

Lectio Divina and Centering Prayer

Lectio Divina and Centering Prayer are two distinct prayer forms. *Lectio Divina* is a reading, reflecting, responding and resting in the word of God that helps one grow in relationship with God.

Centering Prayer is a method of prayer in which we consent to rest in God's presence. It is a prayer that moves us beyond conversation with Christ to communion with Him. It prepares us to receive the gift of contemplation.

Lectio Divina is a gift to **Centering Prayer**. As our relationship with God deepens, we will be renewed in our intention to rest with God in **Centering Prayer**.

Centering Prayer is a gift to *Lectio Divina* as it frees us from obstacles to hear the word of God on a much deeper level in *Lectio Divina*.



Lectio Divina and Bible Study

Bible Study is the reading of the scriptures for information and an understanding of the context of the passage. It provides a solid conceptual background for the practice of *Lectio Divina*.

Lectio Divina is a method of prayer that leads us into the deeper meaning of scripture and the transformation of our lives. A contemplative reading of the Scriptures is compatible with well-grounded interpretation of the Bible.



Becoming a Word of God

Being transformed into the Word of God is a process that happens as we faithfully read, reflect, respond and rest in God's Word.

An attitude of resting in God's presence becomes a part of our daily lives. We become a channel of God's presence to others.

Living in union with God we are able to transcend ourselves as the "center" and experience all in God and God in all.

Our energy becomes one with the Divine Energy. We become merciful, compassionate and loving as God is merciful, compassionate and loving.

"Visit our website at www.contemplativeoutreach.org for further information about *Lectio Divina* and related events, retreats and the online bookstore.



Contemplative Outreach

Contemplative Outreach, Ltd.
1560 Union Valley Rd #909, West Milford, NJ 07480
973.838.3384 • www.contemplativeoutreach.org

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LECTIO DIVINA

Listening to the Word of God in Scripture

Lectio Divina is one of the great treasures of the Christian tradition of prayer. It means Divine Reading, which is how to read the book we believe to be divinely inspired. This tradition of prayer flows out of a Hebrew method of studying the Scriptures, which was called *Haggadah*. It was part of the devotional practice of the Jews in the days of Jesus.

Lectio Divina is a traditional way of cultivating friendship with Christ. It is a way of listening to the texts of Scripture as if we were in conversation with Christ and He were suggesting the topics of conversation. The daily encounter with Christ and reflection on His word leads beyond mere acquaintanceship to an attitude of friendship, trust, and love. Conversation simplifies and gives way to communing. Gregory the Great (6th century), in summarizing the Christian contemplative tradition, expressed it as a "resting in God." This was the classical meaning of Contemplative Prayer in the Christian tradition for the first sixteen centuries.

Monastic Form of *Lectio Divina*

The monastic form of *Lectio Divina* is an ancient method that was practiced by the Mothers and Fathers of the Desert and later in monasteries both East and West. The monastic way is unstructured. One listens to the word of God in a particular passage chosen for the occasion and then one follows the attraction of the Spirit. This method can also be prayed in a group.

Guidelines for Monastic *Lectio Divina*

Moment One: (*Lectio*) Read the Scripture passage for the first time. Listen with the “ear of your heart.” What phrase, sentence or even one word stands out to you? Begin to repeat that phrase, sentence or one word over and over, allowing it to settle deeply in your heart. Simply return to the repetition of the phrase, sentence or one word, savoring it in your heart.

Moment Two: (*Meditatio*) Reflect, relish the words. Let them resound in your heart. Let an attitude of quiet receptiveness permeate the prayer time. Be attentive to what speaks to your heart.

Moment Three: (*Oratio*) Respond spontaneously as you continue to listen to a phrase, sentence or word. A prayer of praise, thanksgiving or petition may arise. Offer that prayer, and then return to repeating the word in your heart.

Moment Four: (*Contemplatio*) Rest in God. Simply “be with” God’s presence as you open yourself to a deeper hearing of the Word of God.

While the monastic method of *Lectio Divina* starts with listening to the Word of God in Scripture, the moments can occur or reoccur in any order following the lead of the Spirit.

The Method of *Lectio Divina*

Lectio Divina is the most traditional way of cultivating friendship with Christ. It is a way of listening to the texts of scripture as if we were in conversation with Christ and He was suggesting the topics of conversation. It is listening with the “ear” of the heart. The daily encounter with Christ and reflection on His Word leads beyond mere acquaintanceship to an attitude of friendship, trust and love. *Lectio Divina* leads us to communion or as Gregory the Great, in summarizing the Christian contemplative tradition, says, “resting in God.”

Growing in Relationship

Growing in relationship with God is a process like any other **relationship**. We need to begin by listening and entering into dialogue with God’s word. As the dialogue unfolds we will discover different ways of being in **relationship**; different moments of being with God.

There are the moments of listening to the other and pondering the meaning of his/her words. There are the moments of responding and dialoguing, as well as being with the other when no words need to be said.

A **relationship** with God is also made up of many moments. These moments may come in any order.

Be open to each moment as it presents itself, taking as much time as needed.

There are no “shoulds, oughts or musts.” Listen with the ear of your heart and let the dialogue with God unfold in its own time and let the Holy Spirit take the lead.

We need to trust that God is eager to be with us and to share with us the inner peace and freedom we desire.

Scholastic Form of *Lectio Divina*

This way of practicing *Lectio Divina* developed in the Middle Ages at the beginning of the Scholastic Period. At this time, there began a tendency to compartmentalize the spiritual life. As this tendency grew, more emphasis was placed on rational analysis and less on personal experience. The scholastic form divides the process into stages or steps in a hierarchical pattern. The scholastic method is a good way to learn *Lectio Divina* and is often used in groups, but it can become too restrictive when one wants to follow the lead of the Spirit and simply be open to Scripture.

Guidelines for Scholastic *Lectio Divina*

Step One: Read the passage, encouraging everyone to listen with the “ear of their heart.” What phrase, sentence or even one word stands out to you?

Step Two: Read the passage again and **Reflect** on the word of God. Encourage everyone to be aware of what touches them, a meaningful thought or reflection.

Step Three: Read the passage again and **Respond** spontaneously to the word of God. Be aware of any prayer that rises up within that expresses the experience. Allow a minute or two of silence.

Step Four: Read the passage a final time and **Rest** in the word, reflect or pray, and allow God to speak in the silence. Allow three or four minutes of silence.

To Extend the Practice: After the resting, take the phrase, sentence, or word into your daily activity and listen to it, reflect on it, pray over it, and rest in it as time allows during the day. Allow it to become part of you.