

# LECTIO DIVINA

It can be easy to get frustrated with the Bible when we approach it as an encyclopedia—an entirely literal, one-size-fits-all linear manual for life in the modern world. But what if the Bible wasn't designed as a convenient reference manual or a textbook? What if the Bible is more like a library of ancient texts designed for a lifetime of *ongoing meditation*?

**Lectio divina** is not a new method of Bible *Study*. The study of the Bible sets its focus on *learning* and there is a place for that. **lectio divina** is an ancient time-tested method of *meeting God* in the Scriptures. In doing so, the disciple allows the Scriptures (in cooperation with the Spirit) to lead the reader into further intimacy with God as they move slowly, carefully, and repeatedly through the text. The practice consists of five distinct movements:

- 1) Preparing to meet with God
- 2) Reading (*lectio*)
- 3) Reflection (*meditatio*)
- 4) Response (*oratio*)
- 5) Rest (*contemplatio*)

## TALK ABOUT THIS WEEK'S PRACTICE AS A COMMUNITY (10-30 MINUTES)

Having established a time and place that are both quiet and free from distraction, set aside 3-5 times this week to practice lectio divina.

Any passage of Scripture can be utilized for the practice of lectio divina. Here are a few suggestions with which to start: Psalm 23, Psalm 100, John 15v1-17, or Romans 12.

After selecting one passage, read and move slowly through each of the five movements of spiritual reading.

**Prepare to meet with God:** Turn your phone off and leave it in another room. Situate yourself comfortably in a quiet, solitary place. Calm your body and quiet your mind before God as you work to prepare your heart to receive what God has spoken through the text, and to respond accordingly. Finally, invite the Holy Spirit to guide your thinking and feeling as you read.

**Read (*lectio*):** Read the passage slowly and carefully. Take your time. As you move through the text, pay close attention to what words and ideas draw your attention in unique ways. When your focus is drawn to a particular word or thought, pause momentarily to reflect on them.

**Reflect (*mediatio*):** Upon completing the passage, return to the beginning and read again. On your second journey through the text, allow the text to connect with you personally. Which words or phrases assume a particular resonance in your heart, your season of life, or your person at this moment. Ask, “What do I need to know, or be, or do in light of the text? What does this mean for my life today?”

**Respond (*oratio*):** Talk to God about your experience. If you’re confused, say that. Moved? Express gratitude to God. Upset? Tell him about it. Compelled to worship? Worship. If the text has brought something else to mind, talk to God about that.

**Rest (*contemplatio*):** Pause to sit in God’s presence before fleeing from the moment. You might express wonder, awe, gratitude, or praise through words, or you might allow yourself to feel and experience these things quietly before God.