



LECTIO DIVINA

Making Room for God to Speak

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LECTIO DIVINA

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Lectio divina (Latin for “divine reading”) began with St. Benedict, and eventually evolved to include four distinct movements: Read (*lectio*), Meditate (*meditatio*), Pray (*oratio*), and Contemplate (*contemplatio*). The purpose of this practice is not simply to know more of God’s Word or to memorize it (though that will happen as you practice), nor is it to study the context and make complex observations and connections as we do when we read inductively. The purpose of lectio divina is to position yourself for an encounter with the Living God; by slowly, methodically, dwelling on one small passage of scripture. Eugene Peterson would tell you to *eat* it—to devour it intentionally, to savor it bite by bite.

In lectio divina we stop on just one verse, or a small group of verses, for a sustained *pause*. This does not seem productive, nor does it promise a particular outcome. That is the point. Divine reading is a kind of “holy leisure” you can enjoy with God. You’re not in a hurry, and you don’t have to force this exercise to be meaningful. This is a *practice*. The only goal is to make room to be with God. This might be very new to you, but go all in anyway. Don’t take this too seriously, but do engage yourself in the experience. Think of this as an experiment in faith.

THE PRACTICE

Set aside 20 minutes for this exercise.

1. Have your journal ready. Choose one of the suggested passages, or select your own, and locate it in your Bible.

Genesis 16:6-15, 2 Kings 6:8-17, Psalm 22, Psalm 73, Isaiah 43:14-19

Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 5:24-34, Luke 11:1-13, John 10:3-14, Ephesians 3:14-21

2. READ. Start by reading through the passage once, then again. Read it out loud if you can. Stretch out with it, get to know it a little. You might notice a few things as you do, but resist the urge to pull much from it right now; you’re just warming up. Which words stick out to you as you read? If something resonates with you, stop on it before moving on.

3. MEDITATE. Now begin again, this time even more slowly. Do something different this time. Follow the words with your eyes, but imagine God reading the passage to you, word by word. *Listen* as he does. Hear his voice, how it rises and falls as he speaks. This might sound strange to you, but try it anyway. You’ve got nothing to lose. You’re trying something new. Dwell on the words and phrases bit by bit. Perhaps you’ll see something

new you didn’t expect. What do you feel? What’s going on in your heart? Engage your imagination: what do you see?

4. PRAY. What do you need to say to God? Say it, then listen for his response. Give God room to answer. Talk back and forth together. Interact with God. If you need to give something up, cut it loose. If God is giving you something, take it. Don't rush.

5. CONTEMPLATE. Now tie a bow on what just happened. Take out your journal and write out the verse you've meditated on, then write down what God has been saying. Record the conversation so you can return to it later. Perhaps God is prompting you to do something: to send someone an encouraging text, or to make something right. Let what just happened in this practice move you to action *today*. God has spoken. What now? This is where the mysterious interaction of lectio divina gets practical. Take what God is doing and make it concrete somehow.