

LECTIO DIVINA

MC Leader Guide

By Jocelyn Sacks & Allen Smith

Use the outline below to lead your community through this reflective exercise. Orient your time by describing Lectio Divina's background, why it is important, and give an overview of the rhythms.

Background & Importance

Lectio Divina (Divine Reading) is an ancient church practice that promotes group meditation and communion with God. It approaches the Bible not as a text to be studied but as a living Word to be experienced together. Lectio Divina is a great UP exercise that teaches us how to receive and respond from God together.

Rhythms: Read, Reflect, Respond, & Rest (about 30 minutes)

Open in Silence & Prayer (3 minutes)

- First Movement: **Read** (Lectio)
Read the passage (3 minutes)
Reflect on the word in silence (3 minutes)
Respond in small group (3 minutes)
- Second Movement: **Reflect** (Mediatio)
Read the passage again (3 minutes)
Reflect in silence (3 minutes)
[No group sharing this round]
- Third Movement: **Respond** (Oratio)
Read the passage a final time (3 minutes)
Reflect in silence (3 minutes)
Respond in small group (6 minutes)

Close in **Rest** (Contemplatio): silence & prayer (3 minutes)

GROUND RULES for Group Sharing:

1. *Confidentiality*. What is shared here, stays here.
2. Participation is encouraged – but *voluntary*. Someone can pass if they choose.
3. *Use only non-verbal communication* when someone is sharing: nodding your head, good eye contact. In other words, don't respond verbally.
4. *Break into groups of 3*, if possible. A group of 4 is preferable to a group of 2 unless the pair is a married couple.

INSTRUCTIONS

OPEN IN SILENCE (3-5 minutes)

Instructions: “A good way to prepare the heart and mind is to spend a few moments in silence. Get comfortable and close your eyes if you like. Focus on breathing. Relax. Become aware of your surroundings. Don't dwell on one thought, just notice it and let it pass by.”

Pray: *“Lord, we thank you that your Word is alive and active. We believe that you spoke the world into existence. We now ask that you would speak again to our hearts by the power of your Word. Holy Spirit, teach us and guide us as we now listen to you in your Word.”*

FIRST MOVEMENT: READ (LECTIO)

Instructions: “As we read our selected passage, don't worry about getting it all. We will read this passage two more times. In this reading, pay attention to what stands out, to what draws your attention. It might be a verse, phrase or even a word. You might want to write down what the Spirit draws your attention to. Afterward, we will break up into small groups to share what stood out to us.”

- Read through the selected Bible passage slowly and clearly.
- Reflect in silence on what you heard (3-5 minutes)
- Respond in your group by sharing your verse, phrase or word. The others just listen with minimal or no comment. (3-4 minutes)

SECOND MOVEMENT: REFLECT (MEDITATIO)

Instructions: “As we re-read our passage, use your imagination to recreate the scene. As you reflect on the passage in silence, pay attention to your thoughts, but also expand your attention to your body and spirit too. How is your body responding? Are you becoming more relaxed or more tense? If so, where in your body do you sense it? What is moving your heart? What feelings arise? What desires are provoked? What does it make you want to do?”

- Re-read through the selected Bible passage.
- Reflect in silence on what you heard (3-5 minutes)

THIRD MOVEMENT: RESPOND (ORATORIO)

Instructions: “This is our final reading. Invite the Spirit to guide you as you practice active listening. As you listen to the Scripture, I encourage you to silently talk to God about where you believe the Spirit might be leading you. To hear God you will need to turn off your internal cynic that questions your experience. Be confident that Holy Spirit uses His Word to speak to your spirit. When he does it usually it sounds like your internal voice you use for thinking, but it will be much more peaceful, calmer, and accompanied with love. Afterward, you might find it helpful to write down anything the Spirit prompted you to pray about.”

- Read one last time the selected Bible passage.
- Reflect in silence on what you heard (3-5 minutes)
- Share in your group by sharing how your heart wants to respond (6 minutes).

REST: (CONTEMPLATIO)

Instructions: “In this last stage, simply be with God and enjoy His presence. As you sit in silence, spend time thanking God for meeting with you. If He revealed a sin or idol, repent and believe again in the good news. If His presence was absent, wait and trust Him that He is still present in the darkness. If He revealed a truth about yourself or your situation, receive it and give him praise for it.”

- Allow at least 3 minutes in silence.
- Close in prayer.

DEBRIEFING

If this was practiced during a training session, take some time to process the experience.

- How was it for you?
- What did you like or dislike in this experience?
- What did you learn?
- Would you feel comfortable leading this time?

Pro Tips:

1. God speaks in sync with His character and Scripture. This is not a time for people to interpret their own meaning, but rather to believe that the Holy Spirit can speak to us still through God’s Word. Lectio Divina is a time to practice hearing God.
2. Attuning the ear to hear from God is a process. You can only learn by practicing. Be patient with those who are slow or who struggle. This may be a totally new way of relating to God for them. Richard Foster says of Lectio Divina: “It is prayerful reading in which all of our external and internal senses swing like a needle to the pole star of the Spirit. We become “all ears” to God.” Learning to listen like this takes time.
3. Sometimes someone might share something “off” or “questionable.” It might be best to discuss this after the meeting. It depends on how intimate your group is. Gently lead and encourage.