

LECTIO DIVINA

There is a time-tested method for reading sacred scripture. The practice is widely known as Lectio Divina (lex-ee-oh div-eeen-ah)— or in English it might be called divine reading, devotional reading, or spiritual reading. This method of reading scripture was formalized by a french monk in the 12th century named Guigo II. He writes:

“One day when I was busy working with my hands I began to think about our spiritual work, and all at once four stages in spiritual exercise came into my mind: reading, meditation, prayer, and contemplation. These make a ladder for monks by which they are lifted up from earth to heaven. It has few rungs, yet its length is immense and wonderful, for its lower end rests upon the earth, but its top pierces the clouds and touches heavenly secrets.”

You can use this method of spiritual reading for any passage of Scripture. Truth be told, if you come across a poem or a song that touches you on a spiritual level, you can use this method there too.

Lectio Divina is a discipline that holds a lifetime of discoveries, yet is relatively simple in its construction. As with any ladder, you must start your climb from the bottom. Then follow the logical progression up. In **reading** we seek the sweetness of the blessed life in God, in **meditation** we perceive it, in **prayer** we ask for it, and in **contemplation** we taste it.

Step 1: Read the passage of scripture with a sense of expectation. This is an ancient wisdom text, and through these words come a deeply personal message from God’s heart to yours. Open yourself to this message.

Step 3: Prayer, in the context of *Lectio Divina*, is to ask for that which has been revealed to you in your reading and meditation. To pray is to humble yourself — you who is able to do so little on your own — and ask for the infinite grace of God that has been revealed to you in this passage.

Step 2: Meditation is the exercise of actively applying your mind to the passage. Mull it over, chew on it, look at it from different angles. Are there other passages with which you can draw a connections? Or try placing yourself in the story. What do you see, hear, and smell as you stand in the scene? Seek understanding.

Step 4: Contemplation literally means to be lifted up as a temple. We recognize the inadequacy of our own words in prayer, and we simply allow ourselves to be lifted up above the common, earthly things. This exalted contemplation cleanses the soul from ego desires as your heart touches the blessed heart of God.

