

Lectio Divina – an Overview

John of the Cross expanded this to:

And you will find in *meditation*,
Knock in *prayer*,
And it will be opened to you in *contemplation*.

In the Middle Ages a monk systematized this into four steps:

1. *Lectio* (reading of a passage from scripture)
2. *Meditatio* (meditation on the passage)
3. *Oratio* (praying or speaking simply and briefly)
4. *Contemplatio* (silent contemplation while waiting for God)

This had become the standard pattern for *lectio divina*. However, the form can be expanded or changed to meet the needs of the individual or community of faith.

Lectio Divina

Preparation—Select the passage from scripture you will be using. Dim the room lights if possible. Light a candle. Move into a comfortable position, such as sitting upright in a chair with both feet on the floor, hands resting in your lap. Take a couple “cleansing” breaths (not too deep) and begin.

Lectio—Slowly read the passage from scripture. Pay close attention to what is being said. Focus on a word or phrase that catches your attention. Silently repeat the word or phrase to yourself. (1-2 minutes)

Meditatio—Slowly read the passage again. Think about the passage. What feelings or emotions does it stir within you? What part or parts of the passage touch your own life today? (2-3 minutes)

Oratio—Slowly read the passage a third time. Focus on a single word or phrase that stands out in your mind or moves your heart. Silently ask God to speak to you through that word or phrase. Avoid the temptation to say more. This is God’s time to speak to you, not yours to talk to God. (1 minute)

Contemplatio—Slowly read the passage a final time. Then, sit in silence, open to God’s presence. If a thought comes into your mind, recognize its presence, let go of it, and return to your silence contemplation. Let the presence of God’s spirit move through you communicating to you in whatever way it chooses. (3 minutes)

Return—At the end of the time, take a couple slow breaths as you prepare to end the time of prayer. Remember that God will continue to be with you.

The Benedictine monks of St. Andrew’s Abbey suggest a final step:

Operatio (action)—Return to your family, friends, tasks, and community carrying your experience with you as you go.