

Lectio Divina

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Colossians 3:16-17)

Lectio Divina is an ancient practice of “sacred reading.” This slow, repetitive method of reading a short passage of scripture will train us in listening to the Word of God, not just reading it. In this way, our reading transforms us, instead of merely informing us. Take fifteen minutes a day for one week, and try it.

Choose a passage that is 6-8 verses long. Any short passage will do. It could be part of your daily reading schedule, or something from a lectionary or devotional book. Here a few examples...

Deuteronomy 30:15-20; Psalm 119:1-8; 1 Corinthians 3:1-9; Matthew 5:17-26; Ephesians 6:10-17; 1 Peter 2:7-12; Isaiah 55:1-5; John 15:12-17

Preparation (Silencio) Take a moment to quiet yourself, take a few deep breaths and become consciously aware of God’s presence with you. Ask God to speak a personal word to you.

Read (Lectio) As you read through the passage two or three times, slowly, listen for the word or phrase that is addressed to you. A single word or phrase will emerge and present itself for further consideration. Once you know your word...

Reflect (Meditatio) Read the passage again, paying particular attention to the word or phrase that you feel drawn to. Ask yourself, what in my life needs to hear this word right now? If you are reading a story, ask yourself, where do I fit into this scene? What character do I identify with, and why? This is a great time to incorporate a journal. Write your observations, and continue writing through the next step...

Respond (Oratio) What is your response to God? In prayer, carry on the dialogue, sharing with God how you feel about what he’s telling you to do. Do you feel joy, love, resistance, conviction, bewilderment, incredulity?

Rest (Contemplatio) In this final reading of the passage – just rest. If you’ve been writing, put the pen down. If you have been wrestling and resisting, put that aside for now, and simply rest in the understanding that you have been in the presence of the lover of your soul.

Resolve (Incarnatio) Incarnate (live out) the word of God. As you move into your daily activities, resolve that you will live out any truth that you have learned. Helpful questions are, “If I believe the word I’ve received, what should I stop doing?” And, “If I believed, what should I start doing?”

Adapted from Ruth Haley Barton, “Sacred Rhythms”