



Lectio Vicinitas
(NEIGHBORHOOD READING)

Roles of group members:

1. **Scribe:** the person who will write down observations on the community observation guide sheet. Lead the group through steps 2 and 3.
2. **Prayer Guide:** the person who will invite group members to share prayers and blessings throughout the walk. Lead the group through steps 1, 4, and 5.
3. **Walking Guide:** the person who will guide the group in the prompted direction (see Map of Our Community), keep time, and make sure everyone's observations are heard. Guide the group back to church when it's time to return.

Steps for Lectio Vicinitas (NEIGHBORHOOD READING)¹

1. SILENCIO (PREPARE)

As you prepare to depart, quiet your inner voice.

Invite the Holy Spirit to guide your steps and your observations.

Seek a mindset of openness, leaving preconceived assumptions behind.

The **Prayer Guide** may begin with a prayer or blessing for the group.

2. LECTIO (READ)

With the group's input, the **Walking Guide** will prayerfully lead the group to begin the journey in the prompted direction.

As you begin walking, take special notice of whatever and whomever you see. In this stage try to minimize interpreting what you see and maximize observation.

Use the following questions to help your group notice, but do not feel the need to be contained to these categories.

Who are the people you see?

What structures do you notice?

Where are the places of activity?

What signs of hope, need, or change do you notice?

Take note of places where people are gathering. Look for written words on signs, posters, magazines. Observe the housing in the community, if a property is for sale or rent look up the cost.

What stands out to you right away?

¹ Adapted from Thelisteningchurch.com, © 2019 Luke Edwards

You can make notes on paper or on your phone if it helps you to remember. The **Scribe** can use the Reading Notes section on pages 7-10 to jot down your observations and the observations of your group.

3. MEDITATIO (MEDITATE)

Find a quiet place to sit in the neighborhood.

Reflect upon what you saw.

Replay the walk in your imagination, stopping for moments that stood out to you.

Ruminate on these moments. What stood out to you about them?

Slowly shift your focus from the mind to the heart.

What feelings stirred in you?

What was happening under the surface?

Where did you feel God's presence on your walk?

Where could you see God already working?

4. ORATIO (PRAY)

Shift into a conversation with God about what you saw on your walk. You can do this in a journal if it helps.

Ask God some questions. Ask God for clarity in areas that are unclear.

Ask God where you might partner with God's redemptive work already happening in the community.

If you (the **Prayer guide**) feel prompted, invite your group to bless the community. You can use your own words, or one of the blessings below.

God, help us see your presence in this community.

Lord, teach us to love our community through knowing our community.

Gentle Spirit, show us signs of hope. Gentle spirit, reveal signs of pain.

God, bless us as we seek to know and love our neighbors.

5. CONTEMPLATIO (CONTEMPLATE)

As you begin to close, jot down your newly discovered insights about your neighborhood.

Write down anything you feel like God was saying to you at this time. Rest in God's presence for a few moments before returning to the Fellowship Hall to gather and reflect together. The **Walking Guide** will lead the way back!

As you walk in your community, look for evidence of the following:

People groups: Who is standing at bus stops, hanging out on street corners, going into businesses, playing in the park, waiting in line at the store? Note ages, ethnicities, languages, and apparent economic status. How much do you see people interacting with one another?

Places of activity: A pizza joint crowded with youth, a shopping plaza, a heavily trafficked intersection, playgrounds, school zones

Structures: What are the types and conditions of the structures (homes, businesses, roads, parks)? How much "free space" is there in the community? What is the mix of private and public space?

Services: Where can people go to shop, eat out, get an education, worship, and receive assistance? What appears to be the quantity and quality of available services? Who is providing services, and who is receiving them?

Signs of change: Note which businesses are opening or closing, and if housing is under construction, for sale, or being demolished. Check for languages added to shop signs, and buildings used in ways different from their original purpose. Overall, do conditions appear to be getting better or worse?

Signs of hope: Where is there evidence of God's grace and God's people at work? Look for churches and nonprofit organizations, playing children, uplifting artwork, Christian symbols, social gatherings, and gardens. Look especially for local assets that could be connected with neighborhood needs.

Signs of need: Look for evidence of hardship, hurt or injustice. Is what you see specific to particular areas or affecting the neighborhood as a whole? Be aware that marginalized people and social problems are often hidden, especially in communities that appear well-off.

READING (LECTIO) NOTES

Structures

People Groups

Services

Places of Activity

Signs of Hope

Signs of Need

Signs of Change

Other Notes