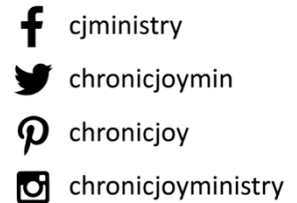




CHRONIC JOY
chronic illness ministry



Lectio Divina



THE PRACTICE OF HOLY READING

Lectio Divina is the ancient practice of slowly, contemplatively reading the words of Scripture, an invitation to encounter God through His Word, to pay close attention, to be fully present.

As we step into the practice of *holy reading*, we begin to discover the underlying spiritual rhythm of our lives, a rhythm sewn into the creation of the world. Day follows night. Tides rise and fall. Months and seasons change as we note the waxing and waning of the moon. And we learn to celebrate new life, sometimes even as we grieve significant loss.

Lectio Divina helps us to reconnect with the eternal rhythm of our lives in five stages:

1. Silence
2. Reading
3. Meditation
4. Prayer
5. Contemplation

The best way to learn a new practice is through experience, so let's begin together with the words of **Isaiah 58:11**.



1. SILENCE

Choose a quiet place, settle into a comfortable position, close your eyes and allow the distractions of the day -- all the voices clamoring for your attention -- to slide away. Feel your shoulders relax. Notice the rhythmic beating of your heart. Begin to notice the presence of God as you breathe in. As you breathe out, release the burdens, pressures and fears of your day.

2. READING

Lectio is a way of reading patiently and slowly, of listening for God's still, small voice in His Word.

When you're ready, read the words of **Isaiah 58:11**.

Read slowly. Focus on each word. Allow yourself time to simply *be* with God in the words, listening for a word or phrase that captures your heart. Underline, circle or highlight the word or phrase.

*The Lord will guide you always,
he will satisfy your needs in a sun-scorched land
and will strengthen your frame.
You will be like a well-watered garden,
like a spring whose waters never fail.*

3. MEDITATION

Meditation is our response to God's Word, an invitation to drink in and savor, to allow God to meet us where we are, and to touch us soul-deep.

Explore your thoughts by journaling as you answer these questions:

- ④ What does the word or phrase you underlined, circled or highlighted above mean to you in the current circumstances of your life?
- ④ Is there something you might need to change?
- ④ Someone you need to forgive?



- ④ Something you need to release -- fear, frustration, control, worry, anger, apathy, anxiety?
- ④ What did you feel when the word or phrase first caught your attention?
- ④ What might God be saying to you through this word or phrase?

4. PRAYER

Prayer is a unique and personal experience, a place of communion and conversation with God. Sometimes we come with words, sometimes we simply come with the groanings of our heart.

It's OK to:

- ④ wrestle with God
- ④ ask, seek or plead with Him
- ④ thank Him
- ④ pause in wonder and awe
- ④ sing
- ④ worship
- ④ weep
- ④ hold God at arm's length
- ④ lean in close without words at all

Sometimes, in a dry season, we can use the words of others to enter into prayer:

You are a fire that takes away the coldness, illuminates the mind with its light, and causes me to know your truth. -- Saint Catherine of Siena

Oh, God, give me stillness of soul in You. Rule me, O King of gentleness, King of peace. ~ Saint John of the Cross

Lord, lead me.

There is no right or wrong way to pray.

Prayer is simply, profoundly, mysteriously, intimately, powerfully how we enter into the presence of God.



5. CONTEMPLATION

This is where we lean into God's embrace and rest in His presence. Contemplation is the stage of surrender -- deep, intimate, sometimes tearful, often too deep for words -- a quiet rest in the presence of the One who spoke creation into being, who formed man from the dust of the earth and breathed life into him, who formed Eve from Adam's rib, who created *us* in His image.

Lectio Divina is an encounter with God in His Word. As we begin to discover Him in the words of Scripture, we will also begin to see Him more clearly in the world He has created. Lectio helps us to reconnect with the spiritual rhythms of our lives, inviting us to experience the depth of God's love for us, His presence in every moment, every breath and every heartbeat of our lives.

Lectio Divina is an opportunity to slow down and experience God's Word deeply. An opportunity to savor the words of Scripture, to sit at God's table, to be nourished, fed and refreshed. An invitation to be fully present with our holy God.

