

LECTIO DIVINA

DISCIPLINES
& PRACTICES

One of the coolest things about being a Christian is that you get to become a part of a larger community that stretches not only across the space of the earth, but across time. Outside of our limited chronological bubble, there have been a people following Christ's teaching for over 2000 years. Today, I'd like to introduce you to a practice that joins us together with 15 centuries of other Christians, and will likely improve the quality of your devotional time spent with God.

Especially if your time spent reading scripture has become stale, monotonous, and simply routine, join me in stepping into the world of prayerful scripture reading with the help of Lectio Divina – which is simply the Latin words for “divine reading.” As I previously mentioned, this is a way of reading scripture that has been around since the early 500s. It includes four simple steps that help you connect deeply to the word and think through its implications. I will warn you in advance though, it will require you to slow down and take your time. The four parts are originally named: lectio, meditatio, oratio, and contemplatio. But put into language we can understand and remember, they are as follows: reading, meditation, prayer, contemplation. Let's break down how this looks:

Reading or lectio: Before you read, begin by praying that God would work in you and reveal something to you in this time. Then read the passage. You will want to read it once or twice just to familiarize yourself with the words. On the second or third time reading the passage, write down any word or words that are sticking out to you.

Next is Meditation or meditatio: In this section, spend a few minutes reflecting on the passage as a whole, and particularly on those words that you took note of. Sit with them and ponder what God might be trying to say to you with those words or simply how they apply to your life.

After that is Prayer or oratio: Bring those words to God in this time. Talk with him about what these words mean, maybe even use those words in a prayer back to God.

Finally Contemplation or contemplatio: This is not a time to think about anything in particular, but is rather a time of rest. Sit in the stillness and the quiet of God's goodness. Be glad that you have had this time to sit in God's word.

Those are the four main elements of Lectio Divina. It seems simple, but the act of intentionally building this space into your life for God to move in you through his word can be life changing. One of the most important things we can do is give God space to work. You might not feel this incredible, special connection with God each time you do this. You may not walk away after one or two tries feeling as though your life is completely different. You aren't guaranteed a super powerful spiritual encounter with God. But what you are doing is faithfully allowing some quiet to enter your life in order to hear the still small whisper of what God has for your life. Join me and our Christian brothers and sisters from centuries and centuries ago by giving Lectio Divina – divine reading – a try.

Instructions

Pick a passage that is short enough for you to read multiple times, and long enough for you to reflect on. Then, pray to begin your time. From there slowly work through each section (Reading, Meditation, Prayer, Contemplation) as outlined above, spending a few minutes on each one. Don't rush this! It is a purposely slow process. Physically write down anything God is saying to you throughout this time.

First Time: Pick one day in the next week to try this out. You will want to plan and prepare in advance to make sure you have enough time. About 20 minutes should work.

Another Step: Set a regular monthly or weekly day to practice this. Make it a part of your routine.

Final Step: Add in a section at the end of your four steps that some call actio (action). This additional step is a time to spend planning out how you are going to live out the things God is revealing to you. You may not always have a brand new action each time, but you may continue to think on the same action that God is calling you to.

Bonus: Try Lectio Divina with a friend or family member. Read out loud and share anything that God may lay on your heart. Learn and listen not only to what God is saying to you, but also what he is speaking to the other person.