Moses Project Spiritual Practices Fall 2021

**Divine Reading (Lectio Divina)**

Scripture reading is sure to be one of the more familiar Christian spiritual practices. In worship, in small groups and in personal devotions, reading the Bible is often a given. Today you are invited to the ancient Christian practice of *lectio divina*, which is Latin for divine reading. More of a prayer practice than a Bible study, *lectio divina* is all about allowing the text to form and transform us as people of faith rather than reading for information. To that end, we focus on only a few verses, we read slowly to allow what we read to settle into us, and we listen for what God has to say to us personally through that passage. This practice invites us to move through four steps:

1. **READ** the scripture slowly and prayerfully. Pay attention when a key phrase or word catches your attention or evokes a response. You may repeat it a few times, either silently or aloud.
2. **REFLECT** on the word or phrase. Read the passage again, allowing the word or phrase that you discovered in the first reading to sink into your heart. Be curious. Consider how this word or phrase speaks to your life. Bring heart, mind and spirit to this experience.
3. **RESPOND** to what you have read. Consider the invitation these words may be offering. Form a prayer that expresses your response to the idea, then “pray it back to God.”
4. **REST** in this experience of God’s word. Read a final time, letting the text soak into your deepest being, savoring an encounter with the Divine.

As a variation, consider engaging this prayerful process with other reading, such a poem or a spiritual text. Or you might try *visio divina*, which invites you to linger with a visual image in this prayerful manner.

In a Group: You might share this practice in a group by reading through the scripture text aloud together, allowing time for reflection and sharing in between readings. Invite a new reader with each step. Encourage participants to share their own experience rather than commenting on what is shared by others. Close the practice with prayer.

Andrea Severson, L.M.H.C., M.Div.

Andrea Severson is a licensed mental health counselor and spiritual director. Her degrees include a Master of Science in counseling from Drake University and a Master of Divinity from Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University. She holds a certificate in spiritual direction and is an ordained elder in the United Methodist Church. Andrea enjoys hearing the unique stories of the individuals and couples with whom she works.  Her areas of interest include anxiety, depression, trauma, identity, faith and spirituality, life transitions, and relationships.  Andrea is a member of the American Mental Health Counselors Association and Spiritual Directors International. In her spare time, she likes reading historical fiction, listening to the Beatles and camping.