

The Practice of Group *Lectio Divina*

Lectio divina, or “holy reading,” is an ancient practice from the Christian tradition, dating from the early medieval era of prayerful study of Scripture in monasteries. *Lectio divina* is a slow, quiet, and thoughtful encounter with Scripture. Reading and responding to the biblical passage three times provides time and space for God’s Word to move from our lips, into our minds, and finally into our hearts.

Based on the image of Jacob’s ladder, a twelfth century Carthusian monk named Guigo II described four steps of *lectio divina*: *lectio* (reading), *meditatio* (meditation), *oratio* (prayer), and *contemplatio* (contemplation). Through these four steps, God’s Word sinks deeper into our hearts and imagination.

Facilitators may wish to use *lectio* with a Scripture passage or poem as an opening or closing prayer for the group’s meeting. A version of this prayer outline for participants is included on the following page. To begin:

- » Ask for three volunteers to read the Scripture passage.
- » Invite the group into prayer with a few moments of silence.

We listen to God’s Word for the first time.

- » We listen for a word or phrase that God will speak to us today.
- » We reflect in silence.
- » We share aloud the word or phrase that spoke to our heart.

We listen to God’s Word for the second time.

- » We reflect in silence on what God may be saying to us through the word or phrase that spoke to our heart.
- » We share aloud what this word or phrase means to us.

We listen to God’s Word for the third time.

- » We reflect in silence on how God may be calling us to act through the word or phrase that spoke to our heart.
- » We share aloud how we feel God may be calling us to respond.

We thank God in prayer.

- » The facilitator closes with a prayer thanking God for this encounter with the Word.
- » Or each participant may be invited to offer a short prayer of thanksgiving.

Guidelines for Group *Lectio Divina*

- ▶ Make yourself comfortable as you settle in for a time of quiet prayer. Breathe deeply to settle your body and your mind, becoming aware that you are in God's presence.
- ▶ Listen to the first person read the Scripture passage aloud. Spend a few moments in quiet reflection on the passage. What word or phrase speaks to your heart? When the group is invited to share, **speak that word or phrase aloud.**
- ▶ Listen to the second person read the Scripture passage aloud, keeping in mind the word or phrase that first spoke to you. Spend a few moments in quiet reflection on what God may be saying to you through this word or phrase. When the group is invited to speak, **share what this word or phrase means to you.**
- ▶ Listen to the third person read the Scripture passage aloud. Spend a few moments in quiet reflection on how God may be calling you to act through the word or phrase that spoke to you. When the group is invited to speak, **share how you feel God may be calling you to respond.**
- ▶ Our group will close our practice of lectio divina with a prayer of thanksgiving for our encounter with God's Word.

“Listen with the ear of your heart.”
—*Rule of St. Benedict, Prologue 1*