

# A Leaders Guide to Lectio Divina for Legacy Small Groups

## What is Lectio Divina?

Lectio Divina (Latin for “holy reading” or “sacred reading”) is a method of reading God’s word with the intentional purpose of hearing God’s voice. It is a devotional method or spiritual discipline practiced by Christians for over 1200 years. We know it was spelled out in formal detail and a daily practice by **Rules of the Benedictine monastic order** in the fifth century. However, many trace the practice back 200 years earlier to Origen in the early 3<sup>rd</sup> Century. The main goal of Lectio Divina is to listen to the voice of God speaking today through the Word.

## Special Note to Leaders

Lectio Divina is **not** Bible Study. The goal is **not** to exegete a text, but for each Christian to **listen** what God might be saying to them today through the text. It is sometime difficult for those of us who are called and gifted to exegete Scripture and/or are used to doing and hearing Bible Study to maintain the posture of a listener, not a student. This is why Lectio Divina can be a helpful practice. It is about receiving from God the personal illumination and wisdom needed for very personal and truly transforming application of God’s Word.

On the other hand, in Lectio Divina there is potential for interpretations that go beyond what the biblical authors intended to communicate. Leaders need to understand this danger. God will not say anything to any individual in your group that contradicts or goes beyond the principles that sound exegesis would lift from a text, because God is never irrational, nor does He ever contradict Himself. Lectio Divina was developed by Christians who were very knowledgeable about the content and meaning of Scriptures. Legacy leaders must be responsible that what is shared in the group stays within the guardrails of sound interpretation. This will be easier if you choose texts that are very familiar to your group and have perhaps been clearly expounded from Legacy’s pulpit. It is highly recommended groups begin this practice with short passages, well known, narrative texts.

## Leader Preparation for Lectio Divina

1. Make sure you know the text. Perhaps read a good commentary prior to session.
2. Line up three group members to read. Assign them to reading one, reading two, reading three. I like to have the text read in different versions.
3. Lead group through the plan below.

## Lectio Divina Process for Small Groups

### **Step One: Prepare – Silencio** – (Leader's should share the following with their groups)

"We begin by just sitting together in silence for a minute or two. Our goal in this moment is to relax and breathe deeply, let go of all stressful emotions, block out all distracting thoughts, and be fully aware of God's presence with us right now. He is here. Let's get ready to listen to Him by a moment of silence." (Be still and Know that God is near for at least a 1 to 2 minute. Embrace a little bit of uncomfortableness.)

**Step Two: Read – Lectio** – (The leaders should give the following instructions to the first two readers in front of the group.) In just a minute I have asked (Reader #1) to give the first reading of our text. (Reader #1) please our text slowly and out loud. Pronounce the words clearly so that all of us can let them resonate in our minds and hearts. Please pause on the commas and periods and after any words which feel significant to you. Our goal in these readings is to let the word of God sink deep and into our souls. Our goal in these reading is not to judge or analyze the text, but to hear God speaking to us about our lives. After the first reading I am going to ask (Reader #2) to let us sit in silent reflection for a minute or two and then give their reading of the text."

**Step Three: Meditate – Meditatio** – "Now I want to ask each of your to read this text silently to yourself. Savor the words. Enjoy them. Listen for God's voice. What is He saying to you? How is he inviting you to reflect on His words? What is His invitation to you? Note and focus on the words that stand out to you. What are the ramification of these words for your life?" (Give the group time to do this)

"Now I'd ask each of you to pick out a word, idea, or phrase that strikes you in a personal way and then share with the group in just a few short what impacted you and explain why. Let's bless and encourage one another by sharing what God might be saying to each of us through this text. "

**Step Four: Pray – Oratio** – "Let's take some time now to pray together through this text. Based on the observations and insights we have shared. In short one or two sentence prayers: 1) Let's praise God for the specific attributes He has revealed about Himself in this text. 2) Let's confess to Him any sins we need to forsake or specific actions we feel He is calling us to make, or any areas where we might be resisting what he is calling us to do in this text. 3) Let's thank I for blessings and promises we recognize in this text. And 4) let's ask him to fulfill or assist us with any petitions that arise from the text. What is God calling you to be and do? Ask for the courage and strength to step into a deeper and closer relationship with Him."

**Step Five: Contemplate – Contemplatio** – "Now let's spend a few minutes I silence just reflect on all that we've experienced. Again recognize God's presence and be with Him." (Ask the third reader to to read the text. Then close with prayer.)