

Praying Scripture using *Lectio Divina*

Lectio Divina is Latin for “divine reading” or “holy reading”. *Lectio Divina* is a Christian tradition of prayerfully reading a passage from scripture by tarrying with the text, pondering its meaning and lifting up words of thanks. The intent of *Lectio Divina* is both to increase our understanding of the Word and to nurture a deeper, more open connection with God through His Word.

A well-rounded approach to scripture involves both informational and formational reading. Most Bible study tends toward the informational side of the equation. Informational study is predominantly about getting to know the Bible stories and the principles presented therein. Formational reading involves taking time to encounter the text in a way that shapes us as disciples. One approach isn’t better than the other. In fact, they feed one another. *Lectio divina* is a practice that is very much a formational reading of scripture.

The Method

There are four classic movements to *Lectio Divina*:

* *Lectio*: This first movement consists of slowly and attentively reading a scripture passage several times. You may want to jot down words or phrases that seem to stand out to you.

* *Meditatio*: In this second movement, as the name implies, we meditate on the text. This “meditation” is not like that of Eastern traditions in which we seek to bring the mind to rest or emptiness. Rather, the intent of *Meditatio* is to engage with the text with an active mind. You may ponder a phrase or word that arrested your attention in your first readings of the text and sit with it, wondering how it speaks to your life right now. You may imaginatively place yourself in the story, all the while listening for the Holy Spirit to speak within you about the meaning of this text for your life right now.

* *Oratio*: *Oratio* is a Latin word associated with speech. It is a word from which we derive words like “oral” and “oratory”. In this third movement, we speak to God from the heart about what we have found in the text. The Word may have convicted our hearts about something. If so, we may find ourselves seeking God’s forgiveness in mercy. If the Word touches on a hurt, we may cry out in pain. If the Word reveals a calling, then from our hearts we may pledge ourselves to God or ask for guidance. *Oratio* is a time for us to voice a response to God from our understanding of the text.

* *Contemplatio*: When all is said and done, *Lectio* comes to an end simply by joyfully resting in God’s presence. We offer back to God our loving focus and attention with a heart of gratitude.

Don’t overthink this method or be legalistic about it. The essence of *Lectio Divina* is slowing down in your reading enough to prayerfully consider what God may be saying to you right now. Chat with God about what you are hearing and then just tarry a few quiet moments in God’s presence. The Holy Spirit will do the rest. In some ways I have found this form of reading more valuable to my growth as a disciple than more academic studies of scripture. Nevertheless, I will repeat what I said earlier; formational and informational reading enhance one another. A mature and holistic study of God’s Word will include both approaches.

Blessings to you in your reading from The Practical Disciple