

Lectio Divina

Adapted from pages 59-61 of *Sacred Rhythms* by Ruth Haley Barton. Copyright (c) 2006 by Ruth Haley Barton. Used by permission of InterVarsity Press, Downers Grove, IL. www.ivpress.com

The practice of lectio divina includes a time of preparation, reading the same short passage of scripture four times, and taking that word with us into our everyday lives with a resolve to live it out in concrete ways. Each of the four readings will have a special question or thought to meditate on. This exercise will include Psalm 23 for your convenience. You can choose any other piece of scripture that you prefer. You could do this with a new scripture every day if you would like. Six to eight verses is a generally good length for lectio divina.

Prepare. Take a moment to become quiet. Let your body relax and allow yourself to become consciously aware of God's presence with you. Take a few slow, deep breaths. Invite God to speak to you through this scripture.

First reading (“lectio” = reading). Read the passage slowly, pausing between phrases and sentences. Read for the word or phrase that strikes you. It may be louder, it may resonate with you, bring tears to your eyes, make you feel resistant, energize you, or move you. This is the word that is meant for you. In this first reading, savor this word, do not analyze it or try to apply it.

Psalm 23 (NLT) 1 The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need. 2 He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams. 3 He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name. 4 Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me. 5 You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You honor me by anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings. 6 Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the Lord forever.

Write or draw your word or phrase

Second reading (“meditatio” = meditate). As you read, listen for the way in which your life is touched by this word or phrase that was meant for you. What part of your life needs to hear this word today?

Psalm 23 (NLT) 1 The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need. 2 He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams. 3 He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name. 4 Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me. 5 You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You honor me by anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings. 6 Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the Lord forever.

Third reading (“oratio” = pray). In this reading, listen for God’s invitation to you. What is God inviting you to do or be? What is your response? Write it down. Allow any prayer to flow spontaneously from your heart, both the positive and the negative.

Psalm 23 (NLT) 1 The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need. 2 He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams. 3 He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name. 4 Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me. 5 You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You honor me by anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings. 6 Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the Lord forever.

Fourth reading (“contemplatio” = contemplate). As you read a fourth time, rest in acknowledging God’s ability to bring about what he is inviting you to do or be.

Psalm 23 (NLT) 1 The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need. 2 He lets me rest in green meadows; he leads me beside peaceful streams. 3 He renews my strength. He guides me along right paths, bringing honor to his name. 4 Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me. 5 You prepare a feast for me in the presence of my enemies. You honor me by anointing my head with oil. My cup overflows with blessings. 6 Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the Lord forever.

The final step of lectio divina is resolving and planning to live it out. This is explored more in the *What Needs to Change: Becoming More Like Christ and Making Plans: Becoming More Like Christ*.

Consider creating some art or looking for an image, picture, or symbol that you can use as a constant reminder of the word or phrase that was given to you.