

## Soul Care | *Spiritual Basics for Hungry People* Week 4 – Meditating on Scripture



# Lectio Divina...

*What makes our reading spiritual has as much to do with the intention, attitude, and manner we bring to the words as it does with the nature and content of those words. Spiritual reading is reflective and prayerful. It is concerned not with speed or volume but with depth and receptivity. That is because the purpose of spiritual reading is to open ourselves to how God may be speaking to us in and through any particular text.*

Marjorie J. Thompson, *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life*, p. 18)

*Spiritual reading is a meditative approach to the written word. It requires unhurried time and an open heart. If the purpose of our reading is to be addressed by God, we will need to practice attentive listening and a willingness to respond to what we hear.*

Marjorie J. Thompson, *Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life*, p. 19

*Lectio divina is the deliberate and intentional practice of making the transition from a kind of reading that treats and handles, however reverently, Jesus dead to a way of reading that frequents the company of friends who are listening to, accompanying, and following Jesus alive.*

Eugene H. Peterson, *Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading*, p. 85

*Lectio divina comprises four elements: lectio (we read the text), meditatio (we meditate the text), oratio (we pray the text), and contemplatio (we live the text). But naming the four elements must be accompanied by a practiced awareness that their relationship is not sequential. Reading (lectio) is a linear act, but spiritual (divina) reading is not – any of the elements may be at the fore at any one time.*

Eugene H. Peterson, *Eat This Book: A Conversation in the Art of Spiritual Reading*, p. 91

*The Syrian sixth-century monk who goes under the name Denis the Pseudo-Areopagite speaks of a species of contemplation that is like a corkscrew, mobile with a circular action, endlessly spiraling deeper into God, penetrating to the heart of the divinity. The image signifies that although the contemplative act engages all our energies at each occurrence, it has the potential to increase in intensity as our capacity for love grows. The same is true of our experience of lectio divina. Our contact with God is not immediately profound, but reaches profundity only after many years' continuance. Therefore our initial experience must necessarily be superficial, although at the time we could not realize this. The full benefits of revelation are not accessible to a rapid perusal.*

Michael Casey, *Sacred Reading: The Ancient Art of Lectio Divina*, p. 45



# *Lectio Divina...*

Christians have practiced this ancient method of praying the Scriptures for over 1500 years. It uses both the head and heart to integrate God's Word in us. The intention of lectio divina is to "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Colossians 3:16).

Prepare yourself by selecting a time and space that will allow you to be attentive to God. Don't seek to control the process, instead pray and seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Remember this process is not a linear step-by-step technique. Allow yourself the freedom to move freely back and forth between the various movements of lectio divina.

1. *Reading* (Lectio): Slowly read a short passage of Scripture being alert to any word or phrase that attracts your attention. Read it again and again until you are drawn to a specific portion of the passage. Linger over that phrase, savoring the richness of that for you. This is *SLOW-MOTION* reading so don't rush it!
2. *Reflecting* (Meditatio): Reflect on the meaning of your word or phrase. Enter into dialogue with this portion of Scripture. As your phrase engages you what memories, images, feelings, thoughts or connections with this or other passages arise for you? The monks described this process as rumination or rumination and resembles the cow in the chewing of the cud.
3. *Responding* (Oratio): As you continue to linger over this word or phrase what invitation is God calling you to? How does your heart respond, in joy, expectation, sorrow, or confession? Allow your experience to be voiced to God in prayer.
4. *Resting/Receiving* (Contemplatio): Remain quiet in God's presence (Psalm 46:10). do not worry about results or try to force any lesson or insight from God. It may come: simply rest gently in God's arms (Psalm 131:2). The monks called this "lap time with God."

"Read little, ponder much." motto of the Taize Community of France



# *Read ...*

## **Psalm 63 (NIV)**

[1] O God, you are my God,  
earnestly I seek you;  
my soul thirsts for you,  
my body longs for you,  
in a dry and weary land  
where there is no water.

[2] I have seen you in the sanctuary  
and beheld your power and your glory.

[3] Because your love is better than life,  
my lips will glorify you.

[4] I will praise you as long as I live,  
and in your name I will lift up my hands.

[5] My soul will be satisfied as with the richest  
of foods;  
with singing lips my mouth will praise you.

[6] On my bed I remember you;  
I think of you through the watches of the night.

[7] Because you are my help,  
I sing in the shadow of your wings.

[8] My soul clings to you;  
your right hand upholds me.

[9] They who seek my life will be destroyed;  
they will go down to the depths of the earth.

[10] They will be given over to the sword  
and become food for jackals.

[11] But the king will rejoice in God;  
all who swear by God's name will praise him,  
while the mouths of liars will be silenced.



# *Meditate ...*



*Pray...*



*Contemplate...*



*Read ...*



*Meditate...*



*Pray...*



*Contemplate...*



# *African Method...*

What does this scripture say about God?

What does this scripture say about humanity?

[Where is God inviting you to be transformed?]\*

What do you hear God asking you to be or do?

\*This question is an experimental one added by Tom Schwanda

---

Classnotes from *The Transforming Power of Scripture: Context and Culture*  
Tom Schwanda



# *Sulpician Method...*

From the order of St. Sulpicius, 17<sup>th</sup> century Paris

This is a Jesus-focused meditation. Select a Jesus-scene from one of the Gospels and do the following:

**A.** Jesus before the eyes (*adoration*): Look upon Jesus and adore him in one of his virtues (humility, love, obedience, etc.) Don't busy self with details and meanings. Just look and try to have a deep appreciation and love.

**B.** Jesus in the heart (*communion*): The soul draws into itself the virtue or attribute it has seen in the Lord. Make it your own.

**C.** Jesus in the hands (*co-operation*): A resolution or plan to utilize or manifest that virtue. Try to be specific and concrete.

During the day, after your meditation, remember Francis de Sales' "Spiritual Nosegay." This is a blossom plucked from the garden of your meditation and from time to time throughout the day you lift it to your nose and sniff it and let it be part of the moment. It is a way of keeping your meditation alive throughout the day.

---

Handout from *Christian Spirituality in the Early and Medieval Church*  
Gary Sattler