



Lectio Divina: A
Living the Way
Workshop





Lectio divina is a reflective interaction with a Bible passage that helps us listen for God's voice.

This workshop will guide participants to ...

- Experience the Bible as active and alive to us today
 - Hear God speak to us through His Word
- Slow down and attentively receive from God's Word

When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, Lord God Almighty. (Jeremiah 15:16).

Resources you will need ...

- LTW Lectio Divina Workshop Guide
- Jan Johnson, *Meeting God in Scripture*
 - The Bible, any translation
 - startlivingtheway.com

Session One | Lectio Divina



Begin by catching up on one another's lives. What is something recent that is bringing you joy?
What is something recent that is causing you stress?

John Wesley was a pastor and evangelist who led a revival in England in the 1700s. He trained his followers to ask themselves 22 questions daily to reveal the health of their souls. Below are three. Pick one for reflection and discussion.

1. Did the Bible live in me today?
2. Do I give the Bible time to speak to me every day?
3. How do I spend my spare time?

Session One | Lectio Divina

What the Bible Says

God's Word is special. It's not just another book. It's not mere about more information. The Bible is active and alive and has the power to change who we are deep down. On average, people read an online article for 15 seconds before moving to another. We are habituated in speed and efficiency. The Bible isn't meant to be read that way. We are called to read it slowly, deeply, and contemplatively. That's how it moves past our eyes and brains and infuses the depths of our souls. This workshop will help participants encounter God's Word in fresh, exciting, and transformative ways. Pause for a moment.

How does this possibility make you feel?

Blessed is the one who does not walk in step with the wicked or stand in the way that sinners take or sit in the company of mockers, but whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates on his law day and night. That person is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither—whatever they do prospers. (Psalm 1:1-3)

1. What does it mean to be blessed? How is it different from the way our society thinks of the good life?
2. What words best describe your experience with the Bible? How often do you find *delight* in it?
3. Practically, what do you think it means to meditate on God's Word? Do you have any experience with this?



Session One | Lectio Divina

LTW Practice—Lectio Divina

Lectio divina is Latin for “divine or sacred reading.” It is a reflective interaction with a Bible passage that helps us watch and listen for God’s voice to us in the text. When we engage in this practice, we slow down our encounter with God’s Word and intentionally absorb each part of it. As a result, we discover His Word as not just informative, but alive, active, and formative. Historically, there are four steps to the process of *lectio divina*: *lectio*, *meditation*, *oratio*, and *contemplatio*. The process below is adapted for use in groups.

Lectio (*Read the Passage*) Read the chosen passage aloud twice. Read slowly and pay close attention to each word. Quietly ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate the passage to you. Ask the Spirit what He has for you in it—for this moment in time.

Meditatio (*Silent Meditation*) Ask God for a word or phrase from the passage for meditation. Choose what you find to be especially meaningful. Remember, God works through our thoughts and desires. Meditate for several minutes on your chosen word or phrase. Make note—with minimal assessment—what the Spirit brings to your mind.

Oratio (*Respond in Prayer*) Pray your response to God. Tell him what you have encountered in your reading and meditation. Make note of how you sense the Spirit is prompting you to act or change as a result. If you are participating as a group, pray conversationally about what you have learned, especially that it would take root in the lives of one another.

Group Sharing (*if applicable*) Each person should share the word or phrase he or she chose for meditation, and briefly explain what he or she has experienced.

Re-read the Passage. Re-read the passage, slowly and reflectively. Continue to focus on your experience in the previous steps.

Contemplatio (*Rest in God*) Take several minutes to contemplate your experience. Rest in God and know that His Spirit has been at work for good. Resolve to take the steps He has revealed.

Discussion Questions

1. Read through each step carefully. What strikes you about this way of experiencing the Bible?
2. What hinders you from practicing this kind of intentional interaction with God’s Word?
3. When would be a good time and a good place to practice *lectio divina* this week?



Session One | Lectio Divina

4. **Practice** lectio divina using the following passage from the Gospel of Matthew. Then (if in a group) discuss your experience.

²⁸ “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30)

Exercises for Session Two

1. Read “Meditation is Different Than Application” from *Meeting God in Scripture* by Jan Johnson.
2. Experiment with lectio divina. Try meditating on the character of God, i.e., his goodness, faithfulness, love, compassion, justice, mercy, and on and on. Use passages like Psalm 23:1-6, 46:1-11, Isaiah 43:1-3, Jeremiah 29:11-13, Matthew 8:23-27, Colossians 1:15-20, and 1 John 4:7-12.
3. Complete the discussion questions for session two. If participating in a group, come ready to discuss with others!

Interlude

You’ve finished the first session of this workshop! You’re moving beyond knowledge of the Bible into the realm of attachment. In other words, you’re progressively becoming attached—mind, heart, and soul—to God’s words to us. They are becoming that which shapes who you are and how you interact with the world around you. Lectio Divina is that powerful.

Don’t forget that it’s best to go on this sacred journey alongside others. Make some time to get together with your group (however many) and deepen your relationships. Grab coffee just to chat. Go to a baseball game. Gather your families for a movie night. Do something that simply celebrates the joys of being human and knowing others. This is good for its own sake but will also help you grow as you complete future sessions.

“Since I have learned to read the Bible this way—and this has not been for so very long—it becomes every day more wonderful to me. I read it in the morning and in the evening, often during the day as well, and every day I consider a text which I have chosen for the whole week, and try to sink deeply into it, so as really to hear what it is saying. I know that without this I could not live properly any longer.” (Dietrich Bonhoeffer)



Session Two | Meditation



Begin by catching up on one another's lives. Is there anything causing you anxiety, worry, or fear in the past weeks? Pray for one another about these things. Reflect on your experiences with lectio divina since you last met.

1. What biblical passages did you cover?
2. Did practicing lectio divina (see session #1) help you to meditate on Scripture?
3. Did God reveal anything to you through lectio divina? Share with one another.
4. Do you hope to change anything in your life as a result?

Session Two | Meditation

Understanding Christian Meditation

Meditation is the practice of slowing down and turning one's attention deeply to God and His Kingdom. When we meditate, we clear our minds (as best we can) of any distractions and gaze on the beauty of God and what he has made. It is, in fact, the second step of *lectio divina*. In this session, we dig deeper into meditation.

"Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. (Joshua 1:7-8)

God appointed Joshua to succeed Moses as the leader of the Israelites. This meant he would be the one to lead the people into the land God had promised. It was no small task, but God did not leave him to his own devices. God promised to give Joshua strength, courage, and His presence when Joshua did this crucial thing: meditate on God's Word.

The word *meditate* means to reflect, ponder, or muse deeply about God's goodness and beauty. In several places in the Bible, it describes a lion growling over its prey as it savors and protects its catch. This is what God commands Joshua to do—savor and protect His Word. It is what brings God's life-giving presence along the way.

1. Take a moment to imagine yourself in Joshua's place. What concerns, thoughts, and emotions would you have?

2. Think about the imagery of a lion growling over its prey. What does it mean to **savor** and **protect** God's Word as we meditate on it?

3. What does Jan Johnson say is the difference between meditation and application (see "Meditation is Different than Application")?

4. How do you think meditation might change your character?



Session Two | Meditation

This session's exercise gives special attention to meditation. It's a crucial part of our interaction with God's Word. We encourage groups to walk through this exercise during your meeting time.

²⁵ "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? ²⁶ Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? ²⁷ Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life? ²⁸ "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. ²⁹ Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. ³⁰ If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you— you of little faith? ³¹ So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴ Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. (Mt. 6:25-34)

Lectio (Read the Passage) Read the passage aloud twice. Read slowly and pay close attention to each word. Quietly ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate the passage to you. Ask the Spirit what He has for you in it—for this moment in time.

Meditatio (Silent Meditation) Take a walk (together, if in a group) and observe God's creation. (If weather does not permit, reflect on a picture or mental image of a familiar place.) What is striking? What is beautiful? What emotions do you feel? How does creation remind you of God's loving care for what He has made (i.e., of the birds of the air and flowers of the field)? What does God want you to know about His love for you?

Then, return to the passage. Ask God for a word or phrase for meditation. Choose what you find to be especially meaningful. Remember, God works through our thoughts and desires. Meditate for several minutes on your chosen word or phrase. **Take time to reflect on your experience (together, if in a group).**

Oratio (Respond in Prayer) Pray your response to God. Tell him what you have encountered in your reading and meditation. Make note of how you sense the Spirit is prompting you to act or change as a result. If you are participating as a group, pray conversationally about what you have learned, especially that it would take root in the lives of one another.

Re-read the Passage Re-read the passage, slowly and reflectively. Continue to focus on your experience in the previous steps.

Contemplatio (Rest in God) Take several minutes to contemplate your experience. Rest in God and know that His Spirit has been at work for good. Resolve to take the steps He has revealed.



Session Two | Meditation

How can you meditate on your lectio divina experience throughout the next week (e.g., memorize a word or phrase or carry an item that reminds you of God's provision)?

Exercises for Session Three

1. Read "Praying Scripture Back to God" from Wycliffe Bible Translators found at <https://www.wycliffe.org/prayer/how-to-pray-scripture-back-to-god>
2. Continue to practice lectio divina. Try meditating on passages that describe our spiritual formation in Christ, e.g., John 14:15-21, Colossians 3:1-4, or 1 Peter 1:3-9. Consider using the same passage each day for a week.
3. Complete the discussion questions for session three. If participating in a group, come ready to discuss!

"The voice of God indeed calls daily to us; calls to the world to abandon sins and seek the Kingdom of God wholeheartedly. O that we may all hear the call of the Father and, sometime, at last be converted to the Lord ... In silence and meditation on the eternal truths, I hear the voice of God which excites our hearts to greater love." (C.S. Lewis)



Session Three | Prayer



Begin by catching up on one another's lives. How have you spent your free time over the past weeks? What words would you use to describe it (e.g., rejuvenating, refreshing, wasteful, fretting)?

Discuss your experiences with lectio divina since you last met. (If working as an individual, take some time to reflect on your experiences.)

1. What biblical passages did you cover?
2. Did practicing lectio divina help you to meditate on Scripture?
3. Did God reveal anything to you through lectio divina? If so, would you be willing to share?
4. Do you hope to change anything in your life as a result?

Session Three | Prayer

Prayer refers to all the ways we commune with God. It helps us grow in intimacy with Him. Wittingly or not, we sometimes reduce our prayer lives to giving God lists about how we would like the world to be. While asking is a vital part of a balanced prayer life, the heart of prayer is about fulfilling the deepest longing of the human soul—for communion with God Himself. The good news is that we can commune with God in concentrated moments of solitude and call upon His presence as we go about our daily activities.

Prayer, in fact, is vital to our experience of God's Word. We are not called merely to meditate, but to interact with God Himself as we do so. Prayer is how we share with God in what he reveals as we practice *lectio divina*. It is a marvel that God speaks to us, indeed. It is no less so that He listens to our response! In this session, we will explore prayer as it relates to our response to God's Word.

How would you describe the depth of your prayer life? For instance, how often do you pray? Do you pray various types of prayers (e.g., praise, thanksgiving, and confession)? Do you make time to listen to God?

"Bible searching and searching prayer go hand in hand. What we receive from God in the Book's message we return to Him with interest in prayer." (P. T. Forsyth)

Prayer and God's Word

Athanasius, a fourth-century theologian, said, "Most Scriptures speak to us; the Psalms speak for us." The Psalms are the worship book of the Bible. They include praises, confessions, and laments. They are God's words to us, but also God's provision as one way of speaking to Him. Yes, we can (and should) pray Scripture using them *as our own words*. Doing so transforms and even heals our souls. **Try praying the following Psalms—slowly and reflectively—to God several times. Try to make them your own words to him.**

First, start with a verse that expresses your heart's desire for communion with God. Make sure you read them slowly, several times over if you wish.

Open my eyes to see the wonderful truths in your instructions. (Psalm 119:18)

Then, launch into the following passage from Psalm 71 as your prayer to God. Make note of any ideas or images from your life that come to mind as you pray.

Since my youth, God, you have taught me, and to this day I declare your marvelous deeds. Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, my God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your mighty acts to all who are to come. Your righteousness, God, reaches to the heavens, you who have done great things. Who is like you, God? Though you have made me see troubles, many and bitter, you will restore my life again; from the depths of the earth you will again bring me up. You will increase my honor and comfort me once more. I will praise you with the harp for your faithfulness, my God; I will sing praise to you with the lyre, Holy One of Israel. (Psalm 71:17-22)



Session Three | Prayer

1. Reflect on your experience. What thoughts or emotions did praying God's words provoke?
2. How is praying God's Word different from spontaneous prayers or other pre-written prayers?
3. Would you like to incorporate more of this practice into your life? If so, how can you make that happen?

LTW Practice—Lectio Divina

This session's exercise focuses on prayer. It's a crucial part of our interaction with God's Word, especially as it complements meditation. We encourage groups to walk through this exercise during your meeting time.

¹ Those who live in the shelter of the Most High will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty. ² This I declare about the Lord: He alone is my refuge, my place of safety; he is my God, and I trust him. ³ For he will rescue you from every trap and protect you from deadly disease. ⁴ He will cover you with his feathers. He will shelter you with his wings. His faithful promises are your armor and protection. (Psalm 91:1-4)

Lectio (Read the Passage) Read the passage aloud twice. Read slowly and pay close attention to each word. Quietly ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate the passage to you. Ask the Spirit what He has for you in it—for this moment in time.

Meditatio (Silent Meditation) Ask God for a word or phrase from the passage for meditation. Choose what you find to be especially meaningful. Remember, God works through our thoughts and desires. Meditate for several minutes on your chosen word or phrase. Make note—with minimal assessment—of what the Spirit brings to your mind.

Oratio (Respond in Prayer) Pray your response to God. Tell him what you have encountered in your reading and meditation. Make note of how you sense the Spirit is prompting you to act or change as a result. If you are participating as a group, pray conversationally about what you have learned, especially that it would take root in the lives of one another.

Then, pray the passage to God. Insert the first person where the text uses the second person, or even insert your own name. Personalize it. Pray it to God as your own words to Him.

Re-read the Passage Re-read the passage, slowly and reflectively. Continue to focus on your experience in the previous steps.

Contemplatio (Rest in God) Take several minutes to contemplate your experience. Rest in God and know that His Spirit has been at work for good. Resolve to take the steps He has revealed.



Session Three | Prayer

How can you pray God's words to Him throughout the next week (e.g., memorize Psalm 91:1-4 and pray it to God several times throughout the day)?

Exercises for Session Four

1. Continue to practice lectio divina. Try meditating on passages that describe our spiritual formation in Christ, e.g., John 14:15-21, Colossians 3:1-4, or 1 Peter 1:3-9. Consider using the same passage each day for a week.
2. Complete the discussion questions for session four. If participating in a group, come ready to discuss!

"In Meditative Prayer the Bible ceases to be a quotation dictionary and becomes instead 'wonderful words of life' that lead us to the Word of Life. It differs even from the study of Scripture. Whereas the study of Scripture enters on exegesis, the meditation upon Scripture centers on internalizing and personalizing the passage. The written Word becomes a living word addressed to us. This is a time not for technical studies or analysis or even the gathering of material to share with others. Dietrich Bonhoeffer says, 'Just as you do not analyze the words of someone you love, but accept them as they are said to you, accept the Word of Scripture and ponder it in your heart, as Mary did.'" (Richard Foster)



Session Four | Contemplation



Begin by catching up on one another's lives (if meeting as a group). How often have you been jealous, critical, or irritable towards others these past weeks? Reflect on the reasons for this and pray for one another.

Discuss your experiences with lectio divina since you last met. (If working as an individual, take some time to reflect on your experiences.)

1. What biblical passages did you cover?
2. Did practicing lectio divina help you to meditate on Scripture?
3. Did God reveal anything to you through lectio divina? If so, would you be willing to share?
4. Do you hope to change anything in your life as a result?

Session Four | Contemplation

Contemplation—Not What You Might Think

Contemplation may evoke images of monastics living a cloistered life—praying, thinking, and meditating throughout their days. But contemplation isn't what you might think. God calls some people to monasticism indeed, but contemplation, understood correctly, ought to happen each moment of our everyday lives. Contemplation is the aspect of *lectio divina* that bridges the gap between God's Word and regular life. It is, as Eugene Peterson says, "... *an organic union between the word 'read' and the word 'lived.'*"

In other words, we contemplate God's Word (and what he reveals through meditation and prayer), when we reflect on what it means for our lives and apply it. We may contemplate His Word when we are at home, work, with neighbors, or even at church. Contemplation is nothing short of the integration of God's way of living for us into every area of our lives.

¹⁶*Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.* ¹⁷*And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Colossians 3:16-17)*

1. What do you think it means to "... do all in the name of the Lord Jesus?" How is this related to contemplation?

2. On a scale from 1 – 10, how well do you contemplate God's Word, i.e., integrate it into every aspect of life?

3. How do you think your life would be different if you intentionally contemplated God's Word?

4. What barriers hold you back from contemplating God's Word in this way? What can you do to remove them?



Session Four | Contemplation

LTW Practice—Lectio Divina

This session's exercise focuses on contemplation. It's a crucial part of our interaction with God's Word. We encourage groups to walk through this exercise during your meeting time.

¹ Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. (Philippians 2:1-4)

Lectio (Read the Passage) Read the passage aloud twice. Read slowly and pay close attention to each word. Quietly ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate the passage to you. Ask the Spirit what He has for you in it—for this moment in time.

Meditatio (Silent Meditation) Ask God for a word or phrase from the passage for meditation. Choose what you find to be especially meaningful. Remember, God works through our thoughts and desires. Meditate for several minutes on your chosen word or phrase. Make note—with minimal assessment—of what the Spirit brings to your mind.

Oratio (Respond in Prayer) Pray your response to God. Tell him what you have encountered in your reading and meditation. Make note of how you sense the Spirit is prompting you to act or change as a result. If you are participating as a group, pray conversationally about what you have learned, especially that it would take root in the lives of one another.

Re-read the Passage. Re-read the passage, slowly and reflectively. Continue to focus on your experience in the previous steps.

Contemplatio (Rest in God) Take several minutes to contemplate your experience. Rest in God and know that His Spirit has been at work for good.

Then, imagine scenes from your life—at work, home, the grocery, coffee shops, with neighbors, friends, and family. Imagine what life will look like as you integrate God's life-giving words. Imagine how those spaces in life will be transformed. Imagine how your relationships will be improved. Pray and ask God to work in and through you, making this vision a reality. Finally, rest. Know that God is the one at work, molding and shaping you through his Word.



Session Four | Contemplation

Reflections on Lectio Divina

You've now encountered an essential practice God has given to build us in the way of Jesus. Take some time to reflect and celebrate what He has done. We invite you to continue your journey by digging into one of the other LTW workshops offered at startlivingtheway.com!

1. Compare your initial expectations to your actual experience with lectio divina. What was similar? Different?
2. How did you grow because of this practice? What was especially meaningful? What was challenging?
3. How do you plan to integrate lectio divina as part of your regular spiritual life?
4. How do you plan to celebrate the good things God has done over these past weeks?

"Contemplative in the context lectio divina, our spiritual reading of the Holy Scriptures, signals the recognition of an organic union between the word 'read' and the word 'lived.' The contemplative life is the realization that the Word that was in the beginning is also the Word that was made flesh and continues to be the Word to which I say, 'Let it be to me according to Thy Word.'" (Eugene Peterson)

