

Lectio Divina: Encountering Scripture through Sacred Reading

Lectio divina, or “divine reading,” is a powerful way to encounter God in scripture and offers a wonderful practice for either individuals or groups. The individual practice has four phases.

Phase 1, *Lectio* (reading/listening)

- Choose a passage of scripture. Although any passage will do, a psalm, a story about Jesus, or one of the poetic passages from a prophet works very well.
- Read the passage to yourself twice. Don’t be caught by the literal meaning of the scripture. Rather, listen for the word or phrase that catches your attention.
- Silently focus on that word or phrase. Repeat it a few times. Allow it to sift through your heart and mind.

Phase 2, *Meditatio* (pondering)

- As you continue to focus on your word or phrase, pay attention to the thoughts and feelings it evokes.
- What images, what thoughts, what memories come to mind?
- Continue to ask God to speak to you through this word, and continue to listen for the reply.

Phase 3, *Oratio*, (responding)

- At some point you may find yourself wanting to reply to God. What desires has your prayer awakened in you?
- Maybe you have found an area of your life that needs some work.
- Maybe you find you are grateful for something and you wish to express that gratitude.
- Maybe you feel called to a new course of action in your life.
- Whatever you sense, do not rush the prayer. Continue to wait and listen as God forms your prayer and desire in your heart.
- Speak your prayer of desire, longing, or action to God. Continue to listen in the silence.

Phase 4, *Contemplatio* (resting)

- In this final phase of the prayer, the conversation with God draws to a close. Having heard a word from God and having expressed your response to that word, you now allow yourself to rest in the silence.
- Allow your mind to settle.
- When you feel that the prayer has come to an end, express your gratitude to God. This can be as simple as saying “Thank you” or “Amen.”

Source – *Creating a Life With God, The Call of Ancient Prayer Practices*, Daniel Wolpert