

Listening Prayerfully to the Scriptures – Lectio Divina

Let anyone with ears to hear listen!

Mark 4:9

Lectio Divina is an ancient method of listening to the Word of God. For centuries, people of faith have used this method to prayerfully open their hearts and minds to God's Word. It can be practiced individually and/or together with others in a group and is a great way to seek insights and applications from the Holy Scriptures.

Key to the experience is trusting Jesus at his word when he said, *Ask and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock and the door will be opened.* (Luke 11: 9-10) With this in mind, when you open the Bible, ask God to speak to you and trust the Holy Spirit to help you hear God's Word for you as you seek it. Before reading the Bible passage each time, pray for God to open your heart to the Scriptures.

Here is the basic format:

1. Read the passage; ask God to speak to you and then sit quietly before God for a minute; then share with God (and others, if you are in a group) a word or phrase that stood out to you.
2. Read the passage; ask God to speak to you and then sit quietly before God for a minute; then share with God (and others, if you are in a group) the images, feelings, and thoughts that struck you (*Lord, I was struck by ...; I felt...; I saw or heard ...*).
3. Read the passage; ask God to speak to you and then sit quietly before God for a minute; then share with God (and others, if you are in a group and feel comfortable sharing this) what you hear as God's Word to you (*Lord, I hear you telling me to ...*).
4. After the previous steps, you may want to read through the passage one more time and then sit quietly for another five to twenty minutes (this can be a time for centering prayer or other types of prayer).

Further ideas to deepen your experience:

- In either your first or second time reading through the passage, read it in the larger context in which the passage is situated.
- Before reading through the second time, take time to study the passage. For example, look at the footnotes related to it in a study Bible or read what a commentary has to say about the text.