

Lectio Divina--Divine or Sacred Reading in Four Parts

(Excerpted from *Praying in Black and White: A Hands-On Practice for Men.*)

1. Lectio means “to read.” Choose a line of scripture.

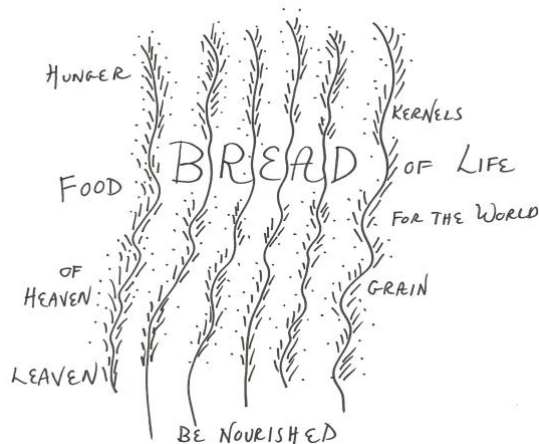
Example: *You have fed them with the bread of tears; you have given them bowls of tears to drink. Psalm 80:5 (BCP)*

Write the passage on a piece of paper. Write it large enough so you can really see it. Ask God to give you a word for the day. Read the passage over and over again until a word jumps out at you. When you have the word, circle it. (If no particular word cries out, just choose one at random.)

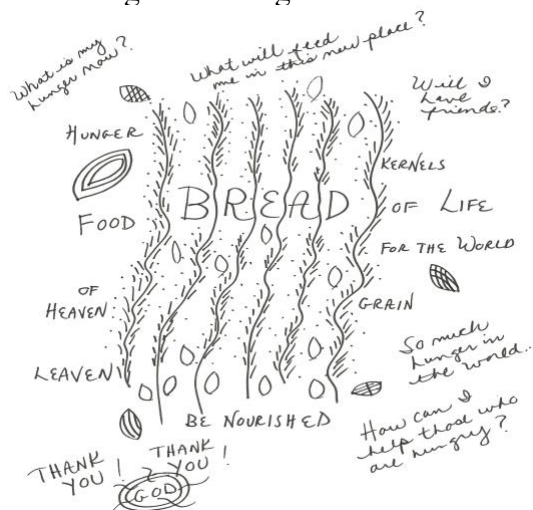
2. Meditatio means to “meditate, chew on, or mull over.” My favorite definition is “marinate.” Do the *meditatio* step in two ways. First, take the word you chose in the *lectio* step and write it in the middle of a piece of paper. Write down everything you know about this word. Brainstorm; do a brain or data dump. Write down anything that comes to mind, even if it seems silly or far-fetched. I chose the word *bread*.



Now, take a new piece of paper. Write your word again in the middle of the page. This time don't think about the word. Instead of teasing ideas out of your brain, listen to the word. Pretend it is a guest in your house. Let it speak to you. Listen for what God might say to you through the word. While you are listening, draw. Doodle around the word. Let the movement of the hand help you focus on the word and release anxiety. If you hear other things about the word, write them down. If the thoughts and words from the previous brain dump come back to you, write them down again.



3. Oratio means to speak or to pray. In this part of the *lectio divina*, talk to God in the more traditional way of prayer. This is a chance to use words and have a conversation with God. You can ask God about the word “What do you want me to hear and learn from this word?” Even though this step is about oral conversation, you can have my pen in hand and continue to draw. Write down your thoughts and questions: “Help my unbelief.” “I’d like to know you better.” “Open my heart.” While you talk and write, continue to draw. Drawing during this step helps me to focus and to listen. Writing helps me to see what I’m thinking and feeling.



4. Contemplatio means to “contemplate.” This is the last step of *lectio divina*. I think of this step as the rest stop or the cool-down period before I go about the normal business of my life. *Contemplatio* is the step where I release the word I have chosen and all of the thoughts and feelings about the word. I give up all of the activity of drawing, thinking, and writing. I close my eyes, still my mind and rest. So put down your pen. Sit in a chair or lie on the floor. Close your eyes. Take a deep breath and release it. Stay in the moment. Breathe. Some people have huge spiritual “Ahas” during this time. Other people just enjoy the rest and the quiet time. My time with *lectio divina* never feels wasted. At the very least, I know more about the word I chose than ever before. And I never hear the word in exactly the same way again.