

## CN SMALL GROUPS 2023: **LIFE WITH JESUS**

**Romans 14:17** – For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, but of righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit

**John 10:10** – The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life and have it to the full.

**Galatians 5:22-23** – But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.

What kind of life does the New Testament describe for disciples of Jesus? It is overwhelmingly a life of peace, joy, love and hope. Life to the full – as Jesus describes it. An experience of rest – an easy yoke and a light burden. An ability to live like Jesus, full of peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, and self-control.

Jesus consistently presented the kingdom of God as open and available and present to be experienced now; if not fully, at least partially. And Paul characterises the life of the Kingdom as “righteousness, peace and joy”.

Is there a single person that doesn't want righteousness, peace and joy?

Righteousness – a life of integrity, a clean conscience, the ability to live consistently according to your values, to not 'blow it', to be the kind of person you actually want to be.

Peace – the feeling of security knowing that you are safe in God's care, the ability to stay level-headed, to not be quick to anger or frustration or panic; to live without gnawing doubt and anxiety.

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Joy – the feeling of wellbeing and hope, the ability to be content and present in the moment, not somewhere else or checked out mentally, finding pleasure in the everyday experience of life.

This is the life we yearn for and almost all of our sin and all of our addictions are either an attempt to get righteousness, peace and joy, or an attempt to put a band-aid over our lack of righteousness, peace and joy.

If Jesus is right, then we can live a life of genuine righteousness, peace and joy now, in the middle of our current circumstances. Not when the kids are a little older, not when work is a little easier, not when the mortgage is paid down a little more... Now!

There is a way of life available where we are so connected to God by the Holy Spirit that whatever life throws at us we can respond with integrity, peace and joy.



**Nondiscipleship costs abiding peace, a life penetrated throughout by love, faith that sees everything in the light of God's overriding governance for good, hopefulness that stands firm in the most discouraging of circumstances, power to do what is right and withstand the forces of evil. In short, nondiscipleship costs you exactly the abundance of life Jesus said he came to bring (John 10:10). "**

**(Willard, The Great Omission, 9)**



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## **Lectio Divina - Matthew 11:25-30**

### **The Father Revealed in the Son**

25 At that time Jesus said, "I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. 26 Yes, Father, for this is what you were pleased to do.

27 "All things have been committed to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

28 "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light."

**Something to ponder:** How might you read this differently if you thought of it as an invitation to want to enter into, not a command to feel guilty about?

# LECTIO DIVINA

Lectio Divina means “divine reading” in Latin. It’s a meditative way of reading the Bible in which we let go of our own agendas and open ourselves to what God is trying to say to us.

Like any practice, we need to prepare our hearts and our minds. You might do this as follows:

Stop. Make yourself comfortable. Take a few deep breaths. Pray something like: “Here I am God, let me hear from you”, or Brother Lawrence’s prayer: “Here I am Lord, all devoted to you, make me according to your heart”.

## Lectio Divina Process

### **1. Read**

Read the passage slowly and carefully. Stop for a moment. Take a few deep breaths. Read the passage again, slowly and carefully.

### **2. Reflect**

Notice. What sticks out to you? Perhaps it’s a particular image, phrase, or single word. Let that be your focus, meditating on what might God be trying to show you through what stands out. Try not to get stuck in “study mode” and analyse the passage too much.

### **3. Respond**

Respond to the text and to God. Ask God to show you what He wants you to take from it. This could lead you to offer thanks, ask forgiveness, or simply talk with God about what the passage brought to your heart. You might find it helpful to write something down in your phone or your journal.

### **4. Rest**

Rest with God. Be aware of God’s presence with you. Listen for His voice. You might like to practice 2-3 minutes of silence. Don’t worry if your mind wanders, just notice that and bring your attention back to Jesus.

Sources: <https://bustedhalo.com/ministry-resources/lectio-divina-beginners-guide> and <https://hallow.com/blog/how-to-pray-lectio-divina/>

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### **Lectio Divina - Matthew 6:25-34**

#### **Do Not Worry**

25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27 Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?

28 "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. 29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you—you of little faith? 31 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' 32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. 33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. 34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

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## **Lectio Divina - Matthew 7:24-27**

### **The Wise and Foolish Builders**

24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. 26 But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 27 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."

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