

Finally we enter into **contemplatio**, or contemplation, a time of rest. Here we entrust ourselves to God as we reflect on what he has spoken. We listen for any other words he may want to speak. We remain as still and close as friends or lovers who do not have the frantic need to fill the space with words. In *contemplatio* we come to a place of reverence and silence once again as we are released to fulfil God's purposes for our lives.

In practicing regular times of *lectio divina*, we not only allow the Holy Spirit to remind us of who we are and what life is really all about; we also grow in intimacy with God. As this intimacy deepens, we become more like Christ.

Try doing all this with the passage below from John's Gospel:

Jesus said again, "Very truly I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who have come before me are thieves and robbers, but the sheep have not listened to them. I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. They will come in and go out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd and does not own the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.

"I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep. I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd.



Lectio Divina

Meditation has always been an integral part of Christian prayer. There are two main types of Christian meditation. The first is active meditation where we use our minds to actively ponder a Scripture or an aspect of who God is. The second type of Christian meditation is stillness meditation where we quiet our thoughts and allow God's presence to move in our hearts and souls.

Many Eastern and new age meditation practices have the goal of emptying the mind. Christian meditation is an attempt to empty the mind of unhelpful things in order to fill it with what is right and true; God himself, his Word and his promises.

Christian meditation involves becoming detached from the controlling and wearying influences of the world and attached to the living God through Christ. Such a 'coming away' better enables us to live for God and with God each and every day. Indeed, there are some simple practices we can all practice daily, even when in the midst of stressful situations.

Before entering into Lectio Divina, you might like to prepare yourself using one of the breath prayers below:

For example; Maranatha (Aramaic for 'Come Lord Jesus') works as follows:

In Breath—**Ma**

Out breath—**ra**

In Breath—**na**

Out breath—**tha**

or

Based on John 10: 10

In Breath—**I have**

Out breath—**come to**

In Breath—**bring you**

Out breath—**life**

or

One of the oldest known Christian prayers uses this same breathing pattern. This is an ancient Eastern Orthodox prayer simply called

The Jesus Prayer

In Breath—**Lord Jesus Christ**

Out breath—**Son of God**

In Breath—**have mercy on me**

Out breath— **a sinner**

Lectio Divina (Divine Reading)

This is an ancient way of reading a short Bible passage attentively, reverently, slowly. **Lectio** is a listening kind of reading that patiently waits in trust for God to reveal Himself. Prayer means to open yourself to and to make yourself available to God. In this, recognize that the divine mystery cannot be contained or controlled by us. Allow yourself to be taken in by the words and be drawn towards Jesus Christ.

The first stage is **lectio** (reading) where we read the Word of God, slowly and reflectively so that it sinks into us. Any passage of Scripture can be used for this way of prayer but the passage should not be too long. We read through several times and notice any word or phrase which stands out for us

The second stage is **meditatio** (reflection) is a time of quiet reflection in God's presence. Our goal is not to force ourselves into a mystical experience or even into deep insight, but to focus our affection and attention on God. We quietly read the words he's led us to in Scripture and slowly chew them over. We interact with them, invite them to shed light on our thoughts and experiences, and permit God to connect these truths to our lives. Through this process we allow it to become his personal Word to us, speaking directly to our issues, decisions, hopes, and dreams—and his will for us in all of it.

The third step is **oratio** (prayer). We respond to what God has spoken to us through Scripture. We often think of prayer as primarily talking to God, but what Scripture invites us to is conversational intimacy with God. We aren't coming to God with demands and petitions; rather, we're consecrating ourselves and asking that he take his Word into the deepest and most intimate places in our lives. We're inviting Christ into the places he's exposed or the moments he's taken us back to so that he might heal us and set us free.