

# Divine Reading / Lectio Divina Seven-Step Model

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Psalm 1 teaches that faithful believers will prosper when they meditate day and night on God's word. Many ancient Christians meditated on God's word with a method called *divine reading* or in Latin *lectio divina* (also translated to *holy reading* or *sacred reading*). The traditional divine reading includes four steps: (1) reading scripture, (2) reflective meditation, (3) responding to God, and (4) resting in God.<sup>1</sup>

This model of divine reading incorporates seven steps that include a focusing prayer and other techniques gathered from various Christian devotional meetings that I attended.

## I: FIND A QUIET PLACE

Find a quiet place that is free from interruptions. Adjust to a comfortable position and quiet yourself before God. Take a slow, deep breath. Slowly and deliberately release the breath. God says in Psalm 46:10, "Be still, and know that I am God." Again, take a slow, deep breath. Slowly and deliberately release the breath.

## II: FOCUSING PRAYER

Take a slow, deep breath before each sentence of the prayer. Slowly and deliberately release the breath while praying:

Lord, purify and restore my inner thoughts and desires.  
Fill my thoughts and desires with you.  
Strengthen me to always love and serve you in all that I do.

Repeat the prayer if needed.

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<sup>1</sup> The traditional four steps of divine reading in Latin are called *lectio*, *meditatio*, *oratio*, and *contemplatio*.

### III: READING OR RECITING (*LECTIO*)

Read or recite a designated scripture selection two or more times in a row. For example:

Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. (Matthew 22:37–38)

### IV: REFLECTIVE MEDITATION (*MEDITATIO*)

Reflect on a special word or phrase that caught your attention from the reading. Deliberately think about the word or phrase. Let the word or phrase mingle with your thoughts, feelings, experiences, hurts, and aspirations.

### V: RESPONDING TO GOD (*ORATIO*)

Respond to God. Thank God for something, or make a godly declaration, or pray for a need of yours, or pray for a need of others.

### VI: RESTING IN GOD'S PRESENCE (*CONTEMPLATIO*)

Surrender all thoughts and feelings to God while resting and basking in God's love. Let God transform you for divine purpose.

### VII: OPTIONS AFTER DIVINE READING

After resting in God's love, say, "Lord, thank you for your love and your work in my life."

If devotionals must end, then go on to other activities. Or you may do more devotionals such as praising God, singing to God, praying for your needs, praying for the needs of others, general Bible study, or more divine reading.

### OPTIONS FOR FOCUSING PRAYERS

Ask God for guidance while considering the use of various focusing prayers. Brief focusing prayers help to focus on God during any devotional or church service. Also, the focusing prayer itself might work as a mini power devotional when time is tight during a few free minutes. Other examples of focusing prayers include:

Lord, I dedicate to love and serve you in every circumstance.  
Fill me with your Holy Spirit.  
Saturate and purify my inner thoughts and desires.  
Empower me to always love and serve you.

Or:

Lord, I accept every blessing that you give me.  
I invite your Holy Spirit to fill me.  
I give all of my troubles to you.

Perhaps God will help you to create your own focusing prayer based of biblical teaching.

## OPTIONS FOR DESIGNATED SCRIPTURE SELECTIONS

Ask God for guidance when choosing the designated scripture selection for reading or reciting. More suggested selections include the following:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. (John 1:1–2)

God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

If we confess our sins, he [God] is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:8)

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law. (Romans 13:8)

Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. (Colossians 3:13)

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6–7)

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. (Galatians 5:22–23)

Some scripture verses are easier to understand than others because of the context. Likewise, criteria for selecting verses for reading or reciting include the ease of understanding the verses with no or little explanation. Also, consider if cropping verses makes them easier to understand.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

Finally, prayerfully consider how to develop these devotional techniques and use them in new ways. Grow closer to God while he transforms and empowers you for divine purpose.

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Additional suggested scripture selections include Genesis 12:1–3; Psalm 1:1–3, 34:4–5; Proverbs 3:4–5, 3:5–6; Isaiah 9:6–7, 40:4–5, 53:4–5, 59:21, 65:25; Matthew 5:6, 5:8, 7:7–8, 28:18–20; Mark 14:62; Luke 24:46–47; Acts 1:8; 1 Peter 1:3, 1:22; 2 Peter 1:3–4, and Revelation 22:12–13.

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