

Using Lectio and Dwelling in Small Groups

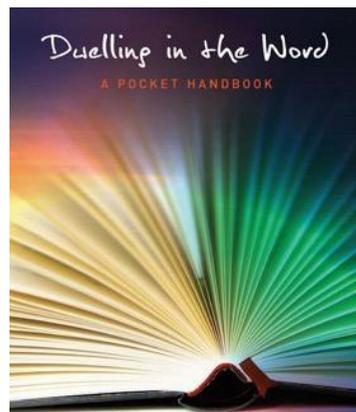
Both these practices can be adapted to use within your small groups. For example:

- In a Bible Study Group, you might start the study with a meditative reading of the passage to be studied that session. Everyone is then invited to share a word or phrase that has struck them, everyone else listens silently as you go round the group. Thus, in a non-threatening way everyone is invited to say something at the start, listening is encouraged, and everyone engages personally with the text before it is studied.
- In a PCC or church committee, Dwelling in the Word has been used very successfully as the opening prayer with the same passage that encapsulates the aims of the group, such as Col 3:12-17. It not only settles the group with a meditative calm but also encourages true listening to one another. The meeting itself has benefited from increased harmony and true listening to each other.
- The process can be used not just on scripture but on anything through which God might speak. The group might meditate and share on a stunning view of nature or a piece of artwork related to the topic of the session. Or the lectio process might be used on a newspaper front page, or....

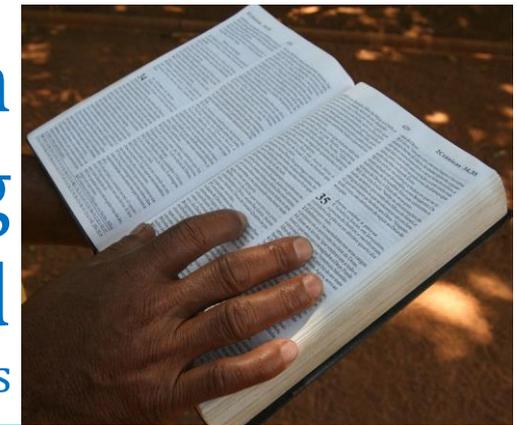
Resources

<https://www.bathandwells.org.uk/dwelling-in-the-word/>

<https://churchmissionsociety.org/resources/dwelling-word/>



Lectio Divina & Dwelling in the Word for Groups



Small Group Leaders

January 2021

Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina is an ancient form of praying with scripture. The Psalmist delighted in meditating on God's word day and night (Ps 1:2, 119:15, 17) and so have Christians and Jews ever since. In the early church this developed into a practice we now call lectio divina - divine reading. St Benedict made Lectio Divina the heart of the Monastic Life. Monks were to engage in lectio for 3 hours a day as part of their daily work.

Thomas Cranmer, the author of the original Prayer Book said:

“Let us reverently hear and read holy scripture, which is the food of the soul. Let us diligently search for the well of life in the books of the Old and New Testaments. Let us ruminare, and, as it were, chew the cud, that we may have the sweet juice, having spiritual effect, marrow, honey, kernel, taste, comfort, and consolation of them (1547).”

There are 6 steps to Lectio Divina:

1. Preparation and Opening Prayer
Take time to become still and focus on God. Seek his presence.
2. Reading. Read a short passage slowly. Then begin to read again, savouring each word and really listening to the passage.
3. Meditation. Stop and dwell with interesting words, ponder what they mean and how they echo in your life (or not)
4. Prayer. Have a loving conversation with God about what has spoken to you. Then carry on slowly reading the passage
5. Contemplation. At the end rest in God's presence, imagine yourself and the passage in a bubble of God's love.
6. Action. Record in a prayer journal, or through art or poetry, the fruit of your meditation and seek some way to act upon it.

Dwelling in the Word

Dwelling in the Word takes and adds to the ancient practice of Lectio Divina particularly for a group. The steps are:

1. Preparation and Opening Prayer
Take time to become quiet and focus on God. Seek his presence.
2. Reading. Have someone read aloud a chosen passage slowly. After some silence have it read it again. Everyone is encouraged to listen and see what strikes them this session.
3. Listening. In pairs share one word or phrase from the passage that particularly drew your attention or that you like or dislike. You may expand on why or just give the phrase. Your partner should listen without interruption and may take notes. Then the partner shares. Allow 1-2 mins each.
4. Sharing. Pairs join up into groups of 4 -8. Each person then shares what their partner found in the passage. The group should gently guide those who begin to talk about themselves into talking about their partner!
5. Reflection. After all insights are shared, there is opportunity for people to reflect on what has been heard.

We rarely really listen to other people and seek to see as they see. By having to retell what we have heard we have to really listen, and the other person is affirmed. In doing so we can hear God from a perspective we would never reach on our own. This becomes the divine reading of each other.

Those using dwelling in the word are also encouraged to stay with the same passage for a year, so that they really are dwelling in the same word regularly. Those doing this often move through a cycle of finding new things, to becoming rather bored with the passage and then out the other side to a place of real integration of the passage in their lives.