

Centenary United Methodist Church

31 Days Bible Reading Challenge

If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal (1 Corinthians 13:1)

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Rest and pray	1 Corinthians 1	1 Corinthians 2	1 Corinthians 3	1 Corinthians 4	1 Corinthians 5	1 Corinthians 6
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1 Corinthians 7	1 Corinthians 8	1 Corinthians 9	1 Corinthians 10	1 Corinthians 11	1 Corinthians 12	1 Corinthians 13
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
1 Corinthians 14	1 Corinthians 15	1 Corinthians 16	Rest and pray	2 Corinthians 1	2 Corinthians 2	2 Corinthians 3
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
2 Corinthians 4	2 Corinthians 5	2 Corinthians 6	2 Corinthians 7	2 Corinthians 8	2 Corinthians 9	2 Corinthians 10
29	30	31				
2 Corinthians 11	2 Corinthians 12	2 Corinthians 13				

Spiritual practice helps us to grow closer to Christ. It helps us make room in our hearts and lives for God. As we start the New Year with the bible reading challenge, I invite you to explore the practice of Lectio Divina, which is an ancient practice of praying the scripture.

Lectio Divina (An ancient practice of praying the scriptures)¹

The early Methodists believed that one "means" of encountering God's saving and renewing grace was "searching the Scriptures" which John Wesley defined as "reading, hearing, and meditating thereon" (Sermon XII, "The Means of Grace").

If we want to hear the "still small voice" of God, as Elijah did (1 Kings 19:12), we must learn to be silent. This quiet listening in God's presence is the goal of meditative Bible reading.

Lectio Divina (Latin for "divine reading") is an ancient way of prayerfully reading and meditating upon the Scripture. Rooted in the Spiritual practices of the ancient Israelites and further developed in the Early Church, *Lectio Divina* has taken many forms over the centuries, but has come to be most often characterized by the following process:

Before beginning, still your heart and body, releasing tension and breathing deeply. Use a brief prayer of preparation such as the Jesus Prayer to "center ourselves" in the Presence of the Lord.

We should be careful not to expect lightening or ecstasies whenever we practice Lectio Divina; God is not so much wanting to reach out and grab us as he is inviting us to listen to his 'still small voice'.

1. *Lectio* (Read) - read a passage of Scripture (not too long), slowly, reverently, listening for God's voice.

2. *Meditatio* (Reflect) - What word or phrase "catches your attention"? What "strikes a chord" with your spirit, your concerns, your memories? Is there something that challenges you? Focus upon that word or phrase, re-reading or reciting it, writing it on your heart...

How does this word speak to your life...?

What is Christ calling you to do or to become...?

3. *Oratio* (Respond in Prayer) - Speak your thoughts and feelings to God, still listening for his voice; offer to him in prayer your whole self, including any brokenness within that needs to receive the healing word he is speaking. This may be a time of repentance and also of receiving God's encouragement.

4. *Contemplatio* (Rest in God) - Silently rest in the awareness of the enveloping Presence, the embrace of the Living Holy and Triune God who has come to meet you through his Word. Enjoy the experience of being in the awesome Divine Presence.

¹ <http://danielhixon.blogspot.com/2012/10/lectio-divina.html>

