

Legacy Leadership Collective / Spiritual Disciplines / Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina is an ancient spiritual practice from the Christian monastic tradition. It is the practice of “divine reading” or praying Scripture. Currently it’s mostly used by Catholics and Anglicans, yet it’s roots go before any of the current camps or religious groups we see now.

“And let them remember that prayer should accompany the reading of Sacred Scripture, so that God and man may talk together; for “we speak to Him when we pray; we hear Him when we read the divine saying.” Ambrose, 350 AD

- John Calvin was a big advocate of Lectio Divina, as was Richard Baxter the Puritan theologian.¹ You’re now beginning to see it’s reprise among contemporary reformed thinkers. It involves a balance of silence and God’s word, seeking to encounter God as he speaks directly and personally through his word.
 - It involves listening to a short passage, *setting aside understanding and analysis*, to open oneself to receive God’s word “expectantly and passively”²
 - It does not treat Scripture as texts to be studied, but as the Living Word.³
 - This type of reading is aimed more at growing a relationship with God than gathering information.⁴
- The focus of Lectio Divina is not a theological analysis of biblical passages but viewing them with Christ as the key to their meaning.
 - Consider Jesus’ statement in John 14:27: *“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you”*, an analytical approach would focus on the reason for the statement during the Last Supper, the biblical context, etc. In Lectio Divina, however, the practitioner *“enters”* and shares the peace of Christ rather than *“dissecting”* it.⁵
 - Although Lectio Divina involves reading, it is less a practice of reading than one of listening to the inner message of the Scripture delivered through the Holy Spirit.¹
 - Lectio Divina **does not seek information or motivation, but communion** with God. Rather than mastering the text, the idea is that it masters us.

Hebrews 4:12–13 (ESV): For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. ¹³ And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

- Process:

¹Thompson, Marjorie J.; Howard, Evan B., *Soul Feast: An Invitation To The Christian Spiritual Life*. (Westminster John Knox Press, 2005) p. 24

²David G. Benner, *Sacred Companions: The Gift of Spiritual Friendship & Direction* (IVP Books, 2002) page 169

³David G. Benner, *Opening to God: Lectio Divina and Life as Prayer* (IVP Books) pages 47–53

⁴Adele Calhoun, *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook; Practices that Transform Us* (IVP Books, 2005) page 187

⁵Richard J. Foster, *Meditative Prayer* (IVP Books 1983) pages 24–25

- **1st & 2nd reading:** Read the passage *out loud* a couple times listening for words and phrases that stand out. The purpose is to listen for a word, phrase, or idea that captures your attention.
- **3rd reading:** Focus your attention *more* on that word, phrase, or idea, repeating it to yourself silently as the passage is read aloud. Spend some time reflecting and sharing what you've heard.
- **4th reading:** Listen to what God might be asking you *to do or become*. After the reading and a time of silent reflection, share with others what God is sharing with you.

Lectio Divina has been likened to "feasting on the Word":

- (1) the taking of a bite (lectio);
- (2) chewing on it (meditatio);
- (3) savoring its essence (oratio) and, finally,
- (4) "digesting" it and making it a part of the body (contemplatio)

1 Corinthians 2:9–13: But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him"— ¹⁰ these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. ¹¹ For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. ¹² Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. ¹³ And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.