

Activity Lectio Divina and the Lord's Prayer



Lifelong Faith Associates (Permission is given to reprint for use by individuals and churches.)

Activity Plan

Introduce the activity with the following words or use your own words:

St. Teresa of Avila once said that when prayer was hard for her, she would focus on a picture of Jesus to help her get back into the conversation. Sometimes she would take two chairs, sit in one, and picture Jesus sitting in the other. Then she would imagine him teaching her the Lord's Prayer, word by word and phrase by phrase. She also told her novices to take an hour to pray the Lord's Prayer!

We don't have an hour, but we are going to ponder the Lord's Prayer as it is presented in Matthew's Gospel. The method we will use is called lectio divina, or divine word. We will proclaim the Word of God four times, and each time we hear it we will let the Word penetrate our minds, hearts, and beings. The four steps of lectio are included on the handout. The first time we listen, we will focus on the actual words of the text. The second time we listen, we will meditate on what God is saying to us or asking of us in this passage. The third time through we will pray for whatever God asks of us, and the fourth time we will rest in God's Word. The four steps are Read, Meditate, Pray, and Contemplate. Let's begin.

Ask one participant to read the passage slowly and prayerfully. Then invite any participants who feel comfortable to share the exact word or phrase in the text which most struck them. Instruct them not to interpret or paraphrase at this point, just to let the actual words of Scripture speak.

Instruct participants to listen again to the Word, this time meditating on what God is asking of them *individually* in the passage. Have another participant read the same passage. Pause, then invite sharing of their meditation. Be very clear that the sharing is optional, not required.

Before a third participant reads the passage, encourage prayer over what God is asking them to do. Remind them of the various prayer forms which might be appropriate at this time. For example, if someone hears God saying they want too much for their daily bread, that person may pray a prayer of petition asking God to help them be less materialistic. The passage is read. Pause, then once again invite people to share their prayers out loud, but only if they feel comfortable doing so.

Before the Scripture is read the fourth and final time, describe this step as contemplative. Encourage participants to simply rest in God's Word in silence after the passage has been proclaimed. As St. Thomas Aquinas said, the fruit of contemplation is action. They are letting God's Word energize them to go out and live the Word in the world.

The Passage: Matthew 6:7-15

“When you are praying, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do; for they think that they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. Pray then in this way:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not bring us to the time of trial, but rescue us from the evil one.

For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”

The Four Steps of Lectio Divina

1. Read

After listening to the Scripture passage, share a word or phrase from the text which especially struck you. Read the words from the text. Do not paraphrase or interpret them. Let the passage itself speak to you.

2. Meditate

Listen to the passage a second time. Be open to what God is saying to you in this passage. It might be different from what God said to you the last time you prayed this Scripture. After a few minutes of quiet, share what you hear God calling you to do or to be. If you aren't comfortable sharing your insights, just listen to others. No one should feel obligated to share.

3. Pray

Listen to the passage a third time. Then pray for the courage, strength, or fidelity needed to respond to whatever God is asking of you at this time. If God is telling you to continue as you are, pray a prayer of thanksgiving or adoration. If God is asking you to change, pray a prayer of contrition for past failures or a prayer of petition for whatever you will need to change. If you feel comfortable sharing your prayer out loud, please do so.

4. Contemplate

Listen one last time to the passage. Then prayerfully rest in the Word of God. Let it penetrate the marrow of your being. No words are needed for this last part of the lectio process.



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<https://www.intergenerationalfaith.com/prayer.html>



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