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What is Lectio Divina?

Lectio divina (Latin, “divine reading”) is an ancient practice of praying with Sacred Scripture. Its foundation traces back to Origen in the third century. In medieval times, Saint Benedict of Nursia instituted a more formal practice in his religious order, setting *lectio divina* as a regular part of the monastic tradition.

Lectio Divina has four parts: *lectio* (reading), *meditatio* (meditation), *oratio* (prayer), and *contemplatio* (contemplation). Many adults practice lectio divina on a regular basis, often for a thirty minute period of time. However, using a modified style for a shorter period of time, this prayer can be practiced with young children, as a way to introduce them to hearing God speak to them through His Word.

Lectio Divina with Children

Using an illustrated Bible for children, select a story. Gather the children and invite them to sit quietly and as still as possible for a minute. Allow the children to hold the Bible and look at the illustration while you read the story. Read the story slowly, then pause for a minute. Invite the children to listen for what God is doing. Then read the story a second time.

Ask the children to tell you what is happening in the story, using the illustration to guide the discussion. Perhaps ask them which character they would like to be in the story. After a few minutes of sharing, ask the children what they would like to say to God after hearing the story. Finally, invite the children into a few minutes of quiet, telling them that God wants to tell them something in response to what they told Him.

This beautiful practice can be a powerful experience of praying with Scripture as a family. As the children begin to read, they can take turns reading the Scripture story. As the practice becomes part of the daily family routine, the time can be extended to include more discussion and prayer.

Success Stories

A friend of mine has been practicing *lectio divina* with her two children for two years, since her children were toddlers. She shares the story of her daughter (the eldest) learning to read, that she would hold the Bible on her lap and point to the pictures for her younger brother as she read. By sharing the Bible story in this way, the brother was able to retell the story and it helped develop both of their reading skills.

Her husband, who works evenings and was not home when she and the children were praying, felt left out of his family prayer life. In order to include daddy, the daughter asked if they could pray Bible stories in the morning! While it was a big adjustment in their schedule, it has been worth it as her family feels stronger and closer to one another.

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