



Praying the Psalms

Lectio Divina

Two Types of Reading

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- Formative - reading *to be* transformed by the text - the Holy Spirit is actively in charge.

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Historically, Christians have thought of these two approaches to reading the Scriptures as:

- Lectio Continua -- continuous reading
- Lectio Divina -- spiritual reading

Learning to pray the Psalms requires that we learn to read formatively as well as informatively.

Lectio Divina

- Lectio Divina is the ancient practice of *spiritual reading*.
- Rooted in the earliest days of the Christian church.
- The classical formula of lectio divina was taught by a 12th century monk named Guigo the Second.

“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 (lectio), meditating (meditatio), prayer (oratio) and contemplation (contemplatio)...”

-- Guigo II, *Scala Claustralium*

Lectio Divina

Classical lectio divina is made up of four stages:

- Lectio (reading)
- Meditatio (meditation)
- Oratio (praying)
- Contemplatio (contemplation)

“Reading, as it were, puts the solid food into our mouths, meditation chews it and breaks it down, prayer obtains the flavor of it and contemplation is the very sweetness which makes us glad and refreshes us.”

-- Guigo II, *Scala Claustralium*

Practicing Lectio Divina

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- Bible -- translation you understand

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- Pen & Paper -- preferably a journal

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- Quiet Place -- so as not to be disturbed

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- Bible -- translation you understand
- Pen & Paper -- preferably a journal
- Quiet Place -- so as not to be disturbed
- Time -- lectio divina cannot be rushed

Be Still

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- Sit in an alert, upright, and comfortable position.

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- Close your eyes and still yourself and your breathing.

Be Still

- Sit in an alert, upright, and comfortable position.
- Close your eyes and still yourself and your breathing.
- For about a minute, breathe in deeply and as you exhale silently pray, “*Lord, speak to me.*”

Lectio

Psalm 27

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Lectio

Psalm 27

- Read the Psalm all the way through without pausing.
- Now, read the Psalm slowly, several more times until the words begin to seep into your mind and your heart.
- Pay close attention to the words and sentences, the images and ideas.
- Highlight or underline any word or phrase that grabs your attention.

Lectio

After a period of reflection...

Ask: **What do these words mean to me just as I have heard them?**

Record your answer to this question in your journal.

Meditatio

Psalm 27

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Psalm 27

- Now turn your attention back to the Psalm.
- Pay close attention to the meaning of the words, the structure of the Psalm, the emotions of the Psalm, etc.
- Go back over the words or phrases you highlighted -- this time seeking just a single phrase or insight that is God's word to you at this time.

Meditatio

Example: Psalm 27:5

For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble; he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will lift me high upon a rock.

Meditatio

After a period of reflection...

Ask: **What do these words have to do with my life? Where do they intersect with the realities of my life?**

Record your answer to this question in your journal.

Oratio

Psalm 27:5

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- Looking again at the Psalm, now turn from listening to answering -- praying.

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- Engage with what you are hearing by *praying* this text of Scripture (gratitude, confession, lament, relief, praise, etc.).

Oratio

Psalm 27:5

- Looking again at the Psalm, now turn from listening to answering -- praying.
- Engage with what you are hearing by *praying* this text of Scripture (gratitude, confession, lament, relief, praise, etc.).
- Spend as much time as needed, slowly working your way through each phrase as you personalize it and make it your own cry to the Lord.

Oratio

Example: Psalm 27:5

Lord, you will hide me in your shelter in the day of my trouble;

Lord, you will conceal me under the cover of your tent;

Lord, you will lift me high upon a rock.

Oratio

After a period of reflection...

Ask: **What is God calling me to?
How is this a call to repent, to
believe, to change?**

Record your answer to this question in your journal.

Contemplatio

Psalm 27:5

Contemplatio

Psalm 27:5

- Rest in the goodness and grace of God.

Contemplatio

Psalm 27:5

- Rest in the goodness and grace of God.
- Contemplate the meaning of this word from God for your attitude throughout the day and the choices you will make.

Contemplatio

After a period of reflection...

Ask: In what ways do these words connect me to the greater world? How do they bring me into harmony with the greater world?

Record your answer to this question in your journal.

Lectio Divina

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- For about a minute, breath in deeply and as you exhale silently pray, “*Lord, thank you for speaking to me.*”

Lectio Divina

Conclude your time the same way you started:

- Close your eyes and still yourself and your breathing.
- For about a minute, breath in deeply and as you exhale silently pray, “*Lord, thank you for speaking to me.*”
- Pray the Lord’s Prayer and then slowly open your eyes, ending lectio divina.

In your life...

Over the next two weeks...

In your life...

Over the next two weeks...

- Practice lectio divina at least two times and journal the process (as described).

In your community...

Over the next two weeks...

In your community...

Over the next two weeks...

- Bring your journals when you gather and share your experiences of lectio divina.