

PRAYER AS COMMUNION WITH GOD

July 15, 2021

“The highest good of human life, indeed the purpose of creation and redemption, is communion with God.” Rankin Wilbourne

“Prayer is all the ways in which we communicate and commune with God. The fundamental purpose of prayer is to deepen our intimacy with God.” Ruth Haley Barton

LECTIO DIVINA

“Blessed is the one... who meditates on God’s word day and night.” Psalm 1:1-2

Lectio Divina (Latin for “divine reading”, pronounced lex-ee-oh di-vee-nuh) is a form of contemplative Bible reading that has been used for over 1500 years in the church. It is a way of being with Scripture that fosters spiritual conversation with God, by allowing God to initiate with us and also creating space for our own response to Him. Above all, Lectio Divina is rooted in the conviction that the Scriptures are alive in the power of the Holy Spirit who seeks to spiritually transform us (Heb 4:12).

When you practice Lectio on your own, begin by choosing a brief Bible passage. It can be a part of a normal reading plan or a passage you select for the day.

To prepare, close your eyes and let your body relax, allow yourself to become aware of God’s presence. Express your willingness to hear from God in these moments by using a brief prayer such as “Come, Lord Jesus,” (Rev. 2:20) or “Speak Lord, for your servant is listening.” (1 Sam 3:10)

The Practice:

1/ Read (Lectio): Choose a short passage and begin to read it slowly, pausing between phrases and sentences. You may read silently, or you might find it helpful to read the passage out loud. As you read, listen for the word or phrase that strikes you or catches your attention. Give your attention to that word or phrase; this is the word that is meant for you. Be content to just receive it simply and openly without judging or analyzing.

2 // Reflect (Meditatio): Once you have heard that word or phrase, read the passage again and listen for the way it connects with your life. Ask, What is it in my life right now that needs to hear this word? Why might the Spirit be giving me this particular word today? Allow for silence, give space for your thoughts and reflections. You might want to write some of your thoughts down in a journal, or even draw/sketch out an artistic reflection.

3// Respond (Oratio): Read the passage one more time, listening for your response. What is my response to God based on what I have read and what He has given me? Share with God what feelings

the text has provoked, whether it is love, joy, sorrow, anger, repentance, conviction. Pour out your heart in honesty to God as the text has touched on something in your life. Again, you might find it helpful to write your prayers in a journal. Or, you might move through the A-C-T-S prayer method. Is there something to adore, confess, thank or ask for?

4 // Rest (Contemplatio) : Rest in the Word of God. Read the text one more time. You have given your response to God, now just wait and rest in God's presence. Let Him do what He wants to do.

SILENT PRAYER

"For God alone my soul waits in silence; from him comes my salvation." Psalm 62:1

At the core of silence before God is committing to relate to God as a Father and friend rather than relating to him based on our petitions and demands. Of course there is time to make requests and petitions, but silent prayer is the practice of focusing our attention on God through simply being in and surrendering to God's presence. The object of silent prayer is communion with God. This kind of prayer is more about knowing God experientially rather than just knowing a lot about God intellectually.

The Practice:

1// Settle yourself in God's presence. Communicate your surrender to him and your desire to simply be in his presence and receive his love. You could say something like, "Here I am, Lord," or "Be still, and know that I am God."

2// You might choose a word or phrase from Scripture as an anchor point that you can return to when you find your mind wandering.

3// When you realize you are distracted, don't beat up on yourself, just notice it without any judgement, just gently return to the word or phrase.

4// It often helps to set a timer, so you are not distracted by looking at your watch or how long it's been.

BREATH PRAYER

“Pray without ceasing.” 1 Thessalonians 5:17

Breath prayer reminds us that just as we breath in and out for ongoing survival, so we need to constantly live in the awareness of our need for God and dependence on his mercy. Breath prayer or “prayer of the heart” has been practiced for 1000 years as a way to “pray without ceasing.”

Breath Prayers are grounded in Scripture. Reminding us of the truth of God’s love for us, truth that we don’t just know in our minds but feel in our bodies. The most famous breath prayer is the Jesus prayer: “Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on me.” (a combination of Luke 18:39 and 18:13).

The Practice:

1// Settle yourself in God’s presence. Breath deeply and relax your body.

2// Chose a breath prayer to pray, like one of the following:

- Breath in, “Lord Jesus Christ,” breath out “have mercy on me.”
- Breath in “Father God,” breath out, “I belong to you.”
- Breath in “Be still,” breath out, “and know that I am God.”
- Or make up your own breath prayer.

3// You might practice your breath prayer for a set period of time, or it might simply become a way you commune with God throughout the day.

ONE MINUTE PAUSE

“Lord Jesus, I give everything and everyone to you.”

“I give myself for union with you, Lord.”

“Fill me Spirit with more of you.”

LITURGIES OF THE MOMENT

“Hear the praise of this grateful heart.”

“Hold [name] in your perfect prayer Jesus, hold [them] in the Father’s love.”

“Lord, help!”