



# PRAYER A SIMPLE GUIDE

'Journeying up' is about our love of God and our response to his overwhelming love for us. Prayer is the backbone of the church. It is one of the key ways in which we are able to experience God's love for us, and offer our response in return. It is an essential ingredient of being fully human. It helps us enter the everyday realities of life more deeply.

Here are some ideas to help.

## THE WAY OF LIFE PRAYER



*Eternal God,  
your Son Jesus Christ  
is the way, the truth and the life  
for all creation;  
grant us grace to walk in his way,  
to rejoice in his truth,  
and to share his risen life;  
who lives and reigns with you and  
the Holy Spirit,  
one God now and for ever.  
Amen.*



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# PRAYING WITH THE BIBLE

## 1. The quiet time

You may find it helpful to use Bible reading notes (from BRF, Scripture Union, or Reflections for Daily Prayer), and then pray about the way the passage has struck you.

What has it made you want to say 'thank you', 'sorry' or 'please' to God for?

## 2. Holy reading

A way of feeding and meditating on the Bible.

- **Read:** Take a passage and start to read slowly until a phrase captures your attention.
- **Reflect:** Chew the phrase carefully, drawing the goodness out of it. Repeat it, roll it around your mind, suck it slowly for its meaning.
- **Respond:** Pray about the thoughts and feelings that have emerged.
- **Rest:** You may just want to stay in silence for a while. You can then repeat this process as you read further.

This can also be done fruitfully together with a small group of people, where reflections are shared.

## 3. Ignatian meditation

A way of entering a gospel event using your imagination - with the senses of sight, smell, touch, taste and hearing.

- Read the passage slowly and attentively at least twice. Put the Bible down.
- Close your eyes and re-run the story, using the senses to enter it imaginatively (see the various people, smell the sea air, listen to the voices, feel the stones underfoot...) Watch the story unfold.
- At the end, move closer in to Jesus and get into conversation with him about what has just happened. Let that conversation (prayer) go on as long as necessary.
- Reflect on what you've learned, and give thanks.

## DAY BY DAY: A SIMPLE DAILY PATTERN

It can be helpful to follow an ordered pattern of prayer. The structure carries us along, however we are feeling, and makes sure that we are fed with a regular diet (of scripture, psalms and prayer). Here is a basic pattern which can be adapted to suit individual preferences. Either of the items marked \*\* are optional if time is short.

### Preparation

In the name of God; Father, Son and Holy Spirit.  
May the light of your presence, O God  
set my heart on fire with love for you. Amen.



### \*\*Psalm and Psalm collect

There is a booklet of suggested Psalms and associated prayers for each day of the month (available from [shelley.porter@truro.anglican.org](mailto:shelley.porter@truro.anglican.org)). Or simply read through the Psalms a day at a time in your own Bible.

### \*\*Reading

Use the lectionary, or your own scheme, or Bible reading notes, followed by silent reflection ('What does this passage say to me?')

### Prayer

Start with things to say 'thank you', 'sorry' and 'please' to God for.  
Pray the Lord's Prayer.

### Offering of the day

*Lord, I offer this day to you:  
the work I do, the people I meet,  
the pleasures and the problems,  
that in everything I may know the love of Christ,  
and be thankful.  
Amen.*

Think about the day's activities and appointments, committing them to God.

### Concluding prayer

The Way of Life prayer on the front of this leaflet.

## PRAYING THROUGH THE DAY

It might be helpful to have certain milestones during the day to help you remain in a prayerful frame of mind. For example:

### STARTING THE DAY

'Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.' (Colossians 3.17)

Think about the day's events and appointments, asking God to help you to 'do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus...'

### DURING THE DAY

**Practise the presence of God** – remember God's presence at odd moments and in gaps between activities and appointments.

**Trigger prayers** – for example: in a queue, pray for people who have to wait; turning on a tap, pray for those who have no clean water; hearing a siren, pray for the emergency; signing a letter, pray for the person receiving it; after a phone call, pray for the person you've just spoken to.

**Arrow prayers** – of need or thanksgiving, at any time, about anything. Short, spontaneous, literary merit not required!

**Prayer as you walk** – to work, to school, to the shops, with the dog. Keep a 'Holding cross' in your pocket and pray as you hold it.

### END OF THE DAY

**Survey the day** – run through the day recalling the moments where something significant happened. Turn the memory into thanksgiving, or apology, or prayer for someone in need.

**Compline/Night Prayer** – a form of set prayer found in Common Worship.



## GETTING STARTED

Prayer isn't a technique; it's a relationship. It's not about trying to persuade a reluctant God to do something, or to craft a perfect set of words to win God over. It's a friendship, with many different dimensions. It starts in the most ordinary, instinctive reactions to everyday life:

- **Gratitude:** good things are always happening to us, however small.
- **Wonder:** we often see amazing things (e.g. in nature) but pass them by.
- **Need:** we bump into scores of needs every day.
- **Sorrow:** we've messed up.

Prayer is taking those instincts of gratitude, wonder, sorrow and the desire to help, and stretching them out before God. Everyone has these instincts. Prayer is about making our responses intentional and focusing them towards God. We therefore need to give prayer that most scarce commodity – time. The rule here is: *Start small; Stay natural; Be honest.*

## PRAYER AS RELATIONSHIP

Like all good relationships (marriage, children, close friends), our relationship with God has different elements:

**'Just getting on with it':** we don't need to get overly precious about the relationship; we just get on with life, secure in the knowledge that God is present and loving at all times.

**Chatting:** ordinary interaction through the day: arrow prayers, trigger prayers, walking prayers, practising the presence of God (see over).

**Talking & listening:** as in marriage, special time for communication is needed if a relationship is to grow. This takes some effort and commitment, and must involve listening as well as speaking. Sometimes we may even want to argue!

**Intimacy:** in deep relationships we get beyond words and into touch and intimacy. This is a time for the love-language of silence, symbols and sacraments.

Prayer can often seem to be an introvert activity but many people are clearly extroverts – so different approaches may be needed. This may mean:

- consciously seeing daily living as 'for God'
- seeing loving action as prayer because it's offered to God
- praying with other people (prayer partners, prayer groups, daily prayer in church)
- using art, music, poetry and journaling as aids to prayer

# SILENT PRAYER

Many people find themselves longing for more silence at some stage on their spiritual journey. Just as when we are reading a page we need both black print and white space, so we may need both words and silence in our life of prayer.

Deep beneath the turbulence on the surface of the sea there is a gentle stillness, and so there may be in us. Silent prayer doesn't try to achieve anything; we open ourselves to God who is beyond anything our minds and our words can imagine – and wait.

- **Centring** – Go to a special place, light a candle, take up a specific bodily position, still the body (relax the shoulders and forehead etc, let the tension seep away), perhaps imagine you are going down in a lift descending to a deeper level of your being.
- **Focusing** – Take a short biblical verse or phrase as a focus e.g. 'come, Holy Spirit', 'my Lord and my God,' or simply 'Jesus'. Start to use the phrase as a rope to hang on to or a stone to keep lobbing into the pool.
- **Waiting** – repeat the phrase slowly and lovingly whenever you need to return your focus to God. It's like being distracted when driving on the motorway – you have to keep turning back to the road. It doesn't matter how often you wander off (it's inevitable) or how little you 'feel'. This is time given to God as a gift. The rest is up to God.
- **Ending** – with the Lord's Prayer, to unite you with the whole family of God.

## FURTHER EXPLORATION

***How to Pray: Alone, with others, at any time, in any place***

Stephen Cottrell, 2010

***Approaches to Prayer***

ed. Henry Morgan, (new edition) 2009

***How to Pray***

John Pritchard, 2002

**The Way of Life resources for small groups:**

Exploring Way of Life

Praying on the Way

This leaflet has been adapted from 'Living Faith' material from the Diocese of Oxford – *with thanks*.



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