

God's word is not a puzzle to be solved, or an equation to be charted, or a theology to be ascribed. Rather God's word is a life to be lived. God's word is intended to be relational. Creation was created out of community to be in community. To bring about relationship between Creator and creation and to establish good and loving relationships between the created order. People with people, people with themselves, and people with the earth and its non-human life forms.

It has been that way since the beginning. God's word has always been about establishing community especially after sin fractured the very good created order Godself established.

It seems to me at times we make God's word or laws to be a list of dos and don'ts. It becomes a static list that forms a grid to which we succumb intellectually but not with our actual way of living.

That's what many of the Scribes and Pharisees did. They knew the law, recited the law, held others to the law but missed the point.

Matthew 25

New Living Translation

²³ "What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest income from your herb gardens,^[c] but you ignore the more important aspects of the law—justice, mercy, and faith. You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things. ²⁴ Blind guides! You strain your water so you won't accidentally swallow a gnat, but you swallow a camel!^[c]

²⁵ "What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are so careful to clean the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside you are filthy—full of greed and self-indulgence! ²⁶ You blind Pharisee! First wash the inside of the cup and the dish,^[c] and then the outside will become clean, too.

²⁷ "What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs—beautiful on the outside but filled on the inside with dead people's bones and all sorts of impurity. ²⁸ Outwardly you look like righteous people, but inwardly your hearts are filled with hypocrisy and lawlessness.

I think what Jesus is trying to point out is that the word of God is to be alive and in motion, God's word isn't to be a stationary obstacle used to keep people in or out, it's not meant to be a set of regulations that create dead routines. It's like Jesus is saying to the Pharisees don't let God's law box you in, let it shape you.

So God's word is not meant to be static, rather it is dynamic. It is a force or that brings about activity, growth, and change. Through the working of the Holy Spirit God's law is to be active and alive calling us to be living embodiments of God's word or the law. Or as the Apostle Paul wrote

Romans 12:1,2

The Message

Take your everyday, ordinary life—your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life—and place it before God as an offering. Embracing what God does for you is the best thing you can do for him. Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it. Unlike the culture around you, always dragging you down to its level of immaturity, God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.

The Psalter is not a collection of beautiful sayings from which we can lift pious snippets. It is, taken as a whole, the ground and constitution of an entirely different life-world, one that refuses to let us live in the thin world of anxiety, greed, self-sufficiency, denial, despair, amnesia, and normlessness.
Walter Bruggemann

God Our Mother

God our Father
Giver of daily bread
Blessing our hands and covering our head

God our Mother
Leading us into peace
Drawing and comforting all those in need

Hallowed hallowed be thy name
Hallowed hallowed be thy name
Hallowed hallowed be thy name
In all the earth

Holy Spirit
Guiding our very step
Deliver us and grant places of rest

Jesus Savior
Grabbing us from the grave
Defeating the fall and bringing the light of day

Hallowed hallowed be thy name
Hallowed hallowed be thy name
Hallowed hallowed be thy name
In all the earth

Lisa Gungor

Lectio Divina means “Divine Reading” and refers specifically to an approach to prayer and scripture reading practiced by monastics since the early Church.

The idea of praying with sacred scripture was introduced to the Church through ancient Jewish tradition. Christians in the early Church continued this tradition and further developed the practice of prayer and meditation using mostly the psalms as a rich source of heartfelt engagement with God.

In the 11th century, a monk named Guigo formalized this practice by creating what he named Lectio Divina. He described the practice in a letter written to his fellow monks which came to be known as *The Ladder of Monks*. In the letter Guigo describes a four-runged ladder to Heaven, with each rung being one of the four steps in his method of prayerful scripture reading. (He was inspired by Jacob’s vision of angels ascending and descending from heaven.) So I will read the steps, along with a short definition of each and brief quotes from Guigo’s letter:

Lectio (reading): An attentive, slow, repetitious recitation of a short passage of scripture.

“looking on Holy Scripture with all one’s will and wit”

Meditatio (meditation): An effort to understand the passage and apply it to my own life.

“a studious searching with the mind to know what was before concealed”

Oratio (prayer): Engaging or talking with God about the passage.

“a devout desiring of the heart to get what is good and avoid what is evil”

Contemplatio (contemplation): Allowing oneself to be absorbed in the words of God as the Holy Spirit draws us into His presence through scripture.

“the lifting up of the heart to God tasting somewhat of the heavenly sweetness”

So today what I would like to do is to lead us through the sixteen verses in a Lectio Divina style.

During the first reading, listen for words or phrases that stand out to you. It may be something that is encouraging, or a comfort, or something that raises a question or some dissonance. It may even be both. Allow the words to arise from the psalm, as if it is God’s word for you today. Let your mind turn the words or phrases over and over

Psalm 119:161-176

New International Version

¹⁶¹ Rulers persecute me without cause,
but my heart trembles at your word.

¹⁶² I rejoice in your promise
like one who finds great spoil.

¹⁶³ I hate and detest falsehood
but I love your law.

¹⁶⁴ Seven times a day I praise you. (seven times is a code word for ‘many times’ not a prescription for practice)
for your righteous laws.

¹⁶⁵ Great peace have those who love your law,
and nothing can make them stumble.

¹⁶⁶ I wait for your salvation, LORD,
and I follow your commands.

¹⁶⁷ I obey your statutes,
for I love them greatly.

¹⁶⁸ I obey your precepts and your statutes,
for all my ways are known to you.

- ¹⁶⁹ May my cry come before you, LORD;
give me understanding according to your word.
- ¹⁷⁰ May my supplication come before you; (the action of asking for something earnestly or humbly)
deliver me according to your promise.
- ¹⁷¹ May my lips overflow with praise,
for you teach me your decrees.
- ¹⁷² May my tongue sing of your word,
for all your commands are righteous.
- ¹⁷³ May your hand be ready to help me,
for I have chosen your precepts.
- ¹⁷⁴ I long for your salvation, LORD,
and your law gives me delight.
- ¹⁷⁵ Let me live that I may praise you,
and may your laws sustain me.
- ¹⁷⁶ I have strayed like a lost sheep.
Seek your servant,
for I have not forgotten your commands.

Awaken My Soul

Come, come like the rain
A quiet stream, a holy downpour
Come, come like the rain
A truer fount than I could ask for

Reign over me, awaken my soul

Come, come like the wind
A gentle breeze a Holy breath here
Come, come like the wind
Your perfect love removing all fear

Breathe into me, awaken my soul

Breathe into us, awaken our souls

Psalm 119:161-176
International Children's Bible

During this reading, interact with the words and phrases that stood out to you. Is there some way you can put yourself into the psalmist's picture of God? Ask yourself how the words or phrases intersect with your life. What about the words or phrases connect your experiences and the things you are feeling? What are they telling you about yourself and about God?

¹⁶¹ Leaders attack me for no reason.

But I fear your law in my heart.

¹⁶² I am as happy over your promises

as if I had found a great treasure.

¹⁶³ I hate and despise lies.

But I love your teachings.

¹⁶⁴ Seven times a day I praise you

for your fair laws.

¹⁶⁵ Those who love your teachings will find true peace.

Nothing will defeat them.

¹⁶⁶ I am waiting for you to save me, Lord.

I will obey your commands.

¹⁶⁷ I keep your rules.

I love them very much.

¹⁶⁸ I keep your orders and rules.

You know everything I do.

¹⁶⁹ Hear my cry to you, Lord.

Let your word help me understand.

¹⁷⁰ Listen to my prayer.

Save me as you promised.

¹⁷¹ Let me speak your praise.

You have taught me your demands.

¹⁷² Let me sing about your promises.

All your commands are fair.

¹⁷³ Always be ready to help me

because I have chosen to obey your commands.

¹⁷⁴ I want you to save me, Lord.

I love your teachings.

¹⁷⁵ Let me live so I can praise you.

Your laws will help me.

¹⁷⁶ I have wandered like a lost sheep.

Look for your servant because I have not forgotten your commands.

Breathe

Breather, breathe on us now
Open Your mouth
And speak the word
That heals this broken ground
Say, say what You will
As we are still
As we breathe in
The very breath of God

Oh Spirit of God
Here with us now
Giving us life again
Breathe, breathe on us now
Fill us with Your love
Send us with Your pow'r
Spirit of God

David Gungor | Lisa Gungor | Michael Gungor

Psalm 119:161-176
The Message

During this reading try to begin to forming words to God. Can you find a way to use the words or phrases that stood out to you in a prayer to God? Tell God of the things you are feeling – the things that encourage you, the things that disappoint you, the things you need help for, the things you are thankful for. Is there some action that goes along with what you are feeling – something you need to let go of, to take on, to make right, to physically do?

¹⁶¹⁻¹⁶⁸ I've been slandered unmercifully by the politicians,

but my awe at your words keeps me stable.

I'm ecstatic over what you say,

like one who strikes it rich.

I hate lies—can't stand them!—

but I love what you have revealed.

Seven times each day I stop and shout praises
for the way you keep everything running right.
For those who love what you reveal, everything fits—
no stumbling around in the dark for them.
I wait expectantly for your salvation;
GOD, I do what you tell me.
My soul guards and keeps all your instructions—
oh, how much I love them!
I follow your directions, abide by your counsel;
my life's an open book before you.

* * *

¹⁶⁹⁻¹⁷⁶ Let my cry come right into your presence, GOD;
provide me with the insight that comes only from your Word.
Give my request your personal attention,
rescue me on the terms of your promise.
Let praise cascade off my lips;
after all, you've taught me the truth about life!
And let your promises ring from my tongue;
every order you've given is right.
Put your hand out and steady me
since I've chosen to live by your counsel.
I'm homesick, GOD, for your salvation;
I love it when you show yourself!
Invigorate my soul so I can praise you well,
use your decrees to put iron in my soul.
And should I wander off like a lost sheep—seek me!
I'll recognize the sound of your voice.

Wonder

Have you ever seen the wonder
In the glimmer of first sight
As the eyes begin to open

And the blindness meets the light
If you have so say

I see the world in light
I see the world in wonder
I see the world in life
Bursting in living colour
I see the world Your way
And I'm walking in the light

Have you ever seen the wonder
In the air of second chance
As you come out of the waters
With the breath of life again
If you have so sing

I see the world in grace
I see the world in gospel
I see the world You made
And I'm walking in the light
I see the world in love
I see the world in freedom
I see the world You made
And I'm walking in the light

Joel Houston | Matt Crocker