

All of us pray in different ways at different stages in our lives. Sometimes our way of praying changes as we grow in our relationship with God

'Lectio Divina' – or 'Sacred Reading' as it is sometimes called – is a specific way of praying with the Bible. In contrast to a Bible study, where we seek the deeper meaning of the text itself, in Lectio Divina we remain with a particular text as a way of encountering the Living Word that can speak to each of us personally at the heart of our lives.

'Lectio Divina' as a way of praying is closely associated with the structure of the life of prayer within monasticism. But St Origen referred to this way of reading the Bible already in the 3rd century, long before the monastic tradition emerged. Lectio Divina was formalised by Guigo II, a Carthusian monk who lived in the 12th century. In his book *the Ladder of the Monks*, he explains this way of praying in four steps: lectio (reading), meditatio (pondering), oratio (prayer) and contemplatio (wondering).

Some Biblical texts that can be used for practicing this way of praying: Ps 23, 139; Is 43:1-7 and 55:1-13; Jer 29:11-14; 1 Kings 19, or Eph 3:14-21.

Book suggestions

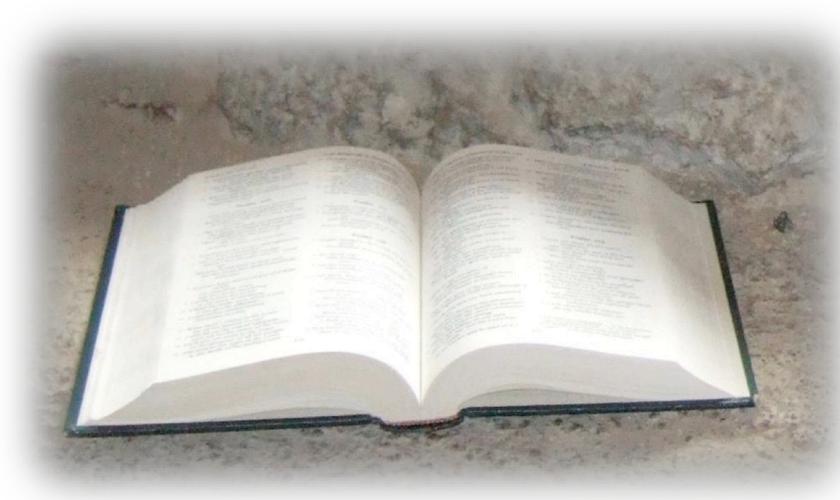
Hayden, Christopher (2001) *Praying the Scripture -s A Practical Introduction to Lectio Divina*, St Paul's Publishing.

Valters Paintner, C. and Wynkoop, L. (2008) *Lectio Divina Contemplative Awakening and Awareness*, Paulist Press.

Front cover image: S Carlsson

Praying with the Bible

Lectio Divina – Holy Reading



***"The Holy Spirit....
will teach you everything and
remind you of all I have said to you."*** John 14.26

The Prayer Pack



We tend to read the Bible to gain knowledge and inspiration; to find out what we can do with it.

But there is a way of praying with the Scriptures that can bring us into personal contact with God.

A slow, meditative reading of a selected passage or psalm, letting the words sink in and even using your imagination to become part of what is being described can be a transforming experience.

This can be difficult at first, so here are some simple steps to help you on your way.

Choose one of the suggested passages or psalms. Take a few minutes to get into a relaxed attentiveness.

Remember that these words are God's words, and that they speak to you, here and now.

Read the passage or psalm slowly, a few words at a time. Read it out loud or in a whisper, but always in rhythm with your breathing, and repeat words or phrases whenever you feel like it.

Linger wherever you feel drawn or moved by what you have read, or perhaps confused, even disturbed by what the words are saying to you – these feelings are often the springboard for growth, if you can own them and pray with them.

Respond to what has moved you: give thanks to God, or share your sadness and confusion; ask for his help, his forgiveness.

Finally, **talk** to God about your thoughts regarding this particular passage – any feelings it has evoked, doubts or concerns that have arisen during prayer time. Be honest. Speak from the heart, as you would with a good friend.

If you find this way of praying quite challenging to begin with, **don't lose hope**: it may just need a little practice, so keep trying, and **share your concerns with God**. As you pray, the Spirit of Jesus will guide and teach you, enabling you to let your present reality meet the reality and truth of the Gospel.

When you're ready, **end your prayer** by saying thank you or using words that are familiar, such as the Lord's Prayer (Our Father) – whichever feels right and comfortable.

