

Lectio Divina

Simple guidelines

*”Seek in READING
and you will find in MEDITATION
knock in PRAYER
and it will be opened to you in CONTEMPLATION”*

St. John of the Cross, paraphrasing Luke 11:9

Lectio Divina, or “*sacred reading*,” is an ancient way of prayerfully receiving the Word of God.

There are typically four phases:

- **Lectio** – *reading* a selected text.
- **Meditatio** – *meditating* on a specific word or phrase that stands out.
- **Oratio** – *speaking to God in prayer*, journaling, or sharing with others in a group.
- **Contemplatio** – *contemplation*... simply “being” with God, resting in God’s embrace without words, awake to the movement of the Spirit.

To begin, choose the Scripture passage you wish to pray. A few verses are better than a whole chapter. You might start with a short story from the Gospels or a portion of the Psalms. Get in a comfortable position and allow yourself to become attentive. When you are ready, move through the following four phases of interaction with your chosen Scripture:

Phase One – Lectio (reading)

What does the text say?

Turn to the text and read it slowly, gently, out loud. During the first reading, simply listen for an overall sense of the passage. Savor the reading, feel the sensation of words in your mouth. Get in touch with the ideas; if it is a story, use your imagination to place yourself in the scene. Pay attention not only to thoughts, but also to emotions and physical sensations.

Does a particular word or phrase stand out?

Listen for the “still, small voice” of a portion of the reading that says, “I am for you today.

Phase Two – Meditatio (meditation)

What does the text say specifically to me at this point in my life?

Take the word or phrase into yourself. Slowly repeat it, allowing it to interact with your inner world of concerns, joys, hopes, memories, and ideas. Let your imagination engage the text.

What is the invitation from God for you today?

Phase Three – Oratio (prayer)

What do I say to God through the text?

Speak to God in response. Be honest with emotions and thoughts, even perhaps, any resistance you might be experiencing.

What feelings or response does it stir?

Are you prompted to any change or action?

Is your posture one of acceptance or resistance?

Be as honest as possible with God about anything you are thinking and feeling.

Interact with God as you would with one who you know loves and accepts you. Wrestle honestly if you need to. Finally, give to God what you have encountered in your heart today.

Phase Four – Contemplatio (contemplation)

Be still, resting in God's embrace, letting God work in your spirit. This is a time of simply sitting in the presence of God, awake to his work and Word

THE WALK

Psalm 1

Three times we read the Bible passage and then pray or journal quietly for a few minutes to help us listen to the Spirit. Each reading is guided by a focus question listed below.

Introduction to the Text

The Psalms record deep devotion, intense feeling, exalted emotion, and dark dejection. The Psalms play with all the keyboard keys of the human soul.

This book has been called the epitome and anatomy of the soul and designated as the garden of the Scriptures. The place Psalms have held in the lives of God's people testifies to their universality, although they have a peculiar Jewish application. They express the deep feelings of all believing hearts in all generations.

Psalm 1 - The first psalm deals with the godly man and the ungodly man. There is a contrast. And the contrast is probably best expressed by the first and the last words of the psalm. Concerning the godly: blessed. Concerning the ungodly: perished.

Psalm 1

"Blessed is the man
who walks not in the counsel of the wicked,
nor stands in the way of sinners,
nor sits in the seat of scoffers;
² but his delight is in the law of the Lord,
and on his law he meditates day and night.

³ He is like a tree
planted by streams of water

that yields its fruit in its season,
and its leaf does not wither.
In all that he does, he prospers.
⁴The wicked are not so,
but are like chaff that the wind drives away.

⁵Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment,
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous;
⁶for the Lord knows the way of the righteous,
but the way of the wicked will perish.”

Psalm 1 (ESV)

Prayer / Journaling / Soul Talk Prompts

1. What is one word or phrase the Holy Spirit impresses on you? In silence meditate on that.
2. What do you feel? What question(s) do you have for God about your life today? Write down a prayer or pray quietly.
3. What is God’s personal invitation to you from the Scripture? You can write down what the Lord may be saying to you. Or you can recall God’s unfailing love for you, even if you’re not feeling it now, and write a prayer of thanks. Or simply rest quietly in the Spirit’s presence.^[P]_[SEP]