



How to Pray with Scripture: *Lectio Divina*

Sarah Christmyer

“There is one particular way of listening to what the Lord wishes to tell us in his word and of letting ourselves be transformed by the Spirit. It is what we call *lectio divina*” — Pope Francis

Four Simple Steps

1. **Read (*lectio*):** Read the passage slowly several times, allowing it to penetrate your heart. What does it say? **Receive** the word God has for you.
2. **Reflect (*meditate, meditation*):** “Chew on” what you’ve read, asking God to speak to you. What stands out? Ponder the Word in your heart, bring it into contact with your life.
3. **Respond (*pray, oratio*):** Talk to God (not at him) about what you have heard. Respond to him. Ask questions. Wrestling is OK. Resolve to act on what you hear.
4. **Rest (*contemplate, contemplation*):** Contemplate; rest in the Father’s loving presence.

Getting Started

1. **Set aside a regular time.** To get close to God, we must spend time with him.
2. **Choose a suitable place.** Somewhere quiet and free from distractions, maybe before the Blessed Sacrament.
3. **Become silent inside.** “Power down.” Close your eyes, focus on breathing or a prayer phrase. Repeat the name of Jesus, call on his presence.
4. **Pray,** “Here I am, Lord.” Place yourself in his presence and listen for his still, small voice.
5. **Allow time** for what you read to sink in. Repeat, repeat, repeat.
6. **Listen deeply.** Savor what you hear. Don’t expect to always understand. Surrender to the Word, which is at times beyond understanding.
7. **Allow your heart to respond in prayer.** If you have nothing to say – simply thank the Lord for his Word and his presence.
8. **Be patient; persevere.** It takes time for seeds to grow.

“The fool falls into the temptation of saying: I already know this text! The wise man knows that it is one thing to know the chemical formula of water and another to savour it by a spring on a summer’s day.” —Abbott General Bernardo Olivera

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Leading *Lectio Divina* in a Small Group Setting

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Before You Begin

- Choose a brief passage of Scripture.
- Set up a table with a cloth, candle, and Bible. Play quiet music if you wish.
- Identify three people to read (using the same Bible translation).
- Review the procedure with the group if they are not familiar with it.

In the Group

Begin with a moment of silence to allow people to quiet their hearts and minds.

Pray: “Heavenly Father, thank you for meeting with us in your Word. We open our hearts to listen to you. Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful ones. Enkindle in us the fire of your love. ‘Speak, Lord, for your servants are listening.’”

1. **Read:** Have someone prayerfully read the Scripture. Ask everyone to listen attentively as the passage is read, listening for a word or words spoken to them.

After a brief silence, ask: What did you hear? Allow time for participants to speak (without elaborating on) the word or words that stood out to them.

2. **Reflect:** Have another person slowly read the same passage while people reflect more deeply on the word they heard before, asking God to speak to their hearts.

After a short silence, ask: What does it mean? Where does it touch your life? Allow participants to share their reflections. If time is limited, ask people to refrain from commenting on what others say or to wait until all have a chance to speak.

3. **Respond:** Ask a third person to read the same passage while the others prayerfully listen and consider whether God is asking something of them. Allow a time of silence for people to speak with God and respond to him, resolving to act on what they hear.

Those who would like to, may say a brief prayer in response to God (prayers might be thanksgiving, praise, or petition).

4. **Rest:** Invite group members to rest quietly in the father’s loving presence. After several minutes, close in prayer.

Our Father,

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