



“Happy are those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or take the path that sinners tread, or sit in the seat of scoffer; but their delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law they meditate day and night. They are like trees planted by streams of water, which yield their fruit in its season, and their leaves do not wither. In all that they do, they prosper.

Psalm 1:1-3

LECTIO DIVINA

READING • MEDITATION • PRAYER • CONTEMPLATION

Lectio Divina means “spiritual or divine reading”. It’s a way of reading scripture that involves the heart as much as the head. It’s not so much about the *amount* you read, but with the *depth*.

Classical writers have compared this process to eating. In reading, you bite off a small chunk of text. Through meditation, you chew on it, extracting the nutrients and juices. In prayer, you swallow, incorporating the results of your meditation and allowing them to nourish your life. And in contemplation, you savor the good taste left in your mouth, celebrate the gift of God’s word to you, and embrace the new life you have received.

Classic descriptions of Lectio Divina list a sequence of four movements: *lectio* (reading), *meditation* (ruminating and reflecting), *oratio* (responding to God), and *contemplatio* (receiving and resting in God).

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Instructions

Stage 1 – Reading

First, choose a relatively short passage of scripture and read it meditatively, prayerfully. In this phase you are a seeker, looking for the “word within the Word.” Watch for a key phrase or word that jumps out at you or promises to have special meaning for you. Read it slowly with your own life and choices in view.

Stage 2 – Meditation

Next, mull over the text; internalize the words. Listen for the phrases that stand out for you as you read the passage. Turn them over in your mind. Reflect on why these words catch your attention, what they bring to mind, and what they mean for you today. This stage is comparable to walking around a great statue, viewing it from multiple vantage points.

Stage 3 – Prayer

Next, pray the text. You have listened; now respond. Turn your meditation from dialogue with yourself to dialogue with God. Share with God in all honesty your reflections, questions, or feelings. Offer your thanksgiving, confession, petitions, or intercessions as they arise within during your dialogue with God. Listen for God’s response and inner nudging.

Stage 4 – Contemplation

Finally, rest. Rest your mental activity and trust yourself completely to God’s love and care. Relax in God’s presence. Allow the text to work itself into you. Pick a phrase from the text to which you can return again and again as you keep your attention on God. Enjoy the rest that Jesus promised to those who come to him. Quietly, when ready, move toward the moment in which you ask God to show you how to live out what you have experienced.

*The gospel is not a doctrine of the tongue, but of life.
It cannot be grasped by reason and memory only,
but it is fully understood when it possesses the whole soul,
and penetrates to the inner recesses of the heart.*

—John Calvin