

Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina (literally divine reading) is a way of becoming immersed in the scriptures very personally. Use the steps in this activity to pray with a piece of the Bible. Let God speak to you through His Word. Don't have a Bible at home? You can find it online at usccb.org/bible

Try picking one of these passages to read:

- 1 John 4:7-11
- Mark 4:35-41
- Matthew 5:1-10
- Matthew 5:13-16
- Luke 2:41-52
- Romans 12:9-12
- Psalm 23

Step 1: Prepare

I'd suggest 30 minutes to read, reflect, and respond to the Holy Spirit's promptings in Lectio Divina. To tune in, I like to light a candle, not because it's necessary, but because the flame and fragrance serve as gentle reminders when collecting my thoughts and calming my mind. I pray a prayer of invitation, saying something like, "God, let me hear from you," and spend a few moments sitting quietly so my mind is open to hearing from God.

Step 2: Lectio (Read)

My first reading is an opportunity to get to know the scripture passage. I listen carefully for any words or phrases that seem to jump out. It's important not to force things, but wait patiently for God to give gentle guidance. One day when reading Jeremiah 31, I felt my mind drawn to the strength of God's commitment to His covenant:

"[I will make a new covenant] not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband." (Jeremiah 31:32 English Standard Version)

I was struck by the image of God leading His people by the hand as an act of love – they weren't left to begin their momentous journey alone.

Step 3: Meditatio (Reflect)

The second reading of the same passage focuses further on the points I become aware of during the first reading. Often I'll just re-read a few verses so I can reflect carefully on where God has nudged me.

Then I'll reflect on what I believe God is saying. I try not to analyze the passage. It's easy to slip into "study mode" and think about interesting points rather than listening to what God might be saying. It helps to ask God to make His focus clear.

Step 4: Oratio (Respond)

After a third reading, it's time to respond. I like to record my thoughts by journaling because I know I'm very prone to forgetting what I've learned, even by the next day! We can respond in prayer too, which gives us the opportunity for a conversation with God.

When reading Jeremiah, I journaled my wonderings. If God is so powerfully committed to keeping His covenant with me, why do I sometimes lack the commitment to stay close to God? Often the events of the day crowd in, and I don't always make time to listen to God. I prayed that God would help me to prioritize spending time with Him.

Step 5: Contemplatio (Rest)

After the final reading, I spend around 10 minutes in silent contemplation. This isn't a time of prayer or meditation — I just sit quietly and allow God to work. When my mind starts to wander and dart here and there, I bring it gently back to stillness again.

There are many sources of inspiration to help develop the practice of Lectio Divina. Soul Shepherding has a collection of downloadable guides, and LectioDivina.org also has some helpful examples of journaling. It's important to remember that Lectio Divina is not an end in itself or another spiritual practice to tick off our to-do list. It helps us hear specifically and individually from God through scripture, guided by the Holy Spirit, and deepens our relationship with Him.

- By Elizabeth Manneh. Excerpt from <https://bustedhalo.com/ministry-resources/lectio-divina-beginners-guide>