

THE LECTIO DIVINA STEPS

Lectio Divina is broken down into the following steps named in Latin:

1. *Lectio* (reading),
2. *Meditatio* (meditation),
3. *Oratio* (prayer),
4. and *Contemplatio* (contemplation).
5. Then, as a result of the encounter with God in Scripture, we are also called to *Actio*(action).

Each of these steps together form a process by which we encounter God in his sacred word and respond to his grace. They form parts of a larger whole, but each one comes with a certain set of skills for our us to master. Let's look briefly at each step.

***Lectio* (Reading)**

In the first phase of *lectio divina* we understand what the passage we are reading says in itself. This is the literal meaning of the Scripture passage and the lessons everyone should recognize in reading it. At this stage we do not yet consider our own lives in connection with the Scriptures. We do not let our opinions influence our reading, but seek to understand the message of the passage as interpreted by the Church independently of anyone's opinions. This phase is summarized with the question: *What does the text say that everyone should understand?*

***Meditatio* (Meditation)**

In the meditation phase of *lectio divina*, we ask, *what does this text say to me, today, and to my life?* We allow God to pull up certain memories of people, places, and events in our lives that relate to the passage we are reading. Meditation is also an opportunity to see ourselves in the text. We can consider our own feelings as if we were a participant in the text or try to understand what it would be like to be one of the people represented in the text. In this way we come to a deeper appreciation of how God is working in our lives through the sacred word. Having entered into the story ourselves, we can return to the present and consider the areas in our own lives that God is calling us to contemplate.

Oratio (Prayer)

Through a meditation on Scripture, we experience an intimate encounter with God that leads us to respond in prayer. Having met our Lord in his holy word, we courageously speak to him in our own words. In this way we consider prayer to be a simple conversation with God. It is a conversation that comes in various forms: we ask petitions (or requests) of him, we give him thanks, and we give him praise. We might also ask for the intercession of Mary or the saints represented in the passage we read. At this phase we can ask ourselves: *What can I say to the Lord in response to his word?*

Contemplatio (Contemplation)

A true encounter with the Lord always leads to transformation. Indeed, the Lord God proclaimed, "Behold, I make all things new" (Revelation 21:5). Through contemplation we come to an understanding of the parts of our lives that need to be transformed by God's grace. We humble ourselves and open our lives up to his transformative power. This step comes with the willingness to change, an openness and trust in God, and the decision to follow God's will rather than our own. With this decision comes a fear of losing what we find comfortable and safe. At the same time we feel the excitement of a call to heroic adventure and a hopeful future of living the life we are meant to live. At this step in the *lectio divina* process, we ask ourselves: *What conversion of the mind, heart, and life is the Lord asking of me?*

Actio (Action)

Finally, although this phase is often not considered to be a part of *lectio divina* proper, it is an essential result of the encounter with God in Sacred Scripture. As Pope Benedict XVI wrote in *Verbum Domini*, "We do well also to remember that the process of *lectio divina* is not concluded until it arrives at action (*actio*), which moves the believer to make his or her life a gift for others in charity" (no. 87). Having received God's love and grace, we go forth to serve others out of the love we have been given. Our transformation calls us to witness to others; it calls us to selflessly serve our brothers and sisters in Christ. These acts are done not so much out of a sense of duty, but out of the inspiration we receive from the acceptance in faith of God's love.

The African Bible Study Method

This Bible Study method was introduced by the African Delegation to the Lambeth Conference in 1998. It is known by both names: "Lambeth" and "African." It is rooted in the ancient method of praying the scriptures, known as *Lectio Divina*, or "Holy Reading."

Opening Prayer:

O Blessed Lord, who caused all Holy Scripture to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that we may embrace and hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our savior Jesus Christ, Amen.

1. One person reads passage slowly.
2. Each person identifies the word or phrase that catches their attention. (1 minute)
3. Each shares the word or phrase with the group. (3-5 minutes, NO DISCUSSION)
4. Another person reads the passage slowly (from a different translation, if possible.)
5. Each person identifies where this passage touches their life today. (1 minute)
6. Each shares. (3-5 minutes, NO DISCUSSION)
7. Passage is read a third time (another reader and translation, if possible.)
8. Each person names or writes: "From what I've heard and shared, what do I believe God wants me to do or be? Is God inviting me to change in any way?" (5 minutes)
9. Each shares their answer. (5-10 minutes, NO DISCUSSION)
10. Each prays for the person on their right, naming what was shared in other steps. (5 minutes)

Closing Prayer : The Lord's Prayer

Notes: This should take 30-40 minutes for a group. It could easily be adapted for individual prayer or as a method of *lectio divina*.

Jan Nel's Methodology for Daily Time in God's Word

- **Choose a place.** Sanctify it as a place to meet with the Lord. Make sure that you have a place that has no distraction where you can meet daily with the Lord.
- **Set a time.** Enter that time prepared with no anger and a clean heart.
- **Have a notebook, a pen, and a Bible.** Write the date and the Book and chapter that you will be studying. Write the following headings with several lines between: **General, Specific, Command, Promise, Principle, and Behavior.**
- **Start with prayer, praise, and proclamation.** Proclaim who God is. Take time to honor and bless the Lord for who he is. Pray, sing, speak out the scriptures that speak of the great name of God.
- **Read Your chosen text** (one full chapter) one time for the *General* meaning. (What is the topic and context?)
- **Read it the second time** for the *Specific* meaning for you. (What would the original listener be hearing?)
- **Read it a third time** for the Practical meaning for you. (Read it in another translation if you can.)
- Continue to look for the following, and record under the appropriate heading:
 1. **Command:** Is there a command that you are to follow?
 2. **Promise:** Is there a promise of God to receive?
 3. **Principle:** Is there a Principle to follow?
 4. **Behavior:** Is there a Behavior to change? Think about the last time you acted in a way that is contrary to the standard you feel God is calling you to.

Meditate and see yourself changing that behavior.

Meditate on the last time you failed. Then see yourself doing what you have been told to change.

Take off – Renew – Put on (Colossians 3:9)

- End with a time of prayer. Repent and commit to what you were called too and receive strength for the day. (Psalm 5:12)

BOOK:

Chapter:



NAME

TODAY'S WORD

Take time to pray, praise, proclaim who God is: Give thanks for who He is.

GENERAL MEANING:

SPECIFIC MEANING:

COMMAND: WHAT IN THIS WORD IS GOD SAYING TO DO

Specific:

Implied:

PROMISE: WHAT IN THIS WORD OR OTHERS IS GOD PROMISING

Specific:

Implied:

PRINCIPLE: WHAT IS TIMELESS

Specific:

Implied:

BEHAVIOR:

Specific

Implied:

Take off the Old...Put on the new!

PRAY: Ask The Lord to assist you in obedience to his **Command**, Thanksgiving for His **Promise**, Living by His **Principle**, and Changing your **Behavior**.