



Meditate

Overview

The digital age has rewired our brains and conditioned us to a new style of reading; we're used to quickly skimming over words to get the information we need and then moving on. But this fast, click-bait mode of reading is at odds with the way Scripture was *designed* to be read.

The word used in Scripture for the ideal way Scripture was designed to be read is “meditation.” This rich Hebrew word calls us to a mode of reading that is slow, reflective, and prayerful. German pastor and martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer defined meditation as “the prayerful consideration of Scripture.”

While there is no single way to “meditate” on Scripture, there is a practice that over the centuries has risen to the surface — *Lectio Divina*, or “divine reading.” *Lectio* is a simple, four-step process of listening for God's voice as you move through a short passage of Scripture.

And this simple, ancient way of reading the library of Scripture has the potential to change your experience of Scripture for a lifetime.

Reflection Questions

When instructed, circle up in triads (smaller groups of 3-5 people) and discuss the following questions:

- 01 How did the church tradition you grew up in, or were saved into, teach you to engage with Scripture?

- 02 Share about your experience of finding a place and time to engage with Scripture. How did it go?

- 03 Did you experience delight, restlessness, frustration, or other emotions as you engaged in this practice?

- 04 What questions are you holding as you enter into the next part of our Practice?

Teaching

Key Scripture

He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

“... Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.” Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.

—Luke 24v25-27, v44-45

Session summary

- Today we might call it the Bible or the Old Testament, but Jesus called it “the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms,” to communicate the three major divisions of the Hebrew Scriptures:
 - The Law (Genesis-Deuteronomy)
 - The Prophets (starting with Joshua)
 - And the Psalms or Writings (wisdom literature and other miscellaneous writings)
- Joshua 1 and Psalm 1 are “canonical seams,” literary bridges that connect the Law, Prophets, and Psalms together. They reveal *how* we’re invited to read and approach Scripture.
- Both of the passages that make up the canonical seams call us to *meditate* — using the Hebrew word *hagah*, which means “to murmur” or “growl over,” like a lion with its prey or a dog with a bone. The idea here is to *chew* on Scripture, drawing nourishment from it the way we digest food.
- Meditation isn’t the finish line; it is only the beginning. The Scripture we reflect on is meant to be embodied — to shape who we are and what we do.
- *Lectio Divina* is a meditative practice that has surfaced throughout church history and follows these four simple steps:
 - **Read:** Notice what stands out in the text.
 - **Meditate:** Let those words settle deeply.
 - **Pray:** Respond to God from the heart.
 - **Contemplate:** Rest in God’s presence.

Discussion Questions

Now it's time for a conversation about the teaching. Pause the video for a few minutes to discuss in small groups:

- 01 Where did you feel challenged or invited as you listened?

- 02 How is a meditative reading similar or different from the way you currently read Scripture?

- 03 What are your habits for consuming information (such as news, social media, or podcasts)? How could those habits be influencing the way you approach reading Scripture?

- 04 What might God's invitation be to you as you embark on this journey?

Closing Prayer

Take a few deep breaths, become aware of God's presence, and pray this prayer slowly, leaving short silence between each line.

Father,

Let us savor your heavenly words.
Let us delight in the teachings of your love.
Let us be slow and gentle, not missing any detail.
Let us long for it more than food.
Let it nourish and sustain our souls.
Let it draw us always into you.

Amen.

Exercise

Lectio Divina

- **Like last week, begin by becoming aware of God's presence.**
 - If you can, sit in a comfortable, but upright position, where you can breathe deeply.
 - Relax your body and feel the ground beneath you.
 - Begin to take some deep, slow breaths to quiet your mind.
 - The first goal is to come to stillness; to let all the distractions fall away and to begin to open your heart to the voice of God.
- **Pray for the Spirit of Jesus to come and meet you.**
- **Choose a short passage to meditate on,** ideally a section of Scripture with natural literary flow, one-page max. We recommend you start with a Psalm or a section from the Gospels, but follow what's in your heart.
- **Follow the four movements to Lectio:**
 - **Read** (*lectio*) the passage slowly, paying close attention to what stands out to you and what you sense the Spirit is highlighting to your mind or heart.
 - **Meditate** (*meditatio*). "Chew" on it. Re-read the passages a few more times and reflect on those words or ideas.
 - **Pray** (*oratio*). Turn what you are hearing into a prayer back to God.
 - **Contemplate** (*contemplatio*). Spend a few minutes sitting in God's presence to reflect on and enjoy his love and attention.
- Let this be a slow, unhurried portion of your day. Try to give it at least 20 to 30 minutes.

Reach Exercise

Practice one small act of obedience to what you read.

- Start your day by tuning in to God’s voice and listening for his guidance from Scripture over your life.
- Then act on the guidance you receive — whether it’s a simple act of love or generosity, or reaching out for forgiveness and mending relationships. Go out and “do it.” Afterward, take time to share what stood out to you and pray together.
- Remember, whatever God places on your heart, prioritize obedience.

Keep Growing

The following resources were created to enhance your experience of this Practice, but they are entirely optional.

Read

Eat This Book by Eugene Peterson (Chapters 03-04)

Watch

This week, we're continuing the BibleProject's "How to Read the Bible" series with part two, "How to Read Biblical Narrative" (link.practicingtheway.org/scripture-2). Watch these six episodes to explore the beauty of this literary style and its unique role in the story of Scripture:

- *Plot in Biblical Narrative*
- *Character in Biblical Narrative*
- *Setting in Biblical Narrative*
- *Design Patterns in Biblical Narrative*
- *The Gospel*
- *Why Jesus Told Parables (and How You Can Understand Them)*

*Please note: these episodes are only a few minutes long, fun to watch, and very helpful in learning to read Scripture.

Listen

Rule of Life Podcast on Scripture (Episode 02)

Join John Mark as he interviews the BibleProject scholar team.

Bonus Conversation

If you would like to slow down this four-week Practice to give your community more time to sit in each week's teaching and spiritual exercise, you can pause and meet for an optional bonus conversation in the Appendix.