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## Session: Lectio Divina

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### Description

My husband Craig has always been fit. He was a firefighter for 35 years and often worked out twice a day. He tends to watch what he eats and tries to limit the fries and ice cream. Early on in our marriage my dad, who loves to tease, commented on Craig's physique. He said "Boy I'd give anything to have a body like that.....except eat right and exercise".

We may want it, but are we willing to do what it takes to get it? The same holds true for our spirituality. We might say that we would do anything to live a peace-filled, God-centered life.....except make time to be in the presence of God.

There is a lot going on in our hearts, minds, souls and bodies that we rarely think about. Prayer and meditation can unlock some of this and move us closer to God In a book called, *How God Changes your Brain; Breakthrough Findings from a Leading Neuroscientist*, Authors Newberg and Waldman say that "...the more you think about God, the more you alter the neural circuitry in specific parts of your brain". In other words, spending time thinking about and talking to God actually changes your brain.<sup>i</sup>

There are sensory experiences which activate the limbic brain which then prepares our bodies to meet our physical needs.<sup>ii</sup> We can create some of these sensory experiences and some come when we aren't expecting them like a stress response. Some might only apply this to flight, or flight but that doesn't address where the emotion resides in your body or how it got there. For example, why are we moved by poetry or music? Have you ever felt emotion in respond to a certain scent?

Being intentional about creating a rhythm of life that includes prayer and meditation can help us slow down and be more fully present in each moment. As we do this, we notice what's happening in our mind, body, heart and soul and we begin to experience God's peace. Prayer doesn't have to be rigorous or legalistic. Author Ken Shigamatsu says, "Prayer can also fill the idle moments of our day. Rather than fumbling for our smartphones to check our email, we can use these pauses as an opportunity to attune to God's presence".<sup>iii</sup>

In this session, your family will practice lectio divina. That term might sound "religious" or complicated but really lectio divina is simply a slow meditative reading of sacred text. We do this to help us discern what God is saying to us and what God is doing in our families, our lives and even the world.

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### Materials Needed

Your Bible or sacred text, a timer.

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## Handouts

Lectio Divina Handout

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## Lectio Divina

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### Read aloud the quote or scripture

“Is prayer your steering wheel or your spare tire?”  
- *Corrie ten Boom*

### Questions for discussion (10 minutes)

1. Where do you think emotion (feelings) comes from? Do you think God plays any part in how we feel? Does God have feelings?
2. What do you think a soul is? Is it part of our body? How about your spirit?
3. If you believe God has feelings, how do you think he feels when you spend time with him?
4. Do you think prayer and/or meditation can have an impact physically on your body? Explain.
5. What is “prayer” to you? How do you think God wants you to pray? Explain.

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### Rule of life activity

Lectio Divina

1. The following lectio divina family (group) activity is taken in part from the book; **A Guidebook to Prayer** by MaryKate Morse.
  2. Prior to starting this session, read the short Lectio Divina Handout.
  3. Choose which passage or scripture you want to read. (See handout.)
  4. Choose one person to guide the family through your lectio divina. This could be an adult or older child.
  5. Leader instructs everyone to get comfortable, sitting in a relaxed position on the floor, couch or chair.
  6. Have everyone close their eyes. Leader says; “Listen for a word or phrase that you particularly notice as I read the passage aloud.”
  7. Leader reads your chosen scripture slowly - one time.
  8. After the reading everyone sits in silence with eyes closed for 2 minutes. Set the timer.
  9. At the end of two minutes leader says; “With your eyes closed, speak out a word or phrase (in the scripture) that you noticed. Don’t worry about others speaking at the same time.”
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10. Now leader says; “As I read the passage again, listen for what God might be teaching or saying to you.” Leader reads the passage. At the end sit in silence again for two minutes.
11. Now as a family discuss / reflect about what each person heard or what stood out. Some people might have heard something meaningful or profound others might have heard nothing. All of that is fine and normal.
12. Now have everyone close their eyes again and listen while you read the passage one last time. Leader says; “Receive the words and rest in God’s truth”.
13. Close your time together by saying the Lord’s prayer together or the leader says a closing prayer.

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### Examen

How did it go? Debrief highs and lows

1. Each person shares their favorite part of the conversation / activity and why.
2. Each person shares their least favorite part and why.
3. Did you do a Serving/Giving activity last week? How did it go?

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**Serving /giving ideas for any time this week: Choose one or create your own. These can be done individually or as a group. You will be sharing your serving experience in the next session.**

- Pray for a friend or neighbor who is going through a hard time.
- Give some of your games to the local hospital.
- Make homemade cards and drop them off at neighbor’s homes.
- Go to a retirement home and volunteer to paint women’s fingernails.
- Keep “hotties” in the car and give them to police officers or other people working outside in the cold. You can do this in hot areas with a cooler and bottles of water.

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<sup>i</sup> Andrew Newberg, M.D. and Robert Waldman, *How God Changes your Brain: Breakthrough Findings from a Leading Neuroscientist* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2009).

<sup>ii</sup> Thomas Lewis, M.D., Fari Amini, M.D., and Richard Lannon, M.D., *A General Theory of Love* (New York: Vintage Books, 2001).

<sup>iii</sup> Ken Shigematsu, *God in my Everything* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 58.