

# ***Lightbulbs, Question Marks, & Arrows***

## ***A Small Group Bible Reading Guide***

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*"In Christianity, Lectio Divina (Latin for "Divine Reading") is a traditional Benedictine practice of scriptural reading, meditation and prayer intended to promote communion with God and to increase the knowledge of God's word. It does not treat scripture as texts to be studied, but as the living word."* —Wikipedia

So, there are a lot of ways to do *Lectio Divina*; some of them are very complex. Here is the somewhat simplified version I have used. It has some similarities to the process used in the **Swedish Bible Reading Method** (lightbulbs, question marks and arrows)

The point here is not to determine the meaning of the Scripture passage as in exegesis. The point with this exercise is to take the Bible and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit seriously by listening closely to Holy Scripture (which, as Calvin would say, is the very breath of the Holy Spirit)

Silence is an important part of this process and extremely uncomfortable for most Americans. This is because we are literally saturated with random and unhelpful noise that clamors for our attention. It deprives us of our rest in Christ and keeps us from listening for God's voice. So, silence should be understood here as a forming discipline insofar as it is an act of self control (which is, after all, a fruit of the Spirit) and as making room in our lives for rest so that we can listen to God. Some people also like to light candles and stuff to set a mood, but I have never done that.

### **Step One: PREPARATION**

In this step you want to encourage people to eliminate distractions. Depending on the group you may want them to simply close their eyes.

Historically, Christians have also meditated in their mind's eye on an icon, (for example a Christian painting like the *Isenheim Altarpiece*), or by repeating a prayer like the 'Jesus Prayer' (Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, Have Mercy on Me A Sinner) or the Lord's Prayer.

Some of this stuff weirds people out, but it is not 'New Age' or 'Buddhist' because Christians were doing it way before them (at least as early as the 3rd or 4th century AD). Maybe they ripped it off of us?! Anyway, the main point here is to simply push away life's distractions like all the waiting chores, PTA meetings, leaky faucets, upcoming business meetings, or whatever keeps us from being present and listening "with the ears of the heart."

*This process should last 2 minutes, and should maintain silence.*

### **Step Two: FIRST READING**

Break the silence by asking people, as you read the passage a first time, to listen for something that *grabs their attention*. Could be a color or an image or a word.



***A light bulb:*** Something that 'shines', that impacts, or draws your attention.

*Then read the passage. Then allow everyone to sit in silence for **2 minutes**.*

### **Step Three: SECOND READING**

Break the silence by asking people, as you read the passage a second time, to listen for something that *they may not understand*.



**A question mark:** Anything not understood from the text, or a question you'd like to ask the writer or the Lord.

*Then read the passage. Then allow everyone to sit in silence for 2 minutes.*

### **Step Four: THIRD READING**

Break the silence by asking people, as you read the passage a third time, to listen for *something that God may be inviting them to do*.



**An arrow:** A personal application.

*Then read the passage. Then allow everyone to sit in silence for 2 minutes.*

### **Step Five: DISCUSSION**

Break the silence by asking people to open their eyes (if they have been closed), and opening the floor for people to share what they may have 'heard.'

Now, a word of caution here...clearly, there is a fine line between allowing people the space to share their experience and allowing them the space to share heresy that confuses people. As 1 John says, we are not to "*believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.*" So, rank heresy has to be gently and lovingly, but firmly corrected by recourse to Scripture.

On the other hand, it's not really reasonable to expect anything but heresy from someone that is not saved, and since we can't really peer into anyone else's heart to know their relationship with God or what they are struggling with, a certain degree of humility and circumspection is also in order. So, "in essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, and in all things charity."

The moderator should discern very carefully whether it is necessary to correct a shared experience publicly.

### **Step Six: FINAL READING**

(This step can also be placed before discussion) However, I like to do the comfort portion here, because we want the last impression as a person leaves the gathering to hear from the Lord is HIS comfort over the person—not some random thought about what someone else thinks about the passage, or even someone else's thoughts or opinion on their comfort from God.

Close by asking people, as you read the passage a final time, to close their eyes and listen for *some way that God may seeking to comfort them*.

*Then read the passage. Then allow everyone to sit in silence for 2 minutes.*

Then say "Amen" or open could say, "*In the name of Jesus, Amen*" (or sometimes I say "*In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen*")

\*Adapted from Patrick Morrow (a letter to his father, Greg, to assist in teaching his church body a fresh way of "studying scripture")