



Lectio Terra Participant Guide

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When we re-open our sacred texts, we discover that they are filled with beings who are both other-than-human and startlingly alive. Trees clap their hands. Animals speak. The earth cries out. Where our Western eyes have been taught to read two characters — God and the people — there is in fact a third: our non-human kin. In our climate-changed world, the Bible invites us back into communion both with God and the more-than-human community, by re-engaging with our stories through the lens of the very real geographies where we make our homes.

Here is a guide for engaging with this spiritual practice:

- Set aside a good half hour — an hour if you can.
- Find a quiet place outside with which you want to be in conversation.
- Silence or turn off your phone before you begin. Nature speaks in slower rhythms than our technology does.
- Make sure to bring your Bible and something to use as a journal.
- Listen to the scripture and to the land with the “ears of your heart.” It’s less important whether you are intellectually convinced that trees or rivers can speak, and more that you choose to act as if they do.
- Treat the text as a friend and a teacher. Whether you intellectually “agree” with the passage or not is less important than what it might be able to teach you. Let it be in conversation with you and draw you into conversation with God and the more-than-human world.
- It is perhaps most helpful to pray with your eyes open. It is okay to speak out loud as well.

This process follows the traditional fourfold rhythm of Lectio Divina: Lectio (Read), Meditatio (Meditate), Oratio (Pray), and Contemplatio (Contemplate). Don’t hurry. There is not a set “time” for each of these stages. Trust that one will flow naturally into another.

The Process

Lectio (Read)

1. Be present to the land and your non-human kin. Identify a place or a being that you feel drawn to. What do you notice about it?
 - a. Take time to observe. Resist the urge to metaphorize and instead approach with curiosity, gratitude, and wonder. (For instance, instead of speculating on what a spiderweb could symbolize, wonder where the spider is and how it made this web.)
 - b. Engage all your senses. Trust that you will meet God in the midst of this curiosity.
2. Read the scripture passage slowly. Listen with the “ears of your heart.” Find a word or phrase that you feel drawn to. Repeat this word or phrase silently to yourself for a few minutes, until it has found a resting place in your heart.
3. Return your attention to the place or being and see what else you notice.

Meditatio (Meditate)

Reflect on the passage and on the land. What are they saying to you right now? Bring your mind, your emotions, and your body into the reflection.

Oratio (Pray)

What are this scripture and this place inviting from me? What am I called to do (or to cease doing)? Begin a conversation with God and the land in prayer. Give the land a chance to offer its own prayer and speak to you.

Contemplatio (Contemplate)

We now begin to internalize what we have experienced, so that it becomes enfleshed in us. Rest in silence. Reflect on what has come to you during this time. If possible, do this in a journal that you can return to multiple times, so you can track this ongoing conversation. When you feel that this moment has come to a close, offer a prayer of thanks and depart. This is an ongoing process that will not be completed today.