

4. “My whole life I have been complaining that my work was constantly interrupted,” Henri Nouwen said near the end of his life, “until I discovered the interruptions were my work.”<sup>83</sup>
5. “When I try to step back from my day’s work, the taskmasters in my head rise up, look at me menacingly, advance toward me. ‘What do you think you’re doing? Uh, just taking a few minutes to . . . sit down. You’re taking a few minutes to sit down? How quaint. How charming. You’re taking a few minutes to sit down, as though there’s not a huge, stinking pile of things that you’ve left undone. You are so weak and pathetic. I’m warning you. There are a thousand things to do. There are a million things to worry about. Get off your lazy, sprawling backside and get busy!’ This happened just today—even though I should know better. I lay down for no reason other than to lie down. Within a minute, a taskmaster in my head spotted me, strode over, started his tirade. ‘When are you going to clean your office? Have you phoned the mechanic yet to have that rattle in your truck motor looked at? What about the situation with that couple at church—when are you going to attend to that? Do you know how many e-mails you haven’t responded to? Do you think you can just wile away an hour here on the couch when all this hangs over you? You are so smug, so rude, so slothful. What kind of time-frittering, excuse-mongering sad sack of a sluggard are you anyhow, lolling about as if the work’s all done? You should be ashamed of yourself.’ Taskmasters despise rest. They create a culture where rest must be stolen, savored on the sly, and of course then it’s not rest: worry over getting caught plunders rest’s restfulness. Even if they never lay a hand on you (hard to do, since they’re imaginary), they mount a ruthless psychological war, a propaganda campaign at once cunning and artless, that defeats you more than whips. Maybe you, too, have a taskmaster or three living with you. I am learning how to let them drown.”<sup>84</sup>
6. “The Chinese join two characters to form a single pictograph for busyness: heart and killing.”<sup>85</sup>
7. “If we do not allow for a rhythm of rest in our overly busy lives, illness becomes our Sabbath— our pneumonia, our cancer, our heart attack, our accidents create Sabbath for us.”<sup>86</sup>
8. Ruth Haley Barton says we suffer from CFS: Christian Fatigue Syndrome

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid. p. 79

<sup>84</sup> Buchanan, M. p. 91

<sup>85</sup> Buchanan, M. p. 45

<sup>86</sup> Mueller, Wayne. *Sabbath: Finding Rest, Renewal, and Delight in our Busy Lives*. Bantam Books. New York. 1999. p. 20

9. "Because we do not rest, we lose our way. We miss the compass points that would show us where to go, we bypass the nourishment that would give us succor. We miss the quiet that would give us wisdom. We miss the joy and love born of effortless delight. Poisoned by this hypnotic belief that good things come only through unceasing determination and tireless effort, we can never truly rest. And for want of rest our lives are in danger."<sup>87</sup>
10. "Psychiatrist Carl Jung once remarked, 'Hurry is not of the Devil ; it is the Devil.'<sup>88</sup>
11. "Being busy is an outward condition, a condition of the body. It occurs when we have many things to do. Busy-ness is inevitable in modern culture. If you are alive today in North America, you are a busy person. There are limits to how much busy-ness we can tolerate, so we wisely find ways to slow down whenever we can. We take vacations, we sit in a La-Z-Boy with a good book, we enjoy a leisurely meal with friends. By itself, busy-ness is not lethal. Being hurried is an inner condition, a condition of the soul. It means to be so preoccupied with myself and my life that I am unable to be fully present with God, with myself, and with other people. I am unable to occupy this present moment. Busy-ness migrates to hurry when we let it squeeze God out of our lives."<sup>89</sup>
12. "There is something deeply spiritual about honoring the limitations of our existence as human beings— physical bodies in a world of time and space. A peace descends upon our lives when we accept what is real rather than always pushing beyond our limits."<sup>90</sup>

#### D. Conclusion

1. "Sabbath isn't eternity, but it's close. It's a kind of a precinct of heaven. A well-kept Sabbath is a dress rehearsal for things above. In finding the rest of God now, we prepare for the fullness of God one day. In Sabbath, we anticipate forever."<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Barton, R. loc 1948

<sup>88</sup> Foster, R. p. 15

<sup>89</sup> Ibid. p. 133

<sup>90</sup> Barton, R. loc 1925

<sup>91</sup> Ibid. p. 213

## Lectio Divina

*Father, you spoke your word and the earth was birthed*

*Speak new life to me today*

*Jesus, you came to us as the Word of God*

*Speak new life to me today*

*Holy Spirit, you awaken us to the word of God*

*Speak new life to me today*

*Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, welcome me now to your word of life*

“For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

<sup>13</sup> Nothing in all creation is hidden from God’s sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.” Heb. 4:12-13 NIV

“...it can go straight to the point of what the human heart is thinking or intends to do.”

The Kingdom New Testament

### A. Defined

1. Lectio – reading
2. Divina – divine, holy
3. Also known as listening prayer
  - a. “When we engage the Scriptures for spiritual transformation, we make it our top priority to listen to God relationally rather than seeking only to learn more about God cognitively.”<sup>92</sup>
  - b. “Reading the Bible and praying the Bible are two very different undertakings. To pray the Bible is to apply listening and silence to the Word of God in order to hear God speak.”<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> Barton, R. loc 615

<sup>93</sup> Wolpert, D. p. 38

**B. Origination**

1. Circa 500 C.E. by Benedict
2. The practice was formalized into four steps by Guigo II, the leader of the Carthusian monks, in 1150.

**C. Purpose**

1. Transformation
  - a. “We have been trained to be informational readers, not spiritual readers...We read the text as rapidly as possible, to amass as much information as we can in as little time as possible (Have you ever caught yourself marking your place and looking ahead to see how much was left?)...Spiritual or formational reading is the exact opposite of informational reading...Instead of coming to the text with our agenda, we come in a posture of openness to God’s agenda.”<sup>94</sup>

**D. The Practice**

1. “The most obvious danger encountered in any exploration of the Contemplative Tradition is the tendency to separate it from ordinary life...smack in the middle of everyday life is precisely where prayer and intimacy with God need to be developed.”<sup>95</sup>
2. Practical preparation
  - a. Choose a time when you have time
  - b. Find a quiet place free from as much distraction as possible
  - c. Get in a comfortable position, but also a position that you can remain alert
  - d. Center yourself/dial down
  - e. Invite the presence of God
  - f. Offer him yourself
3. Four Step Model (see addendum for Six Step Model)
  - a. Lectio (Reading)
  - b. Meditatio (Meditation)
  - c. Oratio (Prayer)
  - d. Contemplatio (Contemplation)

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<sup>94</sup> Mulholland, R. p. 111

<sup>95</sup> Foster, Richard. *Streams of Living Water*. HarperSanFrancisco. 1998. p. 53

## 4. Lectio

- a. Read a passage of scripture
  - 1) Sources
    - a) Lectionary
    - b) Daily Office
    - c) Numerous devotional guides
- b. Keep the length of the passage reasonably short
- c. Read slowly and attentively
  - 1) You can read silently or out loud, whichever is most effective for you.
  - 2) “We live in a world of racecars; lectio divina is a horse and buggy. We communicate by instant messaging; lectio divina is communicating by smoke signals.”<sup>96</sup>
- d. Allow the Lord to highlight a specific word or passage to your heart
  - 1) “A hyperlink on the Internet is a modern metaphor for this process. Listen for the hypertext. Sit with the word.”<sup>97</sup>
  - 2) “The key to *lectio divina* is not focusing too much on the literal, surface meaning of the passage you are reading. That meaning may end up being important, but it is also quite possible that God will use the passage to speak to you about something completely unrelated to its literal content.”<sup>98</sup>
- e. It is generally helpful to read through the passage more than once
- f. Wait patiently for God to speak to you

## 5. Meditatio

- a. Think about what the Lord has pointed out to you. Reflect on the word or phrase.
  - 1) “If lectio can be compared to tasting food, then meditation is like chewing.”<sup>99</sup>
  - 2) Luke 2:19 “But Mary kept all these things, and pondered *them* in her heart.”
- b. Meditation engages thought, imagination, emotion, and desire
  - 1) What’s the word/phrase causing you to feel?
  - 2) What’s the word/phrase causing you to think?
  - 3) What is God saying to you through the word?

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<sup>96</sup> Jones, Tony. *Read, Think, Pray*. Navpress. Colorado Springs. 2003. p. 67

<sup>97</sup> Wolpert, D. p. 43

<sup>98</sup> *ibid.* p. 42

<sup>99</sup> Jones, T. p. 63

4) What is it in my life right now that needs to hear this word?

6. Oratio

- a. Talk to God about what is going on inside you. Tell Him how you feel.
  - 1) Angry, sad, joyful, repentant, love...
- b. Is there anything you want me to do regarding what you have spoken to me?
- c. Pay attention to any sense that God is inviting you to act or to respond in some way to the word you have heard.

7. Contemplatio

- a. "Contemplation is inner quietness."<sup>100</sup>
- b. It's God gazing at us and us gazing at Him
- c. Resting in God's love
- d. The goal is not to hear anything from Him, but simply to be with Him.
- e. Being with Him as opposed to being with the word He has given us.
- f. "When you are ready to rest, you have come to the final phase of the process."<sup>101</sup>
- g. "The prayer of rest— prayer beyond words in which we rest in God's love and sovereignty in our life."<sup>102</sup>

**E. What if nothing happens?**

1. "There is another possible conclusion to your prayer. Perhaps you have heard nothing. You may feel frustrated and angry because all you thought about during your prayer time was your shopping list or your job or something else seemingly unrelated to God. The server was down; the Internet crashed; all links were inactive. For those of us who have grown up in a society that places ultimate value on 'getting things done,' the experience of 'nothing happening' is maddening. However, from Benedict's perspective, such 'failure' is a normal part of our fallen human condition. If encountering God's Word were easy, there would be no need to practice prayer! Prayer is not a product; it is a relationship. Even if you did not experience the wonderful event you imagine, God knows your intention. You wanted to spend time with Jesus, and in some way, although exactly how is a mystery to you, you did.

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid. p. 81

<sup>101</sup> Wolpert, D. p. 45

<sup>102</sup> Barton, R. loc 708

So express your frustration to God; ask for help and for the strength to try again. God does not require that we be successful, just faithful.”<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Wolpert, D. p. 46