

Week 2 ~ Lectio Divina

“Devote yourselves to prayer,” (Colossians 4:2, NIV)

Martin Luther once said, “As it is the business of tailors to make clothes and of cobblers to mend shoes, so it is the business of Christians to pray.”

I cannot truly call myself a sports fan if I fail to follow sports. I should not call myself an animal lover if I do not interact with animals. It would be improper to consider myself a connoisseur of anything if I first didn’t study and thoroughly learn about that which I seek to master, throwing myself into gaining as much experience of, exposure to, and interaction with the subject as possible—be it chocolate, wine, coffee, cheese, honey, you name it.

According to Paul (and Martin Luther) to live a Christian life, we should pray—a lot—and we take it seriously. Prayer, for the believer, is a priority in our actions and our beliefs. That’s what the word “devote” conveys.

Based on your prayer habits, could it be concluded that you are devoted to prayer?

Based on your prayer habits, could it be said that you are in the “business of Christianity?”

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Lectio Divina, Latin for *divine reading*, is a traditional Catholic practice of combining Scripture and prayer in an effort to interact with God through his word, different than reading Scripture for theological purposes or for study. The aim of Lectio Divina is to experience God as the Living Word through the Word.

Lectio Divina, traditionally, has four different components beginning with lectio and ending with complatio.

1. Lectio – read
2. Meditatio – meditate
3. Oratio – pray
4. Contemplatio – contemplate

Scripture, then, becomes the conversation, the prayer between us and God. It stands to reason that if Scripture is God’s conversation to us, and prayer is our conversation to God, then combining the two maximizes the potential for a “successful” encounter with the Divine.

Let me make one little note here before moving forward. There are two main ways you can approach Lectio Divina. The first is to simply begin reading your Bible, wherever you wish, and when you feel impressed by the Spirit to stop and reflect, you enter into meditation and prayer. The other is to choose a particular passage or verse on which you will ponder and pray and begin there.

Let's now use an example of Lectio Divina to show what this practice of prayer might look. In this instance I will begin with a particular passage.

STEP 1: LECTIO

“May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is new creation.” (Galatians 6:14-15, NIV)

As I read these two verses, a couple words jump out at me right away: boast, crucified, creation. What initially catches your attention might be different. I again read the verses to gain an overall impression—for me, two thoughts come to mind: “works of the flesh” and “tooting my own horn.”

So now, with this verse before me and some initial points to guide me, I begin to reflect on and ponder what the Holy Spirit might be saying to me. And, it should be noted, I believe those words and those impressions were God-given; those are the things He wants to talk to me about. I wouldn't have been drawn to those words or formed those impressions without the aid and presence of God's Spirit.

STEP 2: MEDITATIO

- How often do I **boast** in things other than “the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ”?
- **Crucified**=dead → I'm dead to the world. The world's dead to me. → This is a result of Christ and not because of anything I do, even in devotion to Him.
- There's something deeper than what I'm currently grasping about Christ's **crucified** power available to me. This is cause for continued reflection and meditation.
- Crucifixion ushers in a new **creation** reality.
- If I'm going to **toot any horn** it should be Christ's not mine.
- **Works of the flesh**, e.g. circumcision or uncircumcision, don't matter to God.

So do you see, in bold, how deeper reflection/meditation has given my initial impressions more meaning? What is God trying to say to my heart through these thoughts? What is the Holy Spirit revealing to me about Christ and about myself in light of Christ?

Based on my mediation, I turn these thoughts into prayers. I put words to the ideas and further communication with God, through his Word, continues.

STEP 3: ORATIO

Jesus, Son of God, thank you for your sacrifice on the cross. Because of your death, and your death alone, I am made new. I am reminded again that nothing I do matters apart from you. Nothing I do can earn the freedom I have in you. Nothing I do or don't do can make your crucifixion more complete. Lord, forgive me for taking the credit that, according to verse 14, belongs to you and only you. May I always shine the light of your glory back onto you. Help me to be humble in the power I have because of you. And yes, Lord, I am a new creation – Hallelujah! and Amen!

Of course, because you are unique, your meditations and prayers will be unique. There is no “right” way to pray. Inject your own flavor into Lectio Divina and make it your own.

STEP 4: CONTEMPLATIO

So now that you've prayed the thoughts the Holy Spirit directed through his Word, it's time to bask in the goodness of his revelation. This is a time to sit in the emotions of your time with God; maybe ponder your heart's response to God's guidance. Breathe in the freshness that comes with being in the Lord's presence. Spend time in solitude with the Lord—you never know when He might want to speak to you, and it's more likely to happen if you're quietly and patiently waiting than if you're not.

Or, maybe you're not quite there yet. Maybe you don't really feel anything different in your Spirit. Maybe you're not sure you sensed God at all. That's okay. Connecting with God through Lectio Divina grows over time. Like so many other things in life, it is a practice that develops the more you use it.

One Final Thought: Feel free to use the same Scripture as your jumping-off point each day if you feel the Holy Spirit leading you to do so. You don't have to have a different bible verse each day.



Reflection Questions

1. What did you most enjoy about prayer this week?
2. What was most challenging?
3. How did your prayers change throughout the week as you engaged in Lectio Divina?
4. Did you enjoy the role Scripture played in your prayers? Why or why not?
5. What revelations, if any, did you receive in prayer this week? Were any directly related to praying in this way?
6. What are you most likely to take away from this prayer exercise?

