**Got Questions**

**Question: "What is Lectio Divina?"**

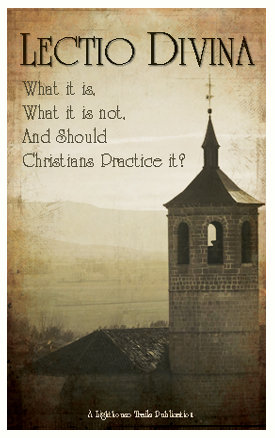
[**https://www.gotquestions.org/lectio-divina.html**](https://www.gotquestions.org/lectio-divina.html) **Answer:***Lectio Divina* is Latin for "divine reading," "spiritual reading," or "holy reading" and represents a method of prayer and scriptural reading intended to promote communion with God and provide special spiritual insights. The principles of lectio divina were expressed around the year 220 and later practiced by Catholic monks, especially the monastic rules of Sts. Pachomius, Augustine, Basil, and Benedict.  
  
The practice of lectio divina is currently very popular among Catholics and Gnostics, and is gaining acceptance as an integral part of the devotional practices of the Emerging Church. Pope Benedict XVI said in a 2005 speech, “I would like in particular to recall and recommend the ancient tradition of lectio divina: the diligent reading of Sacred Scripture accompanied by prayer brings about that intimate dialogue in which the person reading hears God who is speaking, and in praying, responds to him with trusting openness of heart.” Lectio is also said to be adaptable for people of other faiths in reading their scripture—whether that be the Bhagavad Gita, the Torah, or the Koran. Non-Christians may simply make suitable modifications of the method to accommodate secular traditions. Further, the four principles of lectio divina can also be adapted to the four Jungian psychological principles of sensing, thinking, intuiting, and feeling.  
  
The actual practice of lectio divina begins with a time of relaxation, making oneself comfortable and clearing the mind of mundane thoughts and cares. Some lectio practitioners find it helpful to concentrate by beginning with deep, cleansing breaths and repeating a chosen phrase or word several times to help free the mind. Then they follow four steps:  
  
Lectio - Reading the Bible passage gently and slowly several times. The passage itself is not as important as the savoring of each portion of the reading, constantly listening for the "still, small voice" of a word or phrase that somehow speaks to the practitioner.  
  
Meditatio - Reflecting on the text of the passage and thinking about how it applies to one's own life. This is considered to be a very personal reading of the Scripture and very personal application.  
  
Oratio – Responding to the passage by opening the heart to God. This is not primarily an intellectual exercise, but is thought to be more of the beginning of a conversation with God.  
  
Contemplatio - Listening to God. This is a freeing of oneself from one's own thoughts, both mundane and holy, and hearing God talk to us. Opening the mind, heart, and soul to the influence of God.  
  
Naturally, the connection between Bible reading and prayer is one to be encouraged; they should always go together. However, the dangers inherent in this kind of practice, and its astonishing similarity to transcendental meditation and other dangerous rituals, should be carefully considered. It has the potential to become a pursuit of mystical experience where the goal is to free the mind and empower oneself. The Christian should use the Scriptures to pursue the knowledge of God, wisdom, and holiness through the objective meaning of the text with the aim of transforming the mind according to truth. God said His people are destroyed for lack of knowledge ([Hosea 4:6](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Hos%204.6)), not for lack of mystical, personal encounters with Him.  
  
Those who take a supernatural approach to the text tend to disconnect it from its context and natural meaning and use it in a subjective, individualistic, experiential way for which it was never intended. Here is where lectio and Gnosticism share a similarity. Christian Gnosticism is the belief that one must have a "*gnosis*" (from Greek *Gnosko*, "to know") or mystical, inner knowledge obtained only after one has been properly initiated. Only a few can possess this mystical knowledge. Naturally, the idea of having special knowledge is very appealing and makes the “knower” feel important and unique in that he/she has a special experience with God that no one else has. The “knower” believes that the masses are not in possession of spiritual knowledge and only the truly “enlightened” can experience God. Thus, the reintroduction of contemplative, or centering, prayer—a meditative practice that focuses on having a mystical experience with God—into the Church. Contemplative prayer is similar to the meditative exercises used in Eastern religions and New Age cults and has no basis whatsoever in the Bible, although the contemplative pray-ers do use the Bible as a starting point.  
  
Further, the dangers inherent in opening our minds and listening for voices should be obvious. The contemplative pray-ers are so eager to hear something—anything—that they can lose the objectivity needed to discern between God’s voice, their own thoughts, and the infiltration of demons into their minds. Satan and his minions are always eager for inroads into the minds of the unsuspecting, and to open our minds in such ways is to invite disaster. We must never forget that Satan is ever on the prowl, seeking to devour our souls ([1 Peter 5:8](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Pet%205.8)) and can appear as an angel of light ([2 Corinthians 11:14](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Cor%2011.14)), whispering his deception into our open and willing minds.  
  
Finally, the attack on the sufficiency of Scripture is a clear distinctive of lectio divina. Where the Bible claims to be all we need to live the Christian life ([2 Timothy 3:16](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Tim%203.16)), lectio’s adherents deny that. Those who practice “conversational” prayers, seeking a special revelation from God, are asking Him to bypass what He has already revealed to mankind, as though He would now renege on all His promises concerning His eternal Word. [Psalm 19:7-14](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Ps%2019.7-14) contains the definitive statement about the sufficiency of Scripture. It is “perfect, reviving the soul”; it is “right, rejoicing the heart”; it is “pure, enlightening the eyes”; it is “true” and “righteous altogether”; and it is “more desirable than gold.” If God meant all that He said in this psalm, there is no need for additional revelation, and to ask Him for one is to deny what He has already revealed.  
  
The Old and New Testaments are words from God to be studied, meditated upon, prayed over, and memorized for the knowledge and objective meaning they contain and the authority from God they carry, and not for the mystical experience or feeling of personal power and inner peace they may stimulate. Sound knowledge comes first; then the lasting kind of experience and peace comes as a byproduct of knowing and communing with God rightly. As long as a person takes this view of the Bible and prayer, he/she is engaging in the same kind of meditation and prayer that Bible-believing followers of Christ have always commended.  
  
**Recommended Resource:**[The Truth War: Fighting for Certainty in an Age of Deception by John MacArthur](https://www.christianbook.com/Christian/Books/product?event=AFF&p=1011693&item_no=262636)



**Related Topics:**[**What is your view of liberal Christian theology?**](https://www.gotquestions.org/liberal-Christian-theology.html)[**What is the G12 vision / movement?**](https://www.gotquestions.org/g12-vision.html)[**What is the emerging / emergent church movement?**](https://www.gotquestions.org/emerging-church-emergent.html)[**What is neo-orthodoxy?**](https://www.gotquestions.org/neoorthodoxy.html)[**What is contemplative prayer?**](https://www.gotquestions.org/contemplative-prayer.html)

From Lighthouse Trails Research <http://www.lighthousetrailsresearch.com/blog/?p=10887>

*LECTIO DIVINA-What it is, What it is not, and Should Christians Practice it*? written by the editors at Lighthouse Trails is one of the new Lighthouse Trails Print Booklet Tracts and is an easy to understand explanation of the practice of lectio divina, a practice that is becoming increasing popular in evangelical/Protestant circles today. The booklet is 16 pages long and sells for $1.95 for single copies. Quantity discounts are as much as 50% off retail. This is a great way to tell others about lectio divina and answer the question, should Christians practice it. Below is the content of the booklet. To order copies of*LECTIO DIVINA-What it is, What it is not, and Should Christians Practice it?,* [**click here.**](https://www.lighthousetrails.com/home/932-booklet-tract-lectio-divina-what-is-it-what-it-is-not-and-should-christians-practice-it.html) There are also two bonus sections in the booklet: 1) “Some places you will find lectio divina “(listing over 30 Christian authors who are promoting lectio divina); 2) Is There Really a Different Way of Reading the Word of God? (see this section below)

**[](https://www.lighthousetrails.com/home/932-booklet-tract-lectio-divina-what-is-it-what-it-is-not-and-should-christians-practice-it.html)New Lighthouse Trails Booklet Tract: “LECTIO DIVINA-What it is, What it is not, and Should Christians Practice it?”**

LECTIO DIVINA—There’s a lot of talk about it today; umpteen books are published and more are on the way about lectio divina; and an increasing number of evangelical/Protestant figures are writing about it, endorsing it, and teaching it. Some people think lectio divina simply means to read a passage of Scripture slowly (or “praying the Scriptures”) then ponder or think on that Scripture. That can be a part of it. But if you ask mystics or contemplatives what it really entails (And who would know better than they?), they will tell you that lectio divina (pronounced lex-ee-o di-veen-a) always includes taking a passage of Scripture (or other writings), reading it slowly, and repeating it as you work your way down to where you have just a word or small phrase from the passage that you are “meditating” on (repeating over and over). Basically, you are coming up with a mantra-like word or phrase that has been extracted from a passage of Scripture, which, according to contemplatives, if repeated for several minutes, will help you get rid of thoughts and distractions, so then, they say, you can hear the voice of God and feel His presence (going into the silence).

There are said to be four steps in lectio divina. These four steps are:

**Reading (lectio)—**Slowly begin reading a biblical passage as if it were a long awaited love letter addressed to you. Approach it reverentially and expectantly, in a way that savors each word and phrase. Read the passage until you hear a word or phrase that touches you, resonates, attracts, or even disturbs you.

**Reflecting (meditatio)—**Ponder this word or phrase for a few minutes. Let it sink in slowly and deeply until you are resting in it. Listen for what the word or phrase is saying to you at this moment in your life, what it may be offering to you, what it may be demanding of you.

**Expressing (oratio)**—If you are a praying person, when you are ready, openly and honestly express to God the prayers that arise spontaneously within you from your experience of this word or phrase. These may be prayers of thanksgiving, petition, intercession, lament, or praise. If prayer is not part of your journey you could write down the thoughts that have come your way.

**Resting (contemplatio)**—Allow yourself to simply rest silently for a time in the stillness of your heart remaining open to the quiet fullness of God’s love and peace. This is like the silence of communion between the mother holding her sleeping infant child or between lovers whose communication with each other passes beyond words.1

Catholic priest and contemplative mysticism pioneer Thomas Keating explains what lectio divina is not in an article he has written titled “The Classical Monastic Practice of Lectio Divina.” He explains that lectio divina is not traditional Bible study, not reading the Scriptures for understanding and edification, and not praying the Scriptures (though praying the Scriptures can be a form of lectio divina when a word or phrase is taken from the Scriptures to focus on for the purpose of going into “God’s presence”).2 Keating says that lectio divina is an introduction into the more intense practices—contemplative prayer and centering prayer.

While some people think lectio divina is just reading Scripture slowly (and what’s wrong with that), it is the focusing on and repeating a word or small phrase to facilitate going into the “silence” that is the real danger. There is certainly nothing wrong with reading Scripture carefully and thoughtfully. Thoughtfully, we say. In eastern-style meditation (and in contemplative prayer) thoughts are the enemy. Eastern-style mystic Anthony De Mello describes this problem with thoughts in his book Sadhana: A Way to God:

To silence the mind is an extremely difficult task. How hard it is to keep the mind from thinking, thinking, thinking, forever thinking, forever producing thoughts in a never ending stream. Our Hindu masters in India have a saying: one thorn is removed by another. By this they mean that you will be wise to use one thought to rid yourself of all the other thoughts that crowd into your mind. One thought, one image, one phrase or sentence or word that your mind can be made to fasten on.3

Spiritual director Jan Johnson in her book, *When the Soul Listens: Finding Rest and Direction in Contemplative Prayer* also believes that thoughts get in the way, and the mind must be stilled:

Contemplative prayer, in its simplest form, is a prayer in which you still your thoughts and emotions and focus on God Himself. This puts you in a better state to be aware of God’s presence, and it makes you better able to hear God’s voice, correcting, guiding, and directing you.4

Mark Yaconelli, author of *Contemplative Youth Ministry: Practicing the Presence of Jesus*, has this to say about lectio divina. Keep in mind that Yaconelli’s materials are used in evangelical/Protestant settings (e.g., colleges, seminaries, youth groups):

In order to practice lectio divina, select a time and place that is peaceful and in which you may be alert and prayer fully attentive. Dispose yourself for prayer in whatever way is natural for you. This may be a spoken prayer to God to open you more fully to the Spirit, a gentle relaxation process that focuses on breathing, singing or chanting, or simply a few minutes of silence to empty yourself of thoughts, images, and emotions.5

Research analyst Ray Yungen explains this silence that contemplative mystics seek:

When [Richard] Foster speaks of the silence, he does not mean external silence. In his book, *Prayer: Finding the Heart’s True Home*, Foster recommends the practice of breath prayer6—picking a single word or short phrase and repeating it in conjunction with the breath. This is classic contemplative mysticism. . . . In *Prayer: Finding the Heart’s True Home*, [Foster] ties in a quote by one mystic who advised, “You must bind the mind with one thought”7 . . . I once related Foster’s breath prayer method to a former New Age devotee who is now a Christian. She affirmed this connection when she remarked with astonishment, “That’s what I did when I was into ashtanga yoga!”8

With lectio divina, the word or phrase one repeats eventually can lose its meaning, and this repetitive sound can start to put the practitioner into an altered mind state. Yungen tells us that:

Keeping the mind riveted on only one thought is unnatural and adverse to true reflection and prayer. Simple logic tells us the repeating of words has no rational value. For instance, if someone called you on the phone and just said your name or one phrase over and over, would that be something you found edifying? Of course not; you would hang up on him or her. Why would God feel otherwise? And if God’s presence is lacking, what is this presence that appears as light during meditation and infuses a counterfeit sense of divinity within?9

Yungen exhorts believers that: “the goal of prayer should not be to bind the mind with a word or phrase in order to induce a mystical trance but rather to use the mind to glory in the grace of God. This was the apostle Paul’s counsel to the various churches: ‘Study to shew thyself approved’ (2 Tim. 2:15) and ‘we pray always’ (2 Thessalonians 1:11) as in talking to God with both heart and mind.”10

In order to help those you care about stay clear of contemplative spirituality and spiritual deception, it is important for you to understand how lectio divina plays a significant role in leading people toward full blown meditative practices. And we propose that this “presence” that is reached during the “silent” altered states of consciousness from saying a word or phrase over and over (or focusing on the breath or an object) is not God’s presence. God has instructed us in the Bible not to perform “special kinds of process[es]” or “formula[s],”11 as Thomas Keating calls lectio divina, to induce mystical experiences (see Deuteronomy 18:9-11); thus, we believe ample warning about lectio divina is warranted.

In conclusion, lectio divina is a bridge to eastern-style meditation. If indeed, this is true, then it will lead Christians away from the message of the Cross and the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and thus Christians should not practice lectio divina. Do you know where practices such as lectio divina took Thomas Keating in his spirituality? When you read the statement by him below, you can see the answer to this:

We should not hesitate to take the fruit of the age-old wisdom of the East and “capture” it for Christ. Indeed, those of us who are in ministry should make the necessary effort to acquaint ourselves with as many of these Eastern techniques as possible.

Many Christians who take their prayer life seriously have been greatly helped by Yoga, Zen, TM and similar practices, especially where they have been initiated by reliable teachers and have a solidly developed Christian faith to find inner form and meaning to the resulting experiences.12

**Notes:**  
1. Taken from: http://www.lighthousetrailsresearch.com/lectiodivina.htm.  
2. Thomas Keating, “The Classical Monastic Practice of Lectio Divina”  (http://web.archive.org/web/20120201174238/http://www.crossroadshikers.org/LectioDevina.htm).  
3. Anthony de Mello, *Sadhana: A Way to God* (St. Louis, the Institute of Jesuit Resources, 1978), p. 28.  
4. Jan Johnson, *When the Soul Listens* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 1999), p. 16.  
5. Mark Yaconelli, http://web.archive.org/web/20080724110254/http://www.ymsp.org/resources/practices/lectio\_divina.html.  
6. Richard Foster, *Prayer: Finding the Heart’s True Home* (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1992), p. 122.  
7. Ibid., p. 124.  
8. Ray Yungen, *A Time of Departing* (Eureka, MT: Lighthouse Trails Publishing, 2006), p. 75.  
9. Ibid., p. 76.  
10. Ibid., p. 75.  
11. Keating, “The Classical Monastic Practice of Lectio Divina,” op. cit.  
12. M. Basil Pennington, Thomas Keating, Thomas E. Clarke,*Finding Grace at the Center* (Petersham, MA: St. Bede’s Pub., 1978), pp. 5-6.  
**To order copies of*LECTIO DIVINA-What it is, What it is not, and Should Christians Practice it?,* click here.**

**BONUS SECTION**

**Q & A**  
**IS THERE REALLY A DIFFERENT WAY OF READING THE WORD OF GOD?**

**QUESTION:** I live in South Africa and even here, the Dutch Reformed church is doing the contemplative route. Some writers have even written some books on the subject in which they actually encourage their members to explore that route! I put an enquiry to one of the blokes on this subject and he explained as follows:

In the years after Christ ascended to heaven, there were actually two ways of reading the Bible . . .

*Lectio Divina*

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina>

|  |
| --- |
| Lectio Divina.svg  The four movements of ***Lectio Divina***. Clockwise from top left: *Lectio* ("read"); *Meditatio* ("meditate"); *Oratio* ("pray"); *Contemplatio* ("contemplate"). |
| Part of [a series](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Christian_mysticism) on |
| [**Christian mysticism**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_mysticism) |
| **Theology · Philosophy**[[show]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina) |
| **Practices**[[hide]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina)   * [Asceticism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Asceticism) * [Contemplation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_contemplation) * [Hesychasm](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hesychasm) * ***Lectio Divina*** * [Meditation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_meditation) * [Monasticism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_monasticism) * [Quietism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Quietism_(Christian_philosophy)) |
| **People**(by era or century)[[show]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina) |
| **Literature · Media**[[show]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina) |
| * [v](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Template:Christian_mysticism) * [t](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Template_talk:Christian_mysticism) * [e](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Template:Christian_mysticism&action=edit) |

In [Christianity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christianity), ***Lectio Divina*** ([Latin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin_language) for "Divine Reading") is a traditional [Benedictine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Order_of_Saint_Benedict) practice of scriptural reading, meditation and prayer intended to promote communion with God and to increase the knowledge of [God's Word](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logos_(Christianity)).[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-ThompsonHoward2005-1) It does not treat Scripture as texts to be studied, but as the [Living Word](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logos_(Christianity)).[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-Benner47-2)

Traditionally, *Lectio Divina* has four separate steps: read; meditate; pray; contemplate. First a passage of Scripture is read, then its meaning is reflected upon. This is followed by prayer and contemplation on the Word of God.[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-Keith38-3)

The focus of *Lectio Divina* is not a theological analysis of biblical passages but viewing them with [Christ](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christ) as the key to their meaning. For example, given Jesus' statement in [John 14:27](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Bible_(American_Standard)/John#14:27): "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you", an analytical approach would focus on the reason for the statement during the [Last Supper](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Last_Supper), the biblical context, etc. In *Lectio Divina*, however, the practitioner "enters" and shares the peace of Christ rather than "dissecting" it.[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-Foster24-4) In some Christian teachings, this form of meditative prayer leads to an increased [knowledge of Christ](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knowledge_of_Christ).[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-ReferenceA-5)[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-Perfection.27_page_145-6)

The roots of Scriptural reflection and interpretation go back to [Origen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Origen) in the 3rd century, after whom [St. Ambrose](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._Ambrose) taught them to [St. Augustine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._Augustine).[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-BendictMay2007-7)[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-FatherBenedict-8) The monastic practice of *Lectio Divina* was first established in the 6th century by [Saint Benedict](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Benedict) and was then formalized as a four-step process by the [Carthusian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carthusian) monk [Guigo II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guigo_II" \o "Guigo II) during the 12th century.[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-Keith38-3) In the 20th century, the constitution [*Dei verbum*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dei_verbum) of the [Second Vatican Council](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Vatican_Council) recommended *Lectio Divina* to the general public and its importance was affirmed by Pope [Benedict XVI](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benedict_XVI) at the start of the 21st century.[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-spring-9)

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History and development[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Lectio_Divina&action=edit&section=1" \o "Edit section: History and development)]

**Early beginnings**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Lectio_Divina&action=edit&section=2" \o "Edit section: Early beginnings)]

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Origen.jpg)

[Origen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Origen) considered the focus on [Christ](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christ) the key to interpreting Scripture.[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-Raymond26-10)

Before the emergence of the [Western](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_Christianity) [monastic communities](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_monasticism), a key contribution to the foundation of *Lectio Divina* came from [Origen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Origen) in the 3rd century, with his view of "Scripture as a sacrament".[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-Raymond26-10) In a letter to [Gregory of Neocaesarea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gregory_Thaumaturgus) Origen wrote: "[W]hen you devote yourself to the divine reading ... seek the meaning of divine words which is hidden from most people".[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-Raymond26-10)

Origen believed that [The Word](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logos_(Christianity)) (i.e. *Logos*) was incarnate in Scripture and could therefore touch and teach readers and hearers. Origen taught that the reading of Scripture could help move beyond elementary thoughts and discover the higher wisdom hidden in the "Word of God".[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-Raymond26-10)

In Origen's approach the major interpretive element of Scripture is [Christ](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christ). In his view all Scriptural texts are secondary to Christ and are only revelations in as much as they refer to Christ as [The Word of God](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logos_(Christianity)).[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-Raymond26-10) In this view, using Christ as the "interpretive key" unlocks the message in Scriptural texts.[[10]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-Raymond26-10)

The "primordial role" of Origen in interpreting Scripture was acknowledged by Pope [Benedict XVI](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Benedict_XVI).[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-BendictMay2007-7)[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-FatherBenedict-8)Origen's methods were then learned by [Ambrose of Milan](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ambrose_of_Milan), who towards the end of the 4th century taught them to [Saint Augustine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Augustine), thereby introducing them into the monastic traditions of the [Western Church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Western_Christianity) thereafter.[[7]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-BendictMay2007-7)[[8]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-FatherBenedict-8)

In the 4th century, as the [Desert Fathers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Desert_Fathers) began to seek God in the deserts of Palestine and Egypt, they produced early models of [Christian monastic life](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_monasticism) that persisted in the Eastern Church.[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-Cunningham88-11)[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-global31-12) These early communities gave rise to the tradition of a Christian life of "constant prayer" in a monastic setting.[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-global31-12)

Although the desert monks gathered to hear scripture recited in public, and would then recite those words privately in their cells, this was not the same practice as what later became *Lectio Divina* since it involved no meditative step.[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-Cunningham88-11)[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-global31-12)

**6th- to 12th-century monasticism**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Lectio_Divina&action=edit&section=3" \o "Edit section: 6th- to 12th-century monasticism)]

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Heiligenkreuz.St._Benedict.jpg)

[St. Benedict](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Benedict)

After Origen, [Church Fathers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_Fathers) such as [St. Ambrose](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._Ambrose), [St. Augustine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._Augustine), and St. [Hilary of Poitiers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hilary_of_Poitiers) used the terms *Lectio Divina* and [*Lectio Sacra*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Sacra) to refer to the reading of Scripture.[[13]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-13)

According to [Jean Leclercq, OSB](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jean_Leclercq,_OSB), the founders of the medieval tradition of *Lectio Divina* were [Saint Benedict](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Benedict) and [Pope Gregory I](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Gregory_I). However, the methods that they employed had precedents in the biblical period both in Hebrew and Greek. A text that combines these traditions is [Romans 10:8–10](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Bible_(American_Standard)/Romans#10:8) where [Apostle Paul](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apostle_Paul) refers to the presence of God's word in the believer's "mouth or heart". It was the recitation of the biblical text that provided the rationale for *Lectio Divina*.[[14]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-14)

With the motto [*Ora et labora*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ora_et_labora) ("Pray and work"), daily life in a Benedictine monastery consisted of three elements: liturgical prayer, manual labor and *Lectio Divina*, a quiet prayerful reading of the Bible.[[15]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-15) This slow and thoughtful reading of [Scripture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scripture), and the ensuing pondering of its meaning, was their [meditation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_meditation). This [spiritual practice](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spiritual_practice) is called "divine reading" or "spiritual reading" – i.e. *lectio divina*.

Benedict wrote:[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina" \l "cite_note-Linman32-16)

Idleness is the enemy of the soul. Therefore the brethren should have specified periods of manual labor as well as for prayerful reading [*lectio divina*]."

The [Rule of Saint Benedict](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rule_of_Saint_Benedict) (chapter #48) stipulated specific times and manners for *Lectio Divina*. The entire community in a monastery was to take part in the readings during Sunday, except those who had other tasks to perform.[[17]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-Egan38-17)

Early in the 12th century, Saint [Bernard of Clairvaux](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernard_of_Clairvaux) was instrumental in re-emphasizing the importance of *Lectio Divina* within the [Cistercian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cistercian) order. Bernard considered *Lectio Divina* and contemplation guided by the Holy Spirit the keys to nourishing Christian spirituality.[[18]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-Egan91-18)

**Formalization during the late 12th century**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Lectio_Divina&action=edit&section=4" \o "Edit section: Formalization during the late 12th century)]

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Chapelle_Saint_Bruno.JPG)

A chapel at [Grande Chartreuse](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grande_Chartreuse) where *Ladder of the Monk* was written by [Guigo II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guigo_II" \o "Guigo II)

Seek in *reading* and you will find in *meditation*; knock in *prayer* and it will be opened to you in *contemplation* — The four stages of *Lectio Divina* as taught by [John of the Cross](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_of_the_Cross).[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-Cunningham88-11)

The progression from Bible reading, to meditation, to prayer, to loving regard for God, was first formally described by [Guigo II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guigo_II" \o "Guigo II), a [Carthusian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carthusian) monk and prior of [Grande Chartreuse](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grande_Chartreuse) who died late in the 12th century.[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-Keith38-3)The Carthusian order follows its own Rule, called the Statutes, rather than the Rule of St Benedict.[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-Keith38-3)

Guigo II's book *The Ladder of Monks* is subtitled "a letter on the contemplative life" and is considered the first description of methodical prayer in the western mystical tradition.[[19]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-19) In Guigo's four stages one first reads, which leads to think about (i.e. [meditate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_meditation) on) the significance of the text; that process in turn leads the person to respond in prayer as the third stage. The fourth stage is when the prayer, in turn, points to the gift of quiet stillness in the presence of God, called [contemplation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Contemplation).[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-Keith38-3)[[20]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-The_Oblate_Life.27_page_109-20)

Guigo named the four steps of this "ladder" of prayer with the [Latin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Latin) terms *lectio*, *meditatio*, *oratio*, and *contemplatio*.[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-Keith38-3) In the 13th century the [Carmelite Rule of St. Albert](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carmelite_Rule_of_St._Albert) prescribed to Carmelites the daily prayerful pondering on the Word of God, namely to ruminate day and night the Divine Law. *Lectio Divina* alongside the daily celebration of liturgy is to this day the pillar of prayer in Carmel.

*Lectio Divina* was practiced by St. Dominic de Guzman, founder of the Dominican Order.[[21]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-21)

In the 14th century, [Gerard of Zutphen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gerard_of_Zutphen) built on "Guigo's Ladder" to write his major work *On Spiritual Ascents*.[[22]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-McGrath84-22) Zutphen warned against considered meditation without reading of scripture, and taught that the reading prepares the mind, so meditation will not fall into error. Similarly, he taught that meditation prepares the mind for contemplation.[[22]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-McGrath84-22)

**16th century**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Lectio_Divina&action=edit&section=5" \o "Edit section: 16th century)]

By the beginning of the 16th century, the methods of "methodical prayer" had reached Spain and St. [John of the Cross](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_of_the_Cross) taught the four stages of [Guigo II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guigo_II" \o "Guigo II) to his monks.[[11]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-Cunningham88-11) During the century, [Protestant Reformers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Protestant_Reformers) such as [John Calvin](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_Calvin) continued to advocate the *Lectio Divina*.[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-ThompsonHoward2005-1) A [Reformed](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reformed_churches) version of the *Lectio Divina* was also popular among the [Puritans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Puritan): [Richard Baxter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Baxter), a Puritan theologian, championed the practice.[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-ThompsonHoward2005-1)

**20th- and 21st-century revival**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Lectio_Divina&action=edit&section=6" \o "Edit section: 20th- and 21st-century revival)]

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Paulaudenece1977.jpg)

Pope [Paul VI](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_VI), who issued the constitution [*Dei verbum*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dei_verbum).

By the middle of 19th century, the [historical critical](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Historical_criticism) approach to biblical analysis which had started over a century earlier, and focused on determining the historicity of gospel episodes, had taken away some of the emphasis on spreading *Lectio Divina* outside monastic communities.[[23]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-ReadLive-23) However, the early part of the 20th century witnessed a revival in the practice, and books and articles on *Lectio Divina* aimed at the general public began to appear by the middle of the century.[[23]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-ReadLive-23)

In 1965, one of the principal documents of the [Second Vatican Council](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Second_Vatican_Council), the dogmatic constitution [*Dei verbum*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dei_verbum) ("Word of God") emphasized the use of *Lectio Divina*. On the 40th anniversary of *Dei verbum* in 2005, [Pope Benedict XVI](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_Benedict_XVI) reaffirmed its importance and stated:[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina" \l "cite_note-spring-9)

I would like in particular to recall and recommend the ancient tradition of *Lectio Divina*: the diligent reading of Sacred Scripture accompanied by prayer brings about that intimate dialogue in which the person reading hears God who is speaking, and in praying, responds to him with trusting openness of heart [cf. [*Dei verbum*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dei_verbum), n. 25]. If it is effectively promoted, this practice will bring to the Church – I am convinced of it – a new spiritual springtime.

In his November 6, 2005 [Angelus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Angelus) address, Benedict XVI emphasized the role of the [Holy Spirit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Spirit_(Christianity)) in *Lectio Divina*:[[24]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-24) In his annual Lenten addresses to the priests of the Diocese of Rome, Pope Benedict – mainly after the 2008 Synod of Bishops on the Bible – emphasized *Lectio Divina*'s importance, as in 2012, when he used Ephesians 4: 1–16 on a speech about certain problems facing the Church. Beforehand, he and [Pope John Paul II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pope_John_Paul_II) had used a question-and-answer format.[[25]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-25)

One condition for *Lectio Divina* is that the mind and heart be illumined by the Holy Spirit, that is, by the same Spirit who inspired the Scriptures, and that they be approached with an attitude of "reverential hearing".

Since the latter part of the 20th century, the popularity of *Lectio Divina* has increased outside monastic circles and many lay Catholics, as well as some Protestants, practice it, at times keeping a "Lectio journal" in which they record their thoughts and contemplations after each session.[[26]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-26) The importance of *Lectio Divina* is stressed in the [Anglican Communion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglican_Communion) as well.[[27]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-WilhoitHoward2012-27)

The four movements of *Lectio Divina*[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Lectio_Divina&action=edit&section=7" \o "Edit section: The four movements of Lectio Divina)]

Historically, *Lectio Divina* has been a "community practice" performed by monks in monasteries. Although it can be taken up individually, its community element should not be forgotten.[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-Linman32-16)

*Lectio Divina* has been likened to "feasting on the Word": first, the taking of a bite (*lectio*); then chewing on it (*meditatio*); savoring its essence (*oratio*) and, finally, "digesting" it and making it a part of the body (*contemplatio*).[[20]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-The_Oblate_Life.27_page_109-20) In Christian teachings, this form of meditative prayer leads to an increased [knowledge of Christ](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knowledge_of_Christ).[[5]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-ReferenceA-5)[[6]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-Perfection.27_page_145-6)

Unlike meditative practices in [Eastern Christianity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Christianity) – for instance, [hesychasm](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hesychasm" \o "Hesychasm), where the [Jesus Prayer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus_Prayer) is repeated many times – *Lectio Divina* uses different Scripture passages at different times. Although a passage may be repeated a few times, *Lectio Divina* is not essentially repetitive in nature.[[12]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-global31-12)[[28]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-28)

***Lectio* ("read")**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Lectio_Divina&action=edit&section=8" \o "Edit section: Lectio (\"read\"))]

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:D%C3%BCrer,_Albrecht_-_Hand_Study_with_Bible_-_1506.jpg)

Hands on the Bible, [Albrecht Dürer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Albrecht_D%C3%BCrer), 16th century.

these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God

*—*[*1 Corinthians 2:9–10*](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Bible_(American_Standard)/1_Corinthians#2:9)*.*[[29]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-Urs27-29)

The first step is the reading of Scripture. In order to achieve a calm and tranquil state of mind, preparation before *Lectio Divina* is recommended.[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-Benner47-2) The biblical reference for preparation via stillness is [Psalm 46:10](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Bible_(American_Standard)/Psalms#46): "Be still, and know that I am God."[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-Benner47-2) An example would be sitting quietly and in silence and reciting a prayer inviting the [Holy Spirit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Spirit) to guide the reading of the Scripture that is to follow.[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-Linman32-16)

The biblical basis for the preparation goes back to [1 Corinthians 2:9–10](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Bible_(American_Standard)/1_Corinthians#2:9) which emphasizes the role of the Holy Spirit in revealing the Word of God.[[29]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-Urs27-29) As in the statement by [John the Baptist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_the_Baptist) in [John 1:26](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Bible_(American_Standard)/John#1:26) that "Christ stands in the midst of those who seek him", the preparatory step should open the mind to finding Christ in the passage being read.[[30]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-30)

Following the preparation the first movement of *Lectio Divina* is slow and gradual reading of the scriptural passage, perhaps several times.[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-Benner47-2) The biblical basis for the reading goes back to [Romans 10:8–10](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Bible_(American_Standard)/Romans#10:8) and the presence of God's word in the believer's "mouth or heart".

The attentive reading begins the process through which a higher level of understanding can be achieved.[[16]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-Linman32-16) In the traditional [Benedictine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Order_of_Saint_Benedict) approach the passage is slowly read four times, each time with a slightly different focus.[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-Benner47-2)

***Meditatio* ("meditate")**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Lectio_Divina&action=edit&section=9" \o "Edit section: Meditatio (\"meditate\"))]

Although *Lectio Divina* involves reading, it is less a practice of reading than one of listening to the inner message of the Scripture delivered through the [Holy Spirit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Spirit_(Christianity)).[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-Benner47-2) *Lectio Divina* does not seek information or motivation, but communion with God. It does not treat Scripture as text to be studied, but as the "[Living Word](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logos_(Christianity))".[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-Benner47-2)

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:OCD_Zelle.jpg)

A [Carmelite nun](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Discalced_Carmelites) in her cell, meditating on the Bible.

The second movement in *Lectio Divina* thus involves meditating upon and pondering on the scriptural passage. When the passage is read, it is generally advised not to try to assign a meaning to it at first, but to wait for the action of the Holy Spirit to illuminate the mind, as the passage is pondered upon.[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-Benner47-2)

The English word ponder comes from the Latin *pondus* which relates to the mental activity of weighing or considering. To ponder on the passage that has been read, it is held lightly and gently considered from various angles. Again, the emphasis is not on analysis of the passage but to keep the mind open and allow the Holy Spirit to inspire a meaning for it.[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-Benner47-2)

An example passage may be the statement by Jesus during the [Last Supper](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Last_Supper) in [John 14:27](https://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Bible_(American_Standard)/John#14:27): "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you".[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-Foster24-4)

An analytical approach would focus on why Jesus said that, the fact that it was said at the Last Supper, and the context within the biblical episode. Other theological analysis may follow, e.g. the cost at which Jesus the [Lamb of God](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lamb_of_God) provided peace through his obedience to the will of Father, etc.[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-Foster24-4)

However, these theological analyses are generally avoided in *Lectio Divina*, where the focus is on Christ as the key that interprets the passage and relates it to the meditator. So rather than "dissecting peace" in an analytical manner, the practitioner of *Lectio Divina* "enters peace" and shares the peace of Christ. The focus will thus be on achieving peace via a closer communion with God rather than a biblical analysis of the passage. Similar other passages may be "Abide in my love", "I am the Good Shepherd", etc.[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-Foster24-4)

***Oratio* ("pray")**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Lectio_Divina&action=edit&section=10" \o "Edit section: Oratio (\"pray\"))]

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Otto_Greiner_Betende_H%C3%A4nde.jpg)

Hands in prayer by [Otto Greiner](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Otto_Greiner), c. 1900

In the Christian tradition, [prayer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_prayer) is understood as dialogue with God, that is, as loving conversation with God who has invited us into an embrace. The constitution [*Dei verbum*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dei_verbum) which endorsed *Lectio Divina* for the general public, as well as in monastic settings, quoted [Saint Ambrose](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Ambrose) on the importance of prayer in conjunction with Scripture reading and stated:[[31]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-Ray202-31)[[32]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-32)

And let them remember that prayer should accompany the reading of Sacred Scripture, so that God and man may talk together; for "we speak to Him when we pray; we hear Him when we read the divine saying.

Pope Benedict XVI emphasized the importance of using *Lectio Divina* and prayers on Scripture as [a guiding light](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Light_of_the_World) and a source of direction and stated:[[9]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-spring-9)[[31]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-Ray202-31)

It should never be forgotten that the Word of God is a lamp for our feet and a light for our path.

***Contemplatio* ("contemplate")**[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Lectio_Divina&action=edit&section=11" \o "Edit section: Contemplatio (\"contemplate\"))]

[](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Holy_Spirit_as_Dove_(detail).jpg)

[Stained glass](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stained_glass) of the [Holy Spirit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Spirit_(Christianity)) as a dove, c. 1660.

Contemplation takes place in terms of silent prayer that expresses love for God. The [Catechism of the Catholic Church](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catechism_of_the_Catholic_Church) defines contemplative prayer as "the hearing the Word of God" in an attentive mode. It states:[[33]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina" \l "cite_note-33)

Contemplative prayer is silence, the "symbol of the world to come" or "silent love." Words in this kind of prayer are not speeches; they are like kindling that feeds the fire of love. In this silence, unbearable to the "outer" man, the Father speaks to us his incarnate Word, who suffered, died, and rose; in this silence the Spirit of adoption enables us to share in the prayer of Jesus.

The role of the [Holy Spirit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Spirit_(Christianity)) in contemplative prayer has been emphasized by Christian spiritual writers for centuries. In the 12th century, Saint [Bernard of Clairvaux](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bernard_of_Clairvaux) compared the Holy Spirit to a kiss by the Eternal Father which allows the practitioner of contemplative prayer to experience union with God.[[34]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-34) In the 14th century, [Richard Rolle](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Richard_Rolle) viewed contemplation as the path that leads the soul to union with God in love, and considered the Holy Spirit as the center of contemplation.[[35]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-35)

From a theological perspective, God's grace is considered a principle, or cause, of contemplation, with its benefits delivered through the [gifts of the Holy Spirit](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Seven_gifts_of_the_Holy_Spirit).[[36]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-36)

Other Christian methods[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Lectio_Divina&action=edit&section=12" \o "Edit section: Other Christian methods)]

*See also:*[*Prayer, meditation and contemplation in Christianity*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prayer,_meditation_and_contemplation_in_Christianity)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Guigo II** | **Clare of Assisi** |
| Read (*lectio*) | Gaze on the Cross (*intueri*) |
| Meditate (*meditatio*) | Consider (*considerare*) |
| Pray (*oratio*) | Contemplate (*contemplari*) |
| Contemplate (*contemplatio*) | Imitate (*imitare*) |

While the *Lectio Divina* has been the key method of meditation and contemplation within the [Benedictine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Order_of_Saint_Benedict), [Cistercian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cistercian) and [Carthusian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carthusian) orders, other Catholic religious orders have used other methods.

An example is another four-step approach, that by Saint [Clare of Assisi](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Clare_of_Assisi) shown in the table opposite, which is used by the [Franciscan order](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Franciscan_order).[[37]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-Clare-37) Saint Clare's method is more visual than [Guigo II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Guigo_II" \o "Guigo II)'s which seems more intellectual in comparison.[[37]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-Clare-37)

Saint [Teresa of Avila](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teresa_of_Avila)'s method of "recollection" which uses book passages to keep focus during [meditation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_meditation) has similarities to the way *Lectio Divina* uses a specific Scriptural passage as the centerpiece of a session of meditation and contemplation.[[38]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-38) It is likely that Teresa did not initially know of Guigo II's methods, although she may have been indirectly influenced by those teachings via the works of [Francisco de Osuna](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Francisco_de_Osuna) which she studied in detail.[[39]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Divina#cite_note-Elena28-39)

See also[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Lectio_Divina&action=edit&section=13" \o "Edit section: See also)]

* [Christian meditation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_meditation)
* [Midrash](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Midrash)
* [Ladder of Divine Ascent](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ladder_of_Divine_Ascent)
* [*Lectio continua*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_continua)
* [*Lectio Sacra*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lectio_Sacra)
* [Anubhava](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Advaita_Vedanta#Sv.C4.81dhy.C4.81ya_and_anubhava_-_understanding_the_texts), an Indian contemplative practice

Further reading[[edit](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Lectio_Divina&action=edit&section=14)]