Lectio Divina: Encountering Scripture Through Sacred Reading
Creating a Life with God: The Call of Ancient Prayer Practices by Daniel Wolpert

Lectio divina, or "divine reading," is a powerful way to encounter God in scripture and offers a wonderful practice for either individuals or groups. The individual practice has four phases. The group practice can be adapted to fit the setting, here I describe a three-phase group practice.

Individual *Lectio Divina*

Phase 1 *Lectio* (reading/listening)

- Choose a passage of scripture.
- Read the passage to yourself twice. Don't be caught by the literal meaning of the scripture. Rather, listen for the word or phrase that catches your attention.
- Silently focus on that word for phrase. Repeat it a few times. Allow it to sift through your heart and mind.

Phase 2, *Meditatio* (pondering)

- As you continue to focus on your word or phrase, pay attention to the thoughts and feelings it evokes.
- What images, what thought, what memories come to mind?
- Continue to ask God to speak to you through this word and continue to listen for the reply.

Phase 3, *Oratio* (responding)

- At some point you may find yourself wanting to reply to God. What desire has your prayer awakened in you?
- Maybe you have found an area of your life that needs some work.
- Maybe you find you are grateful for something and you wish to express that gratitude.
- Maybe you feel called to a new course of action in your life.
- Whatever you sense, do not rush the prayer. Continue to wait and listen as God forms your prayer and desire in your heart.

Speak your prayer of desire, longing, or action to God. Continue to listen in the silence.

Phase 4 *Contemplation* (resting)

- In this final phase of the prayer, the conversation with God draws to a close. Having heard a word from God and having expressed your response to that word, you now allow yourself to rest in silence.
- Allow your mind to settle.
- When you feel that the prayer has come to an end, express your gratitude to God. This can be as simple as saying, "thank you" or "amen."

Marjorie J. Thompson invites us to think of *Lectio Divina* as a cow chewing cud. She states, "First the cow goes out and east some good grass *(lectio),* then she sits down

under a tree and chews her cud *(mediatio)* until she extracts from her food both milk *(oratio)* and cream *(contemplatio)*" from *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life*

Lectio in a Group

This process follows closely the individual process except that at the end of each phase, the group are invited to speak the results of their prayer.

Phase 1

- The group leader read a Bible passage aloud twice.
- In the silence each person begins to listen for the word or phrase in the passage that speaks to him or her.
- After a period of silence, the group leader invites the group to share aloud their word or phrase. (People are to speak only their word or phrase, not commenting on its importance to them.)

Phase 2

- The group lead reads the passage aloud again.
- This time, the group leader invites participants to wait for an image, thought or phrase that arises in response to the passage.
- After another time of silence, the leader invites the group members to share what they received in the silence.

Phase 3

- The leader reads the passage a third time.
- The group members are invited to listen for how God is speaking to them through the passage.
- After a time of silence, the group is invited to share what they have heard in this phase of the prayer.

Phase 4

- After everyone finishes sharing the group could close the time of prayer with an expression of gratitude: a brief verbal prayer or a moment of silence.

In the group process, it is important that the group members not comment on one another's observation but simply listen during the sharing period.

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