

# A practical guide to meditative

## Scripture reading

Engaging with Scripture is not just about learning or studying—it's about encountering God and being transformed in God's presence. Meditative reading practices help us slow down, reflect, and open our hearts to what God might say through the Bible. Two wonderful meditative approaches to consider are **Ignatian Imaginative Reading** and **Lectio Divina**. Each offers a unique and meaningful way to connect with God, whether individually or in a group setting.

These practices are not about achieving perfection or checking off a task—they're about cultivating a posture of attentiveness and receptivity to God's voice. Here's a guide to help you explore these transformative tools.

### Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina, or “divine reading,” is a historic Christian practice dating back to the 6th century, developed by Benedict of Nursia. It's a prayerful way of reading Scripture that invites deep listening and openness to God's transforming work. It's suitable for solo or group use and typically takes 15 minutes or more.

Before starting, find a quiet, comfortable spot where you won't be interrupted. Put your phone on airplane mode and take a moment to quiet your heart, inviting the Holy Spirit to illuminate the passage for you.

#### **Steps for Lectio Divina:**

##### 1. **Lectio (Reading):**

- Read the passage slowly, allowing each word to settle in your heart.
- Read it again, this time out loud.
- Consider making it personal by inserting your name or “I” into the text.

- Notice any word or phrase that catches your attention. There's no need to force this—let it come naturally.

**2. Meditatio (Meditation):**

- Reflect on the word or phrase that stood out to you.
- Notice any emotions, thoughts, or memories it stirs.
- Listen attentively, allowing God to speak through the text.

**3. Oratio (Prayer):**

- Respond to what you've heard. Ask why a specific word or phrase resonated.
- Share your feelings, questions, or reflections with God.
- Sit quietly and listen, making space for God's response.

**4. Contemplatio (Contemplation):**

- Rest in God's presence. This step doesn't require words—simply be still and allow the experience to deepen.
- Receive God's love and renewal as you let the Word take root in your heart.

Helpful Scripture Passages for Lectio Divina:

- John 15:1-17 – Abiding in the Vine
- 1 John 4:7-11 – God Is Love
- Mark 4:35-41 – Jesus Stills a Storm
- Matthew 5:1-10 – The Beatitudes
- Matthew 5:13-16 – Salt and Light
- Romans 12:9-12 – Marks of the True Christian
- Psalm 23 – The Divine Shepherd
- John 4:1-26 – Jesus and the Woman at the Well

## Ignatian Imaginative Reading

Ignatian Imaginative Reading is rooted in the Ignatian tradition and invites participants to enter Scripture through imagination. By picturing yourself within a biblical story and engaging your senses, you can encounter God in fresh, meaningful ways.

For instance, if you read about Jesus calming the storm (Mark 4:35-41), imagine yourself in the boat—feeling the spray of water, hearing the wind, and experiencing the peace when the storm is stilled. This approach makes Scripture come alive and creates space to hear God's voice.

Steps for Ignatian Imaginative Reading:

1. **Prepare:** Find a quiet space, sit comfortably, and invite God to guide you.
2. **Read:** Read the passage slowly, noticing the details of the story.
3. **Imagine:** Picture the scene vividly. What do you see, hear, feel, smell, or taste?
4. **Engage:** Step into the story as a character or an observer. Interact with what is happening. What might God be communicating to you through this experience?
5. **Reflect:** Afterward, journal or reflect on your experience. Write down what stood out, how you felt, and anything you sensed God saying to you. This can help you process and remember the encounter.

## Practical Tips

- **Start Small:** These practices may feel new at first. Begin with a short passage and take your time.
- **Flexibility:** Adapt the steps to suit your context, whether you're alone or in a group.
- **Journal your experience:** Writing down your reflections can deepen the practice and help you track how God speaks to you over time.
- **Keep returning:** Revisit the passage or phrase throughout your day, allowing it to shape your thoughts and actions.