

Lectio Divina

"Lectio Divina", a Latin term, means "divine reading" and describes a way of reading the Scriptures whereby we gradually let go of our own agenda and open ourselves to what God wants to say to us. In the 12th century, a Carthusian monk called Guigo, described the stages which he saw as essential to the practice of Lectio Divina.

Conversational Prayer - Listening

What is God's voice Like? How do we Listen? God's Voice

- How does God speak to us? - Spirit to spirit

"The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God" (Rom.8:16).

"This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned (1Cor.2:13-14).

- How do we experience Spirit-to-spirit communication? - Spontaneous words, thoughts, impressions, images.

Our Part in Listening

- Reflecting, by actively seeking, sensing, receiving, and being led. (Not passively waiting for something to surprise us.: Approaching in the demeanor of a student, always learning.)
- Noticing internal reactions and responses. (Reveals what is in our heart and mind.)
- Verbalizing our thoughts and impressions. (Writing or speaking out what comes to mind.: - Words are important (this is Conversational prayer): Gives substance to our impressions. : - Helps us focus and use all our mind in the process.)

Listening to the Word

Allowing the Spirit of God to teach us about life in the Kingdom as He reveals the Word and our heart at the same time.

- Not settling for our own understanding of the text.
- Allowing the Spirit to reveal and internalize His truth.
- Focusing on short passages or phrases.

Notes This approach to Scripture is not an attempt to master the text, or to figure out how to "apply" it, but a way of letting the Spirit reveal to us what we need to see and hear. How to Listen to the Word

- Read the passage slowly, several times.
- Notice any reactions you have to a given word or phrase.
- Ask God to "unpack" each word or phrase and show you what you need.
- Receive, reflect, question, ponder, respond (flowing back and forth).

This is a way of engaging with the Spirit of God which Christians have used for centuries, allowing Him to minister the Word to our heart, making it come alive to where we are in our journey. In this way, we actively participate with God to receive what He has for us. Some great places to begin:

Isaiah 55 / Colossians 1,2,3 / Ephesians 1,2,3,4 / John 14,15,16,17

Psalms 23, 27, 84, 100, 139

The Importance of Conversational Prayer

It would be impossible to emphasize enough how important conversational prayer really is. If change comes from engaging with God, then nothing has the potential to change us more than being mentored by Him. Directly engaging with God can feed our soul, renew our mind, and transform our life. So whatever difficulties you may experience, whatever resistance to regular practice you may feel, we strongly encourage you to persist and make this a priority in your life. Nothing else will ever be as helpful as learning how to engage with God and have conversations with Him. This is one of the reasons why we ask you to seriously consider setting aside the time to practice this form of prayer on a regular basis for the duration of this course. The more you practice, and the more time you give to this, the more you will discover experientially how valuable it can be.

Exercise — Listening to God and the Word

Psalms 139 is a beautiful expression of the psalmist's trust that God knows him and loves him completely at the same time, and no matter where he goes or how far he strays he can never get lost. (Please note: this Psalm has often been misunderstood as a fearful vision of God scrutinizing the psalmist, but it is actually a joyful expression of his total trust in God's goodness.)

1. Take a minute or two to quiet and focus.
2. Ask God to show you His heart regarding the text below, and listen as you read.
3. Let some phrase or word capture your attention, allow it to fill your imagination, and ask God to reveal whatever He wants you to see in regard to that phrase.
4. Write down whatever feelings and impressions come to mind.

Do not try to cover the whole passage or worry too much about whether the words you write are your words or God's at this point. Simply begin your reflection with the anticipation that God is with you and will join you in this process.

Psalms 139

1) O Lord, you have searched me and known me. 2) You know when I sit down and when I rise up; You discern my thoughts from far away. 3) You search out my path and my lying down, and are acquainted with all my ways. 4) Even before a word is on my tongue, O Lord, you know it completely. 5) You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. 6) Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is so high that I cannot attain it. 12) Even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is as bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you. 13) For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb. 14) I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are your works; that I know very well.23) Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. 24) See if there is any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.