio

- After an opening prayer, a passage is read two or three times, slowly and deliberately, and participants are asked to find the word or phrase that speaks to them (stands out, or "ring", or rises above the others)
- Share that word or phrase with the group
- Read the passage two or three more times (different reader)
- Participants again reflect on the word or phrase that speaks to them, this time attending to the emotions or feelings that it conjures.
- Share these emotions or feelings with the group.
- Read the passage two more times, again in a distinct voice, with a longer period of silence asking God why this word or phrase provoked this feeling.
- A final and more lengthy time of sharing ends the session with each person telling the others what God is saying to them through the text.

For More Information

- Go to: <http://www.valyermo.com/ld-art.html>