

Lectio Divina in a Group

Lectio Divina can be practiced in very small groups or large ones, as well as in solitude. A group of more than seven should be considered a “large group”. After a bit of experience, independent small groups can happily practice Lectio. When leading a group, you will want to take your time, so that everyone can take theirs. **Spend about 10 minutes in each of the four middle stages**, recognizing there are temptations to stay longer in the more comfortable stages and rush the challenging ones. You may increase the amount of time (particularly individual time) with later sessions. At home, participants may find that five minutes in each stage is a good start. Like physical exercise, building up stamina in spiritual exercise takes time and practice.

Choosing a short or medium-sized Scripture passage is best. Sometimes you will need to read the section in its larger context before starting lectio. Reading the text **well** and **aloud** is important in a group. Keep explaining the stages **concisely** at each session as this guides the process. A handout with a process description and space for notes is helpful. A Bible or the text is essential.

The six steps of Lectio Divina are:

Silencio (Prepare) – Be silent and still. Prepare to receive the text.

Lectio (Read) – Note words or phrases that catch my (or our) attention. Dictionaries, concordances and commentaries can be helpful.

Meditatio (Reflect) What is this text saying to me about my life or us about our shared life? Where am I (or are we) in this text? Is something addressed specifically to me (or us)?

Oratio (Respond) What do I (or we) feel? What is my (or our) response to this text? Tell God the feelings as fully and honestly as I (or we) can.

Contemplatio (Rest) Yield to the text. Resting in God’s presence, without analyzing or thinking. Resting and released, listen to God.

Incarnatio (Live it out.) What does God call me (or us) to do? An image or verse could be useful to keep in mind, so it can be returned to throughout the day.

GROUP SESSION GUIDE

1. **First Session Introductions and Explanation.** During introductions, share your name, something about yourself and a hope for Advent, then encourage everyone to do the same. Explain the Lectio Divina process. For the first session, break into small groups of three to five. For later sessions, you may have everyone work individually to practice a personal quiet time and bring them back together at the end. (10 minutes)
2. If you opt to use an Advent wreath or candle arrangement, lighting a candle would be a good way to introduce the **Silencio** stage. Keep silence for at least TWO minutes at the first session. You may increase this over time.
3. Explain **Lectio**. Read the text aloud. Instruct people to continue individually. Then have participants share a key verse or phrase, etc., within their small groups. In a first session, give equal time for individual and group process. Later on—you may wish to mix this up. (10 minutes)

4. Explain **Meditatio**. Read the text aloud. Have the groups re-read and reflect individually. During a later session, you may do this in groups or mix group and individual time. You may guide this by suggesting they place themselves in the text, i.e. the star lighting the way or other roles. (10 minutes)
5. Explain **Oratio**. In the first session, have the groups read the text aloud in their groups. You may prefer that they process individually for less time (3 minutes), and share longer as a group (7 minutes) or vice versa the first time. Adapt in ways that will support **and** stretch folks. (10 minutes)
6. Explain **Contemplatio**. Have the text read to the group by a participant who reads well aloud, by the leader again or individually (yes, aloud). Have the groups re-read and reflect individually (10 minutes). This may “go short” the first session.
7. Explain **Incarnatio**. Provide a few minutes of silence for reflection and prayer. You may invite the small groups or whole group to respond. It can be beneficial for a leader to share background, thoughts and a challenge. Conclude with united prayer. (5-10 minutes)