



An Embodied Invitation to Listen

Lectio Divina means sacred reading. It is an ancient way of meeting Scripture as a living word... received rather than mastered, encountered rather than controlled. In this practice, Scripture is not something we conquer with insight; it is a place of relationship where we are met by the Spirit already at work within us (Hebrews 4:12).

Biblically, humans are created as integrated beings... formed of body, breath, memory, desire, thought, and relationship. We do not listen with our minds alone. We listen with our whole selves. Lectio Divina honors this truth by making room for noticing: what stirs beneath the surface, what rises in the space between instinct and response, what seeks attention before it seeks explanation.

This practice is not aimed at fixing feelings or producing clarity. Its intention is awareness... meeting whatever arises with honesty and compassion, trusting that God's presence is active even when words feel sparse or meaning remains unfinished.

Lectio Divina unfolds through five movements. These are not steps to complete but invitations to enter. You may linger, return, skip, or adapt. The Spirit leads the pace.

Preparing the Body (Silencio)

Before reading, pause.

Arrange your body in a way that feels supportive rather than correct... feet grounded, back supported, hands resting where they feel at ease. Movement is welcome. Adjustments are welcome. Stillness is not a requirement.

Let your attention come to your breath... not to change it, but to notice it.

Breath Practice

- Notice the natural rhythm of inhaling and exhaling.
- Allow one slower breath in.
- As you release the breath, imagine a bit more space within your chest, shoulders, or belly.
- A simple phrase may accompany the breath if helpful:
"Here I am," or "I make room for this moment."

This breath is not a technique to achieve calm. It is a way of orienting toward presence.

If silence or inward focus feels activating, keep your eyes open, look around the room, or place your feet firmly on the ground. Care for your nervous system as part of prayer.

Choosing the Text

Select a passage that feels approachable today. A few verses are enough. Familiar or unfamiliar both work. You will return to the text several times, each reading opening a different movement of listening.

The Five Movements

1. Read (Lectio)

Read the passage slowly. Reading aloud or listening to another voice may help the body stay engaged. Let the pace match your breathing rather than urgency.

As the words move through you, notice what draws your attention—a word, phrase, image, or perhaps a bodily shift such as warmth, tension, or ease. Meaning does not need to arrive.

Invitational noticing:

- What seems to rise into awareness as the words are received?
- What draws your attention without effort?

Pause for silence or stillness in whatever form feels steady.

2. Reflect (Meditatio)

Read the passage again.

Allow the word, phrase, or image to linger. Reflection may take many forms: imagination, memory, sensation, emotion, or quiet thought. You might picture yourself inside the scene. You might repeat a phrase slowly. You might notice resistance as much as attraction.

All forms of awareness belong here.

Invitational noticing:

- What part of your life seems to lean toward this text today?
- What begins to take shape internally as you stay with what caught your attention?

There is no insight required. Reflection is simply attending.

Pause again.

3. Respond (Prayer-Oratio)

Read the passage once more.

Notice what wants expression now... longing, confusion, grief, gratitude, anger, relief, numbness, hope, questions. Response is not about offering the “right” prayer. It is about honesty in relationship.

Your response may take the form of spoken words, silence, writing, tears, posture, or breath.

Invitational noticing:

- What begins to move within you as expression takes shape?
- What desires or truths seem close to the surface in this exchange?

Nothing needs to be resolved.

4. Rest (Contemplatio)

Set the text aside.

This movement is not about emptying the mind or sustaining stillness. It is about allowing yourself to be with God without agenda. Rest may look like breathing, gazing out a

window, placing a hand over your heart, swaying, or grounding your feet.

Formation happens not only through reflection, but through being accompanied.

Invitational noticing:

- What settles or opens as you remain here without effort?
- What sense of being held, supported, or simply present becomes noticeable?

Stay as long as feels right.

5. Resolve or Carry Forward (Incarnatio)

You may return briefly to the text or remain in quiet.

Rather than asking what to do, notice how this encounter wishes to move with you into daily life... not as obligation, but as companionship.

A symbol, word, gesture, or posture may help you remember what surfaced.

Invitational noticing:

- What seems to be taking root for the hours or days ahead?
- What posture of awareness feels ready to accompany you forward?

Let this movement remain spacious and free.

Closing

Acknowledge whatever emerged... whether clarity or confusion, tenderness or resistance, fullness or absence. Nothing is wasted. The Spirit works through honesty, time, and attention.

If strong emotion or fatigue lingers, return to grounding: feel your feet, name what you see around you, take a steady breath. Care for yourself as part of prayer.

Trust that formation unfolds not through force, but through faithful presence over time.

Footnote: This framework draws from biblical theology and Christian formation, informed by insights from Barbara Holmes, Howard Thurman, Lisa Sharon Harper, Sheila Wise Rowe, Lisa Fields (Jude3 Project), Adele Calhoun, and Tim Mackie (BibleProject).