

# Lectio Divina

by Barbara Koob

## What is Lectio Divina?

Lectio Divina is a Benedictine practice of scripture reading, listening, meditation, prayer and contemplative quiet rest in His presence. It includes:

- Deep Listening with your outer and inner ears
- Contemplative praying of scriptures
- Experiencing God in a gentle oscillating movement from spiritual activity to receptivity, by moving from practice into contemplation and back again into spiritual practice.
- Discovering your own spiritual rhythm through a personal encounter with God.
- Allowing God's voice to touch your heart
- Tuning into God's presence and uniting with Him.

## The "Four Parts" of Lectio Divina are:

- 1. Lectio - listen with reverence** to the still small voice of God. Learn to quiet yourself and love the silence. (*Listening to the gentle touch of Christ the Word*)
- 2. Meditatio - mediate in your heart**, ruminare, chew the cud, and ponder the Word of God. Allow the scriptures to interact with your thoughts, hopes, memories and desires. (*Meditating how Christ the Word Speaks to you*)
- 3. Oratio – consecrated prayer, dialog, and loving conversation** with God. Allow the word to touch and change your deepest "real" self. (*Praying what Christ the Word invites you to do*)
- 4. Contemplatio - contemplate quiet rest** in His presence. Words are unnecessary. Simply enjoy being with God. (*Resting in the presence of Christ and accepting His embrace.*)

**As you practice Lectio Divina, you will discover your own spiritual rhythm through a personal encounter with God.** This rhythm, a back and forth movement between two poles, includes:

Practicing being spiritually active	~and~	Contemplative receiving from God (receptivity)
Inwardly seeing the depths of your soul	~and~	Learning to simply be
Seeking who you truly are (vices & virtues)	~and~	Ceasing from interior spiritual doing
Cooperating with God's grace.	~and~	Resting in the presence of your loving Father
Allowing yourself to be remade in Christ.	~and ~	Accepting with gratitude God's recurring gift

With Lectio Divina, you offer yourself to God as a person in motion. Think of yourself in a helix, an ascending spiral, circling back and forth drawing closer to God.

## Here are a few things before you start:

- Choose a scripture reading that is between ten to fifteen verses. You can include more verses, but Lectio Divina works best with a smaller selection of text.
- Place yourself in a comfortable setting, quiet yourself and begin to focus on God. A good way to do this is by using *Centering Prayer* or a *Breath Prayer*.
- Then follow the steps for either *Private Lectio Divina* (for personal use) or *Group Lectio Divina* (for two or more persons).

**Centering prayer** is when you are aware of your thoughts and feelings but desire to center on God.

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- Choose a sacred word such as "Abba", "Jesus", or "Father".
- Relax yourself and close your eyes.
- Focus on the sacred word as a symbol of God's presence and action within.

**Breath prayers** are a short petition, repeated in the space of one inhalation-exhalation cycle that acknowledges the natures of both the Lord and the petitioner.

- Each prayer addresses God personally, and it contains only seven to eight syllables.
- With this prayer type, ask for something that will reflect God's will or His ways. Express your total dependence, docility and trust towards God. Here are some examples:
  - Jesus, I receive Your grace.
  - Holy Spirit, come to me.
  - Lord Jesus, have mercy on me.
  - Abba Father, I belong to you.

## Private Lectio Divina Steps:

1. **<Lectio>** Read the text aloud slowly and gently.
2. **<Meditatio>** Constantly listen to the still small voice of a word or phrase that somehow says, "I am for you today." God is teaching you to listen to Him, to seek Him in silence. Take the word or phrase into yourself, allowing it to interact with your inner world of concerns, memories, and ideas. Don't be afraid of distractions, but give them to God along with the rest of yourself.
3. **<Oratio>** Speak to God however is best for you whether it is words, ideas or images. Interact and give to God what you have discovered in your heart from the prior step. Experience God with the word or phrase that He has given you as a means of blessing, of transforming the ideas and memories which you have pondered in your heart.
4. **<Contemplatio>** Simply rest in God's embrace. Learn to use words when that is helpful, and let go of words when that is not necessary. Simply rejoice in God that He is with you in words and silence, in spiritual activity and receptivity.

## Group Lectio Divina Steps:

1. **<Lectio>** (*Listening to the gentle touch of Christ the Word*)
  - One person reads aloud twice the passage of scripture, as others are attentive.
  - Silence for 1-2 minutes. Each hears and silently repeats a word or phrase that attracts.
  - Share aloud a word or phrase that has attracted each person. No elaboration.
2. **<Meditatio>** (*Meditating how Christ the Word speaks to you*)
  - Another person reads the same passage. If possible, read the text from a different version of the Bible.
  - Silence for 2-3 minutes. Reflect on "where does the content of this reading touch my heart today?"
  - Briefly share aloud with .... I hear, I see, etc. Resist conversation and dialog.
3. **<Oratio>** (*Praying what Christ the Word invites you to do*)
  - Read the text again by still another person. Again, if possible, read the text from another Bible version.
  - Silence for 2-3 minutes. Reflect on "I believe God wants me to ... Today/this week."
4. **<Contemplatio>** (*Accepting Christ's Embrace, Silent Presence to the Lord, Sharing your experience.*)
  - Now share at some greater length. Anyone can pass at any time. Just say Amen!
  - After sharing, pray in small teams.

**And Finally...** Don't use Lectio Divina to perform or seek some goal -for this exercise is solely about being in the presence of God and praying with the scriptures. At the end of the prayer period, remain in silence with eyes closed for a couple of minutes.