



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 only 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 as we learn to engage with its sacred 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.
- Bring your Bible and something to use as a journal.
- Find a quiet place outside.
- Silence or turn off your phone before you begin. Nature speaks in slower rhythms than our technology does.
- Listen to the scripture and to the land with the “ears of your heart.” It’s not important whether you are intellectually convinced that trees or rivers can speak; what matters is your willingness to imagine the possibility and to be curious, open to surprise.
- Treat the text as a friend and a teacher. Whether or not you intellectually “agree” with the passage 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 may be helpful to pray with your eyes open. It’s okay to speak out loud as well.

This process follows the traditional fourfold rhythm of Lectio Divina: Lectio (Read), Meditatio (Reflect), Oratio (Respond), and Contemplatio (Rest). Take your time. There’s no hurry. Each step may last only a moment or may last several minutes. Trust that one step will flow naturally into another. Feel free to move back and forth between different steps, as you feel led.

The Process

- Find a comfortable position that allows you to be both relaxed and alert. Spend some time settling down. Take several minutes to ground yourself in your physical sensations.
- Reflect: What intention, hope, or desire do you wish to bring into this practice?

Lectio (Read)

1. Be present to the land and your non-human kin. Notice smells, sounds, textures, and colors. Notice what is moving and what is still. Allow a particular being or place to draw your attention. 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 to which you feel drawn. 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 (Reflect)

Reflect on the passage and on the land. What are they saying to you right now? What messages or insights are coming to you?

Oratio (Respond)

As you take in the insights you received, what is your spontaneous emotional response? Share your feelings with God. Engage in a conversation with God and the land in prayer. Give the land a chance to offer its own prayer and speak to you.

Contemplatio (Rest)

Quietly rest in God's presence. You are lovingly present to one another. Breathe in God's presence. When attention falters, you can resume reading (Lectio) until the next moment of insight or movement of love. Continue this peaceful, unhurried rhythm of reading and pausing until it feels complete.

At the end of your prayer:

- Give thanks to God.
- Shift your posture. You may wish to bow or touch your palms together as a gesture of gratitude and respect.
- Take a few minutes to get in touch with what you were feeling, sensing, or intuiting during your prayer. Note in your journal exactly what you were feeling, sensing, or intuiting. If possible, take notes in a journal to which you can return so that you can track this ongoing conversation. This is an ongoing process that won't be completed today.