

Praying with Scripture
Modified *Lectio Divina* (Divine Reading)

Read

1. Read the passage out loud (if possible), slowly, simply to become familiar with it.

Reflect

2. Read the passage again, silently.

Ask the Lord to let you read and “hear” it as if this was the first time;

How would you re-tell this story in your own words? (Not more than 5 or 6 sentences.)

Spontaneous **3. Pick one person from the passage: _____.**

Prayer

Imagine that you are in this person’s “shoes.”

(Note: If the passage does not specifically name persons in its text, simply see if the words themselves evoke any particular feeling. Does it call to mind a previous, or presently occurring, incident or relationship in your life?)

A. How does it feel to be in this situation?

B. Does it remind you of something or someone in your life?

C. Is there anything you would say or do differently?

D. Have a “heart to Heart” talk with Jesus sharing your honest feelings about anything that has come to mind in reference to your reflecting on this passage. It might be something that is weighing heavily on your heart, or something that moves you to a deep sense of gratitude and joyful praise.

Choose one word or phrase from this passage that has a special meaning for you _____.

Resting in God **4. Read the passage again. Close your eyes. Think of your favorite picture of Jesus and LISTEN to HIM.**

(Spend this time in simple silence, waiting and quietly listening for whatever the Lord might “whisper” in your heart.)

INSTRUCTION SHEET

Directions to accompany the use of
"Praying with Scripture" *Lectio Divina* prayer worksheet

INTRODUCTION:

Your relationship with the Lord Himself is what really matters. One of the best ways you can encounter Jesus and dispose your heart to hear from the Lord personally is through "Praying with Scripture." This is a way of prayerfully pondering a Bible passage in which you encounter the Person of Christ. There is a progression that takes place that is not a method or technique but a way that incorporates the natural development of a relationship between two persons. In pondering the passage, there is a deepening process that starts in the head and goes to the heart as the Holy Spirit makes a connection between the persons and events in the Scripture and your own personal life by reminding you of something from your life. Further, you are ultimately led to simply rest in God, to be in His Presence and listen to what Jesus might whisper to your heart through a thought or a word. The goal is union with Christ. The "Praying with Scripture" prayer worksheet includes these four steps: Read, Reflect, Spontaneous Prayer and Resting in God.

These steps, as described on the worksheet, can seem almost too simplistic—most people are surprised at how the Holy Spirit uses this manner of prayer so powerfully to make a connection to one's own life. Don't skip any steps! "Praying with Scripture" also referred to as *Lectio Divina*, which means Divine Reading is Latin, is intended for all ages

SELECTING THE SCRIPTURE PASSAGE:

It is best to begin using narrative passages with people (i.e. the Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth, the Birth of Jesus). This facilitates the immersion in the Scriptural passage through a specific person, and this personally related identification allows you to be more readily open to the truth God desires to reveal. It's easier, initially, to identify with Elizabeth, the centurion, or a shepherd...than concepts such as the "poor in spirit" or one who desires to "enter through the narrow gate."

Later, passages without names of specific people can be selected. To answer the questions in number 3, simply see if the words themselves evoke any particular feeling. Do they call to mind a previous, or presently occurring, incident or relationship in your life? Initially, select 20-25 verses for each meditation. If that seems to be too much, use 10-15 verses.

Some Suggested Scriptures for use with the prayer worksheet

Luke 1: 26-38	The Annunciation to Mary
Luke 2: 1-20	The Birth of Jesus
Luke 22:1 - 20	Jesus institutes the Holy Eucharist on Holy Thursday
Luke 22:39 - 65	Jesus' Agony in the Garden and Arrest
Luke 23:33 - 56	The Crucifixion and Death of Christ
John 20:11-18	Jesus Appearance to Mary Magdalene after the Resurrection
Acts 2:1-4	Pentecost: Public manifestation of the Church

CREATING AN ATMOSPHERE FOR PRAYER

It is crucial that a proper atmosphere for prayer be created. This is, indeed, the very Word of God, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and capable of transforming—positively, joyously—our lives, our world, to the glory of God.

Silence during the actual time of prayerful meditation is important. To foster an environment of "heart to Heart conversation" and subsequent "listening," silence **must** be practiced in order to be personally experienced; it does not come naturally in our noisy, distractible world. As you become familiar with and are guided appropriately through this process, you will come to love, and be irresistibly drawn to, the peace and freedom of silent communion with the Lord Jesus.

PRIOR TO USING THE PRAYER WORKSHEET:

Prior to beginning the actual meditation, read the overview below of the progression from step to step. It is important to know that this is a simple progression allowing one to meditate on (ponder) a passage of God's Word.

For the first step, you will want to read the passage out loud (if possible) as step one is, above all, about "hearing" the passage.

In the second step, re-read the passage silently, asking Jesus to help you understand its meaning. Following this silent reading, you will "re-write" it in your own words, as if explaining it to a small child, simply using a few sentences to describe the passage. This is not about interpreting what it means; but simply to re-state the key points in 3-4 brief phrases. Summarizing the story is important because you need the structure of the Story line before you can go deeper.

In the third step, you will choose a person to whom you feel "drawn", or with whom you can somehow identify. For example, in the "Finding in the Temple" they can choose to "walk in the shoes" of Jesus, Mary, or Joseph; one of the Temple teachers; or any person Mary and Joseph met in seeking their Son. If you are not drawn to a particular person, you may be present as a "silent observer."

Then proceed in briefly filling out the responses requested in points A—D. (This "walking" through the passage in the shoes of the person you have chosen allows you to "make it your own," to be increasingly open to the heartfelt movements of the Holy Spirit. The narrative, and the truth it contains, is deposited more permanently in the storehouse of your mind and heart.)

Note that the question, "Is there anything you would say or do differently?" refers to your own personal life experience as recalled to your remembrance through the passage.

[Along with the other questions, it is aimed at a natural, "unforced" personal application and possible resolution. Sometimes, you will reply in reference to the person you have chosen from the passage (i.e., as "Peter" – expressing regret for having denied Jesus). This, too, is beneficial.]

After completion of points A – D, you are to transition to the fourth step and enter into the silent prayer in accordance with the time allotted. Close the meditation by praying the Our Father.

SUMMARY OF STEPS AND SUGGESTED TIMES:

- 1. Read the passage out loud.** [3 min.]
- 2. Silently read it again and write out the main points.** [3 min.]
- 3. Follow the instructions— answer the questions as indicated. It requires a 3rd "closer look" at the text.** [6 min.]
Responses are written on the handout or in a prayer journal.
- 4. Close your eyes and silently "listen" to Jesus.** [3 min.]

Remember, the purpose of this prayer "exercise" is not only to get to know Jesus better through greater intellectual knowledge and remembrance of Scripture, but even more importantly, to facilitate an opening to a greater "heart knowledge" of our Divine Savior. As you become accustomed to praying in this manner, you may want to gradually extend the time allotted for Step 4. Praying with Scripture (*Lectio Divina*) is a privileged meeting place with Jesus. (See *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, paragraph 2708)

"The ancient tradition of *Lectio Divina*: the diligent reading of sacred Scripture accompanied by prayer brings about that intimate dialogue in which the person reading hears God who is speaking, and in praying, responds to Him with trusting openness of heart... This practice will bring to the Church – I am convinced of it – a new spiritual springtime." (Pope Benedict XVI's address to the International Congress commemorating the 40th Anniversary of Dei Verbum, September 16, 2005.)

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