LECTIO DIVINA

LIBBY: We have a question. Do you ever wonder, "God, are you really there?"

KAI: What is your plan for my life?

LIBBY: Why is this happening to me?

KAI: What do you want me to do in this particular situation?

LIBBY: Okay, so that's four questions.

CATHOLIC CENTRAL OPENING TITLES

KAI: Hi, I'm Kai.

LIBBY: And I'm Libby.

KAI: Welcome to Catholic Central. Today, we're going to tell you about an ancient practice that Catholics use to hear what God is saying to them personally.

LIBBY: It sounds like voodoo woo-hoo, but it's called Lectio Divina. It's a very cool form of Christian prayer using the Bible.

KAI: Lectio is Latin for reading, and Divina is Latin for divine or sacred. You don't have to live in monastery or a convent to practice Lectio Divina. It's for everybody, especially everyday people like you and me, and even this one.

LIBBY: The tradition of sacred reading goes back to the early days of the Catholic Church. Saints like Augustine, Benedict and John of the Cross practiced it.

KAI: Non-Catholic Christians like the famous Protestant preacher John Calvin also promoted it as a way to grow closer to God.

LIBBY: Some people might think it's basically like studying the Bible…

KAI: But not really. A traditional Bible study is where you examine a particular biblical passage to learn what it means. Now, that definitely has value, and it can speak to your heart, but that's more like using your intellect. Lectio Divina is more personal than that. Think about a bird.

LIBBY: Got it. Wingspan 13 inches, red bill, weight 11 ounces. It's flying.

KAI: Exactly. You can study a bird's anatomy and bone structure to find out how it works, but that's not the same thing as letting it fly.

LIBBY: Lectio Divina is not like dissecting scripture academically. It's letting it come alive and do what it's meant to do.

KAI: Which is to speak to us where we're at. Catholics believe the Bible exists for God to connect and speak to his children.

LIBBY: Okay, so you may be wondering, "Lectio Divina, where do you begin?"

KAI: Silence!

LIBBY: Silence is important. You want to find a quiet place. It could be your house, your car, somewhere in nature. It doesn't really matter. Then take some time to settle into the silence.

KAI: You want to make sure you're free of distractions. That means not looking at your phone, Libby.

LIBBY: I'm looking at my Bible app trying to pick out what to read.

KAI: Oh, well, good, because then you want to pick a passage.

LIBBY: Keep in mind, it doesn't have to be a whole book of the Bible or anything.

KAI: Yeah. You can also read other spiritual writings like the writings of the Church fathers or stories about the saints. But the Bible is always the best place to start for listening to God.

LIBBY: It's better to start small. Pick a chapter or a few verses. Then read it over, either digitally-

KAI: Or old school.

LIBBY: OK. I'm picking Psalm 139.

KAI: Great choice. There are four main steps to Lectio Divina. Once you're in silence and have chosen what to read, the first step is, well, reading it.

LIBBY: Lectio.

KAI: Read it slowly with an open mind and heart. Go over it a few times. Really take the time to let it sink in.

LIBBY: As you're reading it, pay attention to any words or phrases that jump out at you.

KAI: Sometimes God can say more to you in a few words than in a few chapters.

V/O: If I say, "Surely darkness shall hide me, and night shall be my light, Darkness is not dark for you, and night shines as the day.”

LIBBY: OK. Out of those lines, the word that stands out to me is “hide.”

KAI: Which leads to the next step of Lectio Divina, oratio, which means prayer. Once you've honed in on a certain word or phrase, ask God why that's standing out to you and what it might mean for your life or a particular situation you're going through.

LIBBY: Once you've prayed about it, the next step is to meditate on it.

KAI: Meditatio. This is where you take the time to really chew on what you've just read.

LIBBY: Chew?

KAI: That's how the Church fathers put it, chewing, turning it over in your thoughts and listening to what God is saying to you through it. It's listening with your heart.

LIBBY: What I'm feeling is that maybe there are ways I hide from God, or maybe it's just telling me that God is with me in every situation, even when I'm lost in distractions. There's no place too hidden away for God's love.

KAI: Okay, so, now we're on a roll. But what if you have trouble understanding the verse, or you get confused, or you misinterpret what it might be saying to you?

LIBBY: You can talk to a trusted, wise friend about it. Always remember the law of love. Nothing in scripture can contradict love of God or love of neighbor.

KAI: If you think the verse is telling you to do something that offends God or hurts another person, then you're misinterpreting it.

LIBBY: Once you've let the scripture really sink into your heart, this leads to the final step of Lectio Divina, contemplation.

KAI: Contemplation is where you empty your mind of all images and thoughts and just rest in God's presence for a while. You bask in his love.

LIBBY: How long is the whole process supposed to take?

KAI: Well, 20 minutes is a good place to start, but it could be 30 or 40 or longer. Just follow the steps and see where it takes you.

LIBBY: You know, Lectio Divina sounds a lot like another prayer form we've talked about on this show, Ignatian Meditation.

KAI: That's true, but there's a difference. Ignatian Meditation is where you use your imagination to place yourself in a scene from the Bible, like the way I did with the story of Jesus meeting the blind man in our other episode.

LIBBY: You imagined the sights, sounds, and smells and let them speak to you.

KAI: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

LIBBY: Lectio Divina is more like listening to what God is saying to you through a particular scripture passage or word.

KAI: It's not using your imagination to visualize a scene from the Bible.

LIBBY: It's more like what Saint Augustine said, "To look at Him who is looking at you." Lectio Divina is meant to help you have a close, intimate encounter with God in four simple steps.

KAI: Yeah, but you want to be careful not to get hung up on the steps. Lectio Divina is not a technique you have to master to gain some supernatural experience. Like all prayer, it's not about doing it just right. It's just about doing it.

LIBBY: You might have to try it a few times to really get the hang of it, and that's okay.

KAI: To wrap up, Lectio Divina is a simple, unique way to read the Bible and listen to what God is saying to you through a particular passage or verse, or even just a word or two.

LIBBY: Got those big questions?

KAI: Here are the answers.

LIBBY: Reading.

KAI: Prayer.

LIBBY: Meditation.

KAI: Contemplation.

LIBBY: I'm Libby. Thanks for watching.

KAI: I'm Kai. See you next time.

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