

# HEARING GODS WORD IN PRAYER

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## INTRO

We continue to follow Pete Grege's book on 'how to hear God'. This week we are looking at the practice of prayer through scripture, more specifically using an ancient approach called *lectio divina*. By harnessing the power of imagination and meditation, *lectio divina* can leave 'our hearts burning within us' as fresh revelation begins to flicker from familiar texts.

Have you ever felt your hearts burn inside you like the disciples did on the road to Emmaus when they listened to Jesus unpacking the scriptures (Luke 24:32)? In other words, has there been a passage or verse of scripture that has felt like an answer to prayer for you?

## ANCIENT ROOTS

Historically the Jews had two approaches to the Torah. The first was analytical and seeks to discover the one objective, true meaning of the text. This is reading with our heads. The second is more subjective in that it seeks the deeper and more personal meaning. This is reading with our hearts. I don't know about you but so often I just read the Bible with my head, and don't give time to my heart, imagination and emotions. It would be easier to design home group notes as an intellectual study of the bible alone, but it is my hope this series will give time and space for more!

*Lectio Divina* was a monastic practice established in the sixth century by Benedict of Nursia, although its origins are much older, rooted in the Bible itself. Benedict's rule required 3 hours of prayerful reading of sacred texts a day, that's one in every six waking hours practising *lectio divina*!

The structure you are invited to use is an acronym of the word P.R.A.Y.

P.R.A.Y.	Action
Pause	Quietly prepare your heart
Read & Reflect	Slowly read, rejoice, reflect and repeat.
Ask	Turn your reflections into prayer
Yield	Enjoy the presence of God.

**LECTIO DIVINA** - Lets have a go! You may like to read through what you are doing to do first and decide on a passage of scripture you would like to study as a group. Some suggested bible passages are those used in church this Sunday 1 king 19. 9b- 18 (Gods whisper to Elijah), or Luke 24:13-35 (road to Emmaus). Give yourself time, go slow and relax.

1. **Pause** - Jesus on the road to Emmaus drew near and initiated conversation. He took a little time before diving into scripture and so can we. It is a good idea to stop before you start. Pause for a moment to settle your heart, consciously slow down and draw near to God as he draws near to you.
2. **Read & Reflect** - The **first reading** is to gain an overview of the passage, resist the temptation to overthink. If certain words or phrase capture your attention make a mental note to look for them on the next reading. Read it slowly, as a group you might like to take it in turns to read a verse or two each. The **second reading** read a little slower, go a little deeper, meditating on the words of the passage. Immerse yourself in the passage by allowing your imagination to wander, what do you feel, what do you see, is the passage unfolding in front of you or are you a character in it? Give yourselves time in silence after the passage has been read.
3. **Ask** - it is now time to turn your meditations into prayerful conversation with God. Many types of prayer can flow from reflection upon scripture - it is a dialogue with God and scripture is Gods part of the script. You might find yourself repenting, rejoicing, petitioning, and interceding for others. We often find this happens in our time of morning prayer with St James Church after reading the scriptures.
4. **Yield** - Yield to the loving presence of God. All you need to do is wait - don't rush off. Enjoy the moment. There is nothing more to do or say. Simply sit quietly for a few moments, reflecting on what you have read and what God has just said. Yielding is not unlike the pausing at the start but your awareness of Gods presence is going to be deeper, the silence easier and your heart fuller this time around because of the things he's shown you through his Word.

**AMEN**