

LECTIO DIVINA

Listening to God in Scripture

This ancient practice is a way to listen to God through Scripture. Personal copies of the Bible have only been available to us for roughly the last 400 years. Before that, corporate worship readings of Scripture were people's primary access to the Scriptures. **Lectio divina** (literally meaning "divine reading") was often a group spiritual discipline to help people maintain a relational listening posture to the Scriptures as they were read together.

Choose a passage of Scripture that you want to meditate upon as a way of listening to God speaking through his Word. In **lectio**, it is best to listen to shorter passages of 3-5 verses max. (There are four passages on the next page that may lend themselves to this kind of practice.) You can either read a passage aloud yourself, read it in a group, or consider a Bible app/website that uses audio readings of the scripture to help the hearing/listening approach. Then pray responsively through the passage using these traditional listening steps:

- **Silencio** – Begin by offering your heart and thoughts to God's leading, and spend a moment in silence quieting yourself.
- **Lectio** – read the passage slowly, and perhaps out loud. If a word or phrase captures your attention or interest, stop reading and reflect on what God may be saying to you here.
- **Meditatio** – Meditate on the passage a second time. Again, pay attention to overall impressions that God may be speaking to you. **Imagine how God's heart, this passage, and your life intersect.**
- **Oratio** – Respond to God in prayer about the impressions you've had so far. Dialogue with him. Be fully honest, as he knows your heart fully. Notice any ways you feel resistance to the passage and the impressions you are hearing, and talk to God about how he may be inviting you into a deeper way of living with and for him there.
- **Contemplatio** – contemplate and wait on God here, trying to focus on his presence to you and his love for you. Allow this time of listening to sink in fully, and surrender to God's continuing work. Consider some type of reminder from this time that you can carry with you throughout the rest of your day.

This traditional way of listening to God in his Word takes practice and repetition—and it can be hard and distracting. Stick with it. The goal of this is to be with God and to listen for the impressions God may be leading you toward through how he has spoken to his people for centuries before us.

“Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? And can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? And why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin, yet I tell you, even Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear?’ For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.”

Matthew 6: 25-34

Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord’s feet and listened to what he was saying. But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, “Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me.” But the Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.”

Luke 10:38-42

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.

1 Peter 1:3-6

In all this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

1 Peter 1:6-9