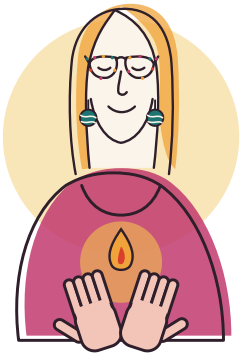
Lectio Divina on Luke 1:35-38

"God, let me say my own yes with Mary, freely and with my questions intact."



PASSAGE
Luke 1:35-38

TIME
20 to 30 minutes

BEST FOR
3 to 12 people

YOU'LL NEED
The passage printed or on a screen, and four readers if you can, ideally different voices.

What this is about

This is the center of the Annunciation story. Mary has asked how this can be, and the angel now answers her. He tells her about the Holy Spirit and about Elizabeth, and he says that no word from God will fail. Then Mary gives her answer. In the last week of Advent, many people in the group are being asked for yeses of their own, so her words land close to home.

New to Lectio Divina?

Lectio Divina (say LEK-see-oh dih-VEE-nuh) is Latin for "divine reading." It is an old Christian way of praying with Scripture. The group hears one short passage four times, and each time listens a little differently. The four readings follow four movements: listen, reflect, respond, and rest. You do not teach or explain the passage. You keep time and keep the silence.

Before you gather

Pray this passage yourself first, using the app, so the silences are familiar to you.

Choose four readers if you can, and give each one the passage ahead of time. A different voice for each reading helps people hear it fresh. Ask them to read slowly, in a plain voice, and to wait a breath before they begin and after they finish. Reading aloud is not a performance.

Have a bell or a phone timer ready, and a candle if you like. Print the passage in large type, one copy for each person. Sit in a circle if you can.

LUKE 1:35–38 (BSB)

35 *The angel replied, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the Holy One to be born will be called the Son of God.*
36 *Look, even Elizabeth your relative has conceived a son in her old age, and she who was called barren is in her sixth month.*
37 *For no word from God will ever fail."*
38 *"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May it happen to me according to your word." Then the angel left her.*

How to lead it

1 **2 MIN**
Gather. Light a candle if you have one. Sit in silence for a minute, then explain how this will go.
Say: "We will hear one passage of Scripture four times. Each time we will listen for something a little different. Nobody has to speak, and you can pass at any time. We will not discuss or correct what anyone says."

2 **1 MIN**
Pray the grace for this week together.
Say: "God, let me say my own yes with Mary, freely and with my questions intact."

3 **5 MIN**
First reading: listen. Keep one minute of silence. Then go around the circle. Each person says one word or phrase that stayed with them, with no explanation. After each person say "Thank you," and go on to the next. Take your own turn last.
Say: "Listen for a word or phrase that stands out to you."

4 **5 MIN**

Second reading, in a different voice: reflect. Keep two minutes of silence. Then ask who would like to share a sentence or two. You do not need to answer or comment.

Say: "What do you notice about the way the angel answers Mary, and about the way she answers back?"

5 **5 MIN**

Third reading, in another voice: respond. Keep two minutes of silence. Then invite people to share, or to pray silently for the person on their right.

Say: "What might God be inviting you to say yes to, or to let go of, this week?"

6 **4 MIN**

Fourth reading: rest. Keep three minutes of silence together. Nothing needs to be said. Ring the bell when the time is up.

Say: "Rest here. We will sit in silence until I ring the bell."

7 **2 MIN**

Close. Read this line together: "I am the Lord's servant. May it happen to me according to your word." Then thank the group.

Say: "Thank you for praying together. The peace of Christ be with you."

About 24 minutes in all, plus the time it takes to read aloud.

These times fit a group of about six. With twelve people, add five minutes for the sharing. With three or four, the sharing goes faster. If you have only twenty minutes, use three readings and skip the sharing after the second.

If you get stuck

- The silence feels too long: stay with it. Breathe. Do not fill it. Most people find the second minute is where it settles.
- Someone cries: stay where you are, pass a tissue, and say, "Take your time. We are here." Check in with them after the prayer.
- Someone explains the passage or gives advice: thank them, then say, "Let's stay with the words themselves."
- No one speaks: count slowly to twenty. Then ask people to share with one other person. A group that stays silent has not failed.
- Someone seems overwhelmed: thank them, stay close, and afterward suggest a pastor, a spiritual director, or a counselor.

A note for leaders

Do not teach or explain the passage. A short explanation can end the listening. If someone shares something painful, thank them and let the silence that follows be long. Mary's words can sound like a demand to say yes to everything. Some people, especially those who give a lot, may feel tired or tight hearing them. If that comes up, thank them, and point out that Mary asked her question before she gave her answer.

Scripture quotations are from the Berean Standard Bible (BSB), which has been dedicated to the public domain. Learn more at berean.bible.