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# FEASTING ON THE WORD

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## INTRODUCTION

There are several traditional ways that Lutherans today approach the study of scripture.

- Devotional reading focuses on what this passage means for us today.
- Historical reading seeks to understand the time and context of when passage was written.
- Narrative or literary reading focuses on the way it was written, including its structure and narrative qualities.
- Lutheran theological reading applies principles of belief (e.g. that God's word is revealed to us as both law and gospel) as we seek understanding of a particular passage.

One devotional approach to reading scripture is called *Lectio Divina*, or "divine reading." This method originated in monastic communities, and emphasizes listening for what God is saying to us, right now, in this time of prayer and reflection. In *lectio*, we spend time listening for God's "still small voice" speaking to us through the words of scripture. The four parts of the practice are:

- *Lectio*: reading or hearing the Word;
- *Meditatio*: reflecting on what we hear;
- *Oratio*: responding to what we have discovered; and
- *Contemplatio*: resting in the presence of God, letting go of our own agenda and listening for the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

One of the gifts of *Lectio Divina* is that we are freed from trying to identify a "right answer." Nothing you say or hear is ever "wrong"!

As you share with the group what you hear, there is no need to explain or defend your answer. We will save some questions about "I wonder" or "I'm curious what it means" until the end of our time together.

## GROUP LECTIO

Opening Prayer: *using these or other words:*

Blessed Lord God, you have caused the holy scriptures to be written for the nourishment of your people. Grant that we may hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that, comforted by your promises, we may embrace and forever hold fast to the hope of eternal life, which you have given us in Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

1. One person reads the text out loud.
  - a. Individual reflection on what word or phrase catches your attention.
  - b. Go around the table, saying your name and sharing your word or phrase.
2. Another individual reads the same passage slowly (from a different translation, if possible).
  - a. Individual reflection: Where does this passage touch my life today?
  - b. Each person shares: "I hear ... I see..." (no discussion).
3. Passage is read a third time (another reader and translation, if possible).
  - a. Individual reflection: "I believe that God wants me to . . . . . today/this week."
  - b. Each shares their answer.
4. Each prays for the person on their right, naming what was shared in other steps. Close with the Lord's Prayer.