

SAINETS IN THE FAMILY

LECTIO DIVINA FOR FAMILIES

LECTIO DIVINA STEPS

1. Reading
2. Mediation
3. Prayer
4. Listening/Contemplation
5. Wrapping Up

TRADITIONAL LECTIO DIVINA STEPS

1. Lectio (Reading)
2. Meditatio (Meditation)
3. Oratio (Prayer)
4. Contemplatio (Contemplation)

Source: www.pbgrace.com/lectio-divina-for-kids/

Lectio divina or “sacred reading” is an ancient method of praying with sacred texts that dates to the fourth century. Usually the text comes from the Scriptures, but other texts may be used as well, such as the writings of the desert fathers or the saints. The basic idea is to spend time listening deeply and intently to what God might have to say to you through the text—almost as if the sacred text were a much-cherished love letter from God.

Lectio divina takes many forms, but traditionally it is divided into four steps: *lectio* (reading), *meditatio* (meditation), *oratio* (prayer), and *contemplatio* (contemplation). These steps do not necessarily need to be followed in a rigid order, although it may help to spend five minutes on reading, five on meditation, five on prayer, and five on contemplation. It is important, however, to touch on all four movements.

There are many books and online resources on *lectio divina* that you can use to explore this practice more deeply.

LECTIO MADE SIMPLE

If the steps outlined below seem overwhelming, back up and begin by reading a short sacred text slowly, perhaps two or three times. Invite them to respond by offering a word, phrase, or image that especially caught their attention. Why did that part of the text stand out? Talk about how God speaks to us through our sacred texts. What might God be saying in the reading? How might you respond?

LECTIO WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

You can walk even young children through the basic movements of *lectio divina* following these steps:

► **Reading.** Use a short story (the shorter the better, but definitely less than five minutes long) from a good picture Bible, a Bible-based storybook, or a children’s book about the lives of the saints. Help your child prepare to hear the story by allowing a short snuggling/settling down time, and explaining what you’re going to do: “Now let’s read a story about God (or Jesus). While I read, you listen for what God (or Jesus) is doing in the story.” Don’t worry about questions or interruptions; if they are about the text, then your child is already “meditating” on it; if not, address the distraction and gently redirect attention back to the story. You may want to read the story or parts of the story again, either immediately or during a later step.

► **Meditation.** If your child doesn't have questions or comments of her own, offer some comments and prompting questions: What is happening in the picture (or in the story)? Why? What are characters thinking or feeling? How is God (or Jesus) acting in this story? (If God isn't directly mentioned in the story, you may need to suggest some ways that God is quietly present.) Which character would you like to be? What would you do differently if you were that character? How would you feel?

► **Prayer.** Invite your child to respond to the story in prayer: "You know, God gives us stories like this to help us grow closer to him. Let's pray to God about this story. What would you like to say to God? Or what questions do you want to ask God about this story?" Provide guiding prompts, if necessary. Be sure to offer your own prayer response, both to make the experience prayerful for you and to model prayer for your child.

► **Listening.** With young children, the contemplation step can be described as listening to God: "Now that we've prayed to God about this story, let's be quiet so we can hear what God might be saying back to us, inside our hearts." Take at least thirty seconds to be silent. If your child is restless or noisy, do your best to complete the period of silence yourself.

► **Wrapping up.** You can finish by asking your child whether they heard God speaking to them. If they say no, you can reassure her that it's okay—sometimes we aren't listening closely enough, and sometimes God just likes to spend time quietly with us. End by blessing your child.

LECTIO WITH OLDER KIDS

► **Reading.** First, select a short reading—the shorter, the better: a paragraph or two, or even a sentence or two. Traditionally, the text is taken from the Scriptures or the writings of the saints. The Gospel or Old Testament reading for the upcoming Sunday is an excellent choice for families just beginning to practice *lectio divina*. Read the text slowly and carefully. Explain words or situations your children may not understand, consulting footnotes or commentaries as necessary. Read the text slowly two or three times, allowing a brief pause between readings.

► **Meditation.** Invite your kids to reflect on the meaning of the passage. You can offer guiding questions such as: What words or images stood out for you? Why? What does the reading mean to you? Does it say anything important about your life right now? Spend just a few minutes sharing as a family.

► **Prayer.** Invite your kids to offer their insights during the meditation step in prayer. This can be done silently or out loud; if your family is just beginning, you may want to offer the prayer yourself on behalf of the whole family, in order to provide an example. During the prayer step, you might offer thanksgiving to God for important insights that emerged from the text. Or, if the text was difficult to meditate on, you might ask God for guidance and clarity. If the text was challenging or caused anxiety, you might ask God for humility, strength, and the ability to trust in providence.

► **Contemplation.** The fourth step of *lectio divina* is sometimes called "resting in the Word of God." Invite your kids to still themselves and attend to God's presence. God may speak to them in a particular way, or may just be with you in silence.

► **Wrapping up.** End with a blessing or the Sign of the Cross.

For more tips on praying Lectio Divina with teens, review the Lectio Divina activity by YDisciple: <http://bit.ly/2l26wVM>