

What Does Sacred Reading Look Like?

In my last post, we explored the spiritual discipline of sacred reading. Today I'd like to show you an example of what this looks like from my journal entries. I'm certainly not an expert on this, but sometimes it helps to see what a discipline looks like for someone else when you're trying to learn it yourself. On this particular day, I read from Colossians 4:5-8. I was following along with my church as we were doing a study on the book of Colossians. So, using the four steps of sacred reading 1) Read, 2) Reflect, 3) Respond and 4) Rest, this is what my entry looked like that for that day.



1) **Read.** The part of scripture that jumped out to me was “Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time,” and “Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt that you may know how to answer each one.”

2) **Reflect.** The answer to the question, Where do I see myself in this passage? was that I felt like God was talking about the importance of time and making the most of the opportunities He gives us. Also, the thought that God wants us to spend some time evaluating our speech—about the words that come out of our mouths on a daily basis—seemed to jump out to me too.

3) **Respond.** In this third step of sacred reading, I had to

pray about how God wanted me to personally respond to the scripture. In this case, I felt like God was telling me to get braver about sharing my faith in those opportunities that He gives me—not to force it, but to watch for the opportunities the Holy Spirit opens up and then be obedient and follow through. I can be shy to share this part of my life with strangers, because of how I might appear. God was convicting me to get past the obsession of worrying that others might think of me as weird if I talked to them about Jesus.

Next, I also felt like God was showing me to pray about my words to others, especially to my husband, Mark. I was being patient with other people, but not so much with him, the most important person in my life. God was telling me to build him up with my words, not tear him down.

4) **Rest.** During this time, I just sat quietly and reflected on what I had learned. I also wrote a short synopsis on a sticky note so that I didn't forget that day's lesson. Then I stuck it right in front of me while I was working in my office. Finally, I thanked God for His wisdom and prayed for help to do make the changes that I needed to make.

I've found the practice of **sacred reading** to be so valuable in teaching me and continuing to mold me into the person Christ wants me to be.

I hope you do too!

Pray on!

Jane

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Sacred Reading

Ever since I was a child, I've loved reading. I read for all sorts of different reasons. I read to get information. Sometimes I read to learn new material. And I also like to read to be entertained. I've learned that I can also let my love of reading draw me closer to God.

Today, let's look at the spiritual discipline of sacred reading or as it is also called, Lectio Divina.



The type of reading that sacred reading emphasizes is not to entertain or even to learn.

It's for an entirely different purpose, one that is explained in this quote by Thomas `a Kempis. *"Do not read to satisfy curiosity or to pass the time, but study such things as move your heart to devotion."*

Now I don't think there's anything wrong with the other types of reading; they all have their place, but the purpose of sacred reading is to draw our hearts to our Lord. **The idea is to come to this reading of a passage of scripture with no other agenda but than to hear what God wants to say to you.** This is known as a meditative or devotional reading of the Bible that St. Benedict popularized as part of the Benedictine monks daily routine. Hebrews 4:12 tells us that the Word of

God is living and powerful, so we can assume that through His word God can shape us, mold us and change our lives. That's what we hope to see through Lectio Divina.

Choosing a Scripture

When undertaking this type of devotional reading, you'll want to choose a fairly short (4 to 8 verses) portion of scripture. The Psalms are a wonderful place to start, as are any of the Gospels and Ecclesiastes. To begin, you'll want your Bible and a notebook to record your thoughts in. You'll need to find a quiet place where you won't be disturbed. Start by quieting yourself and praying that God will bless this time with Him, and that you'll hear what He wants to say to you.

Four Steps of Lectio Divina

- 1. Read (lectio).** Read your portion of scripture listening for the word or phrase that seems to jump out to you. You can write this in your journal if you'd like.
- 2. Reflect (meditatio).** Read the same portion of scripture again and reflect on why you are touched by this word or phrase. Ask yourself, "What is going on in my life that caused those words to jump out to me?" or "Where do I see myself in this passage?" You may also record this in your journal if you'd like to.
- 3. Respond (oratio).** Read the passage a third time. Ask yourself "How does God want me to respond to this?" You may pray something back to God. You may be convicted of a sin. You may be called to do something. Again you can journal your response if you'd like to.
- 4. Rest (contemplate).** Read the passage the final time and then just rest in what you have learned and enjoy being in God's presence. Resolve to carry this word with you throughout your day.

This is a simple but powerful way for God to change us and mold us into the people He wants us to be. One thing I've started doing lately is writing on a sticky note what it is that God has shown me that day, as well as writing it in my journal. You see, I resolved to carry it through my day, but I found that all too soon I forgot what it was God had shown me! By writing it on a sticky note, I can take it with me through my day and look at it repeatedly.

Feel free to share in the comments below if you've ever tried this spiritual discipline or if you plan on trying it. You can also share something God has shown you in your time of Lectio Divina if you'd like.

Pray on!

Jane

Lectio Divina



Jane VanOsdol

One way we can grow in prayer is by learning to slow down and reflect on scripture. An ancient practice called Lectio Divina (Latin term for divine reading) helps us to do exactly that.

This practice teaches us how to focus on a passage of scripture.

- First of all, choose a passage of scripture and read it slowly several times. Write down any words or concepts that stand out to you.
- Next, meditate on the passage. Take time to let God's Word work in your heart, concentrating on those words or concepts that stood out to you in the first step.
- Open your heart to God and talk to Him about this passage. Why did these words stand out to you? What may God be saying to you through this passage?
- Finally, contemplate how God wants you to apply this portion of scripture to your life. Are there habits you need to change? A commitment you need to make? Thank God and rest in His presence.

As we dig deeper into the scriptures, this practice will only enhance our prayer lives. Have you ever tried this practice? Let us know what you think about it by leaving a comment below. Thanks and pray on!

Thanks to Grace Community Church in Noblesville, Indiana (www.gracecc.org) for the information on Lectio Divina.