

Lectio Divina – Divine Intervention

Study Guide

Introduction

As Christians read the Bible and pray. Our Bible reading is usually done in the same way as we read any other book but we do look for some special meaning in the words that God may have for us. In our prayers we talk with God, but mostly we do the talking and very rarely do any listening. In times before the printing press and the easy availability of the Bible the average person was not able to read the Bible and so it was read to them. In Monasteries the Monks were expected to spend long hours in reading and prayer. They were following Paul's charge to "pray constantly." To assist in a way to make this meaningful and look for a way God could speak to them the developed a sacred ritual of "praying the Bible." This is what is known as Lectio Divina or Sacred Reading.

With the Reformation and the stress be placed more on the learning of laity many of the ancient traditions were lost, such as The Divine Hours. Lectio Divina was lost to the church and was only practice in Monasteries. It is a great tool for us to use in our lives to come closer to God and listen for his voice.

Lectio Divina takes a passage of Scripture and during several readings of the passage you look for a word or phrase that stands out. The word or phrase may appear and not have an association with the full context of the passage but just jumps out at you and seems significant. You then take the word or phrase and meditate on it and see how the meaning applies to you. It is in this way that God can talk with us and give us the inspired meaning the words have for us at this time in our lives.

We consider the Bible as the inspired word of God. The writers were inspired by God when they wrote the words and God inspires us when we read his words. By using the practice of Lectio Divina we can allow this to happen. We free our minds of the conglomeration of clutter and he words of God fill our minds and so allow space for God to talk with us.

Four Stages of Lectio Divina

1. **Lectio** – the selection of a reading.
 - Reading can be from any part of the Bible as it is all inspired by God. God can use any passage we choose.
 - Some parts of the Bible are easier to use, such as the Psalms. Another good source is to use the Daily Lectionary passages
 - Use only 2 or 3 verses so that you can immerse yourself in these words.
 - Make yourself comfortable and do not hurry reading – let the words sink in
 - Read the passage slowly as many times as feels right. This could be 4 or 5 or as many as 15
 - Don't intellectualize the passage
 - Look for a word or phrase that jumps out at you
 - It would be normal to spend 10 minutes on this stage – do not rush on let the passage speak to you. Remember God is in control

2. **Meditatio** – meditating on the words

- As you did the reading and found a word or phrase that stood out from the rest of the passage it is time to meditate and digest these words
- Read the passage a couple more times
- Gnaw of the words you have been given. Chew them over, Turn them around. Let them soak into your mind. In Hebrew the word that is translated as meditate is *hagah* and can also mean to chew or growl.
- Look for associations to the words and see where these words lead your mind
- Do not rush this stage – just sit still and be quiet and let the words take you where they will
- This can be a hard stage as our mind may wander to other things but keep coming back to the words – read the words again if you have to, to refocus your mind.
- Take about 10 minutes for this stage

3. **Oratio** – the time to speak or pray to God

- God has given you these special words at this time and they have special meaning just for you
- It is now time to take the words to God and talk to him about them
- Remember God is big enough to handle any of your emotions – it's alright to be angry with God.
- Tell God how you feel and ask for further insight into what the words have for you
- Silence is also a good practice here as you open your mind and heart to God. Let God guide your thoughts.
- Take about 5 minutes for this stage

4. **Contemplatio** – A time to quietly contemplate on what you have experienced

- This difficult to grasp as it is really a non-activity
- We are still and quiet *considering* what God has given us in this time.
- During this time think of a loving father wrapping his arms around you and comforting you.
- Clear your mind and put aside all the things that clutter it and let God fill it with his thoughts
- Come out of this stage slowly. It can be good to close by saying the Lord's Prayer
- Take about 5 minutes for this stage

Conclusion

Lectio Divina is an ancient practice that has been lost, but is a great way for us to communicate with God. The times given here are only guides. As you do this more you will find you spend more time listening for God to speak with you. Try adding Lectio Divina to your life and you will find your spiritual life starting to soar as you open yourself up for God to speak to you through his holy word.