



vibrant**faith**

+ Generations Together

Ways to Pray

Here is an intergenerational session for all members of the congregation exploring creative ways to pray—as individuals, families, and as a community. This session is designed to be conducted in about 90 minutes, and can be adapted for a shorter or longer timeframe.

Introduction

Praying can seem like it's quiet and private, but it doesn't have to be. There are lots of ways to pray – out loud, silently, looking up, looking down, looking at each other, whispering, burning prayer papers, and so on. In this session we will explore several creative ways to pray.

I. Gather

[use the following adaptation of the activity One Word Prayers]

Activity Plan

1. Invite participants to sit together in family groups or small groups of 4-6 individuals. Ask them to talk about the different ways you pray as individuals and as family. Invite some comments to be shared with the whole group. Tell everyone you're going to try a new way of praying together.
2. Instruct each family group to decide on a topic they want to pray about. Tell them to pick a topic that is happy, something the family is excited about or thankful for.
3. Once every family has a prayer topic, explain the prayer method this way:
 - a. Choose a person to start the prayer with the word "God", and only that word.
 - b. The person to the right says the next word of the prayer.
 - c. And the person to the right of that person says the next word.
 - d. And so on. Keep the prayer going so that each family member contributes at least two words or more until the prayer is complete.
 - e. The last person uses the word "Amen."
4. Your prayer may come out sounding something like this:

God-we-are-happy-today-to-know-how-awesome-you-are.-Thanks-for-being-awesome.-Amen.

Or it might come out sounding quite a bit different. Enjoy your time praying together in this fun and sometimes funny way. God enjoys hearing your silly prayers and your fun prayers, along with your serious and quiet prayers.

5. If time permits, have participants do another round. Choose a different topic, start with a different person, and do the prayer again.

II. Grow

[use the following adaptation of the activity Lord's Prayer Stones]

Needed:

- Bible
- Unpolished small stones – three per family or group
- Paints (acrylic or watercolor) and fine tip brushes – one set per family or group

Activity Plan

1. Ask one person to read aloud Matthew 6:9-13.
2. Give three small stones, paints and brushes to each family/small group.
3. Instruct them to discuss and decide on a symbol for each of three key parts of the Lord's Prayer:
 - God's will
 - Daily bread
 - Forgiveness
4. Tell them to paint one symbol on each stone.
5. When the stones are painted, proclaim the Lord's Prayer aloud, very slowly pausing at the appropriate points indicated below.

*Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done*

- Ask God to lead you in the direction God is calling you to go.
- Pray specifically for your job/education, where you are living, a big life change, or a relationship.

on earth as it is in heaven.

Give us this day our daily bread.

- Ask God to take care of all your needs: spiritual, nourishment, shelter, and safety.
- Ask God to help you not worry about these needs, but instead lift them up trust to God.

Forgive us our trespasses,

as we forgive those who trespass against us.

- Think of something that happened recently for which you seek forgiveness.
- Ask God to help you grant someone else forgiveness.
- Thank God for vanquishing your sins and for forgiving you so readily.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

6. Invite participants to discuss the following questions in their family/small groups.
 - Think about what gets in the way of God’s plan for your life. How can you stay in touch with God’s will?
 - Consider the things in your life that keep you safe and healthy that you might take for granted. How can you express your gratitude?
 - What prevents you from treating others as you want to be treated; forgiving them and not holding on to what has been done against you?

III. Go Forth

Needed: sufficient copies of the following activities:

Contemplative Prayer
Prayer Docs
Liturgy of the Hours
Praying for Light

Activity Plan

1. Invite participants to gather in a large group. Invite general discussion on these questions:
 - What have you learned about prayer today?
 - What style of prayer do you like best?
2. Tell participants that you want each household to continue to pray at home, and that you want them to take at least one prayer activity with them as they leave. Briefly describe these activities:
 - Contemplative Prayer (adult/couple, young adult, mature teen): Maybe you’re not the memorized prayer type of person, nor do you like to be confined to a scripture reading or a devotional book. Not to worry, there are many ways to pray and this one only takes your presence and attention. For those who have plenty of excuses for not praying but genuinely want to know God’s presence, contemplative prayer may be something to try.
 - Prayer Docs (adult/couple, young adult, teen family, young family): Create an online document to share daily prayers with friends. Stay in touch and help support each other.
 - Liturgy of the Hours (adult/couple, young adult): Praying the “Liturgy of the Hours” (also known as The Divine Office) is a long standing monastic tradition, but you don’t have to be a monk to enter into the spirit of this form of prayer. Learn how a busy family person can adapt this practice of praying throughout the day.
 - Praying for Light (young family): Take a walk and explore the use of light in the winter. Conclude with a prayer around a candle.
3. With your Bible, ask someone to read aloud James 5:13-18.
4. Conclude with this short prayer:

Dear God of all time, I want to have you constantly in my mind and guiding my actions, but I’m human and life gets in the way. Help me to find daily ways to connect with you so I don’t forget your importance in my life. Amen.

One-Word Prayers

By Erin Davis Gibbons



Families make a point of praying together every day – one word at a time.

For

Teen Family

Season

Winter

Activity Plan

Praying can seem like it's quiet and private, but it doesn't have to be. There are lots of ways to pray – out loud, silently, looking up, looking down, looking at each other, whispering, burning prayer papers, and so on. This week, find time to pray with your family each day.

1. Gather in a circle together. Talk about the different ways you pray as individuals and as family. Tell everyone you're going to try a new way of praying together this week.
2. Decide on a topic you want to pray about. Pick something happy that your family is excited about or thankful for. Start the prayer by addressing "God." Have the person to your right say the next word. Then have the person to their right say the next word.
3. Continue until someone finishes the prayer with "Amen."
4. Your prayer may come out sounding something like this:

God-we-are-happy-today-to-know-how-awesome-you-are.-Thanks-for-being-awesome.-Amen.

Or it might come out sounding quite a bit different. Enjoy your time praying together in this fun and sometimes funny way. God enjoys hearing your silly prayers and your fun prayers, along with your serious and quiet prayers.

5. Repeat this activity once each day for the week.

Lord's Prayer Stones

By Courtney Still



Reflect on three parts of the Lord's Prayer and apply them to your life. Grow in your understanding of how to live a life of faith.

For

Young Adult

Season

Winter

Needed

Unpolished stones, acrylic paint, Bible

Prepare in Advance

- Choose three images to symbolize three key parts of the Lord's Prayer: God's will, daily bread, forgiveness. For example, you could use a path or footprints to be the symbol of God's will.
- Paint your chosen image each on a separate rock. An alternative to painting rocks is to find three objects – possibly just around your house – that will symbolize these parts of the Lord's Prayer.

Experience

1. Read or recite the entire Lord's Prayer as found in Matthew 6:9-13.

Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come,
your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

2. As you go along through the prayer, pause at the following three parts to pray for something in your life that pertains:

Your will be done

- Ask God to lead you in the direction God is calling you to go
- Pray specifically for your job/education, where you are living, a big life change, or a relationship.

Give us this day our daily bread

- Ask God to take care of all your needs: spiritual, nourishment, shelter, and safety.
- Ask God to help you not worry about these needs, but instead lift them up trust to God.

Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

- Think of something that happened recently for which you seek forgiveness.
- Ask God to help you grant someone else forgiveness.
- Thank God for vanquishing your sins and for forgiving you so readily.

3. Keep the appropriate stone in the palm of your hand while you pray.

Consider

Your Lord's Prayer stones or found objects are intended to be a reminder during a personal time of prayer, but you may also want to share them with a friend or make use of them during a group prayer. Reflect and share on the following:

- What are your specific reasons for choosing each of your images? How do they take you into a deeper understanding of the Lord's Prayer?
- Think about what gets in the way of God's plan for your life. How can you stay in touch with God's will?
- Consider the things in your life that keep you safe and healthy that you might take for granted. How can you express your gratitude?
- What prevents you from treating others as you want to be treated; forgiving them and not holding on to what has been done against you?

Pray

*Our Father who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
Forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For Thine is the Kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.*

Contemplative Prayer

By Susan Vogt

Maybe you're not the memorized prayer type of person, nor do you like to be confined to a scripture reading or a devotional book. Not to worry, there are many ways to pray and this one only takes your presence and attention. For those who have plenty of excuses for not praying but genuinely want to know God's presence, contemplative prayer may be something to try.

For

Adult, Couple

Season

Winter

Needed

A little quiet time



Activity Plan

1. Although Contemplative Prayer can be formless, it helps to have the intention to begin. Find a quiet time and place and put yourself in the presence of God. God is always present of course, but calling God's presence to mind helps one start. Begin with something such as:

OK God, I'm here. Help me to be aware of your presence and listen to you.

Others have found it to be helpful to use the phrase:

"Be still and know that I am God."

2. Look around you and notice stuff. Perhaps you are in nature or maybe just your bedroom. Wherever you are, there are things around you – living things, windows, sounds, household items, doors, smells, and so on. Pick something to focus on. It could be as simple as a doorknob or a blade of grass. Start to let the object or sensation speak to you of God. For example:
 - A doorknob is an aid to entering a room. Is God turning the knob to come and say hello. A doorknob is round. A circle like this is never ending – like God. The knob may be spherical like a globe. Think of how God is present all over our planet – and yet right here too.
 - A blade of grass is so insignificant by itself (like me) but together with all the other blades it makes a lawn. Grass is fragile yet resilient. I can easily break one blade. I can bend the grass by walking on it but it will eventually spring back up. People are like that. Grass cannot survive without roots though. I want to stay rooted in God.

Let your imagination wander. If you get distracted and notice it, that's OK. Maybe that's the thought God wants you to pray about because it's important to you.

3. When you've followed the promptings of your environment for as long as you like, simply end with a prayer of thanks.
4. Resume whatever you were doing before, hopefully with a calm and centeredness that will permeate your other work for awhile
5. Variation. Some people may find it helpful to have a journal to capture the thoughts and feelings that occur to you during contemplation. This may help you stay focused. It's okay. It's also okay to go off on tangents. Everything is okay. The important thing is to keep seeing connections between your experiences and God.

Prayer Docs

By Erin Davis Gibbons

Create an online document to share daily prayers with friends. Stay in touch and help support each other.

For

Young Adult

Season

Winter

Needed

Computer with Internet Access



Activity Plan

This activity works best when you recruit a few friends to do it with you. Sure, they might resist at first, but in the end, Prayer Docs are fulfilling and a great way to create a closer community with each other.

1. If you don't already have a Google account with your Gmail address or another email address, set one up. It's super easy. Even if your email address isn't with Google, simply go to [Google](#) and click "Sign Up." If you don't see the "Sign Up" option, click "Sign In" and then "Sign Up." Input your info (including your regular email address), and you're ready to go.
2. Go to [Google Docs](#). Sign into your Google account. Click "Create," and then "Document."
3. Give your blank doc a title by clicking on "Untitled Document" in the top left corner. Then click "Share" in the top right corner. In the "Add People" bar, input your friends' email addresses. Make sure the "Notify People via Email" box is checked. Add a personal message inviting others to join if you wish.
4. Every day, write a short prayer in the document. It can be a prayer of gratitude, a prayer of praise, a prayer for help, just a name, or some other kind of prayer entirely. There are no right or wrong kinds of prayer.
5. Encourage your friends to do the same.
6. Consider responding to each other's prayers with supportive comments, quotes, Bible verses, or poems – or even just a note acknowledging a particular prayer request. In your personal prayers, include all those prayers in yours and your friends' lives. You can support each other in prayer!

Liturgy of the Hours

By Susan Vogt

Praying the “Liturgy of the Hours” (also known as The Divine Office) is a long standing monastic tradition, but you don’t have to be a monk to enter into the spirit of this form of prayer. Learn how a busy family person can adapt this practice of praying throughout the day.



For

Adult, Couple

Season

Winter

Needed

The intention to pray throughout the day.

Prepare in Advance

- Decide whether you would like a published prayer book or just want to wing it. If you want a booklet such as one of the above, order it.
- If you simply want to copy lectionary readings for the day from the internet, find and copy them.
- If you just want to wing it, just show up for the activity.

Background

The idea behind the Liturgy of the Hours is to stop one’s work at prescribed times during the day to pray. Traditionally there are up to eight times to do this each day:

- [Lauds](#) or **Dawn** (at Dawn, or 3 a.m.)
- [Prime](#) or **Early Morning** (about 6 a.m.)
- [Terce](#) or **Mid-Morning** (about 9 a.m.)
- [Sext](#) or **Midday** (about noon)
- [None](#) or **Mid-Afternoon** (about 3 p.m.)
- [Vespers](#) or **Evening** (Dusk, about 6 p.m.)
- [Compline](#) or **Night** (before retiring, generally at 9 p.m.)
- [Matins](#) or **Midnight** (or the middle of the night)

Strict adherence to the number of “prayer stops” or the time of day is not practical for most family or working people but that doesn’t mean one can’t pray the “Spirit of the Hours.” This would mean making intentional stops during your day to remember the God who created day and night and cares for us 24/7. Decide what will work for you.

Activity Plan

1. As always, begin with a prayer such as:

Dear God of all time, I would like to have you constantly in my mind and guiding my actions, but I’m human and life gets in the way. Help me to find daily ways to connect with you so I don’t forget your importance in my life. Amen.

2. If you have decided to use a published prayer resource, become familiar with its format.

3. Decide how many times a day you want to stop to do intentional prayer. Don't be intimidated by the eight prayer times. Very few people, even vowed religious and clergy, do all eight hours. One is fine, more is better. This activity will show you a relatively easy way to do three to five times.
4. Consider the following times that might feel natural and practical for you to incorporate into your daily life.
 - **Morning Prayer:** This is the best time to use the daily scripture(s) from a lectionary since you don't have to go searching for which one to use. Follow your booklet or simply read one of the scriptures you found on the internet. Pause to let it sink in. Perhaps make a Morning Offering. Traditionally the Canticle of Zachariah (Luke 1:68-79) is said at this time.
 - **Breakfast Grace:** Time for Morning Prayer might be compromised by the need to get kids off to school or rush to work, but most of us eat breakfast. Most do not, however, say a formal grace before breakfast. That's OK, the meal or prayer doesn't have to be formal, but you can pause for 10 seconds, look at your coffee or juice, and thank God for sustenance and the upcoming day. This is an especially important pause if the morning was too hectic for Morning Prayer.
 - **Lunch Grace:** Even if prayer time during the day seems non-existent, we all have to eat. Similar to grace at breakfast, this needn't be formal. For many people, it would feel awkward even praying an "official" grace before lunch since you may be with co-workers, at a restaurant, or whatever. That's OK, pause yourself, look at your food, and say a private prayer. Perhaps take a moment to think about how God has been present during your morning or how you need God to be present in your afternoon work.
 - **Dinner Grace:** Dinner prayer is more common in many families – hopefully yours. Don't rush it. You may all say a memorized grace, but intentional prayer often happens best when we can focus for a moment on what we are thankful for that day – not just the food.
 - **Evening Prayer:** This might be a pause before you go to bed (perhaps using another of the day's scripture). Review your day. How was God present? The Magnificat (Luke 1:46-55) is the traditional canticle for Evening Prayer. Although planning to pray at the end of the day is admirable, some people (including this author) have a hard time adding one more thing to a busy day at the end of the day. If you say night prayers with your children, you have my permission to count this since helping a child pray is prayer for you too.

Decide which times you want to commit to. The idea is to have a plan and to implement it more often than not. You might forget or skip some of the times, just commit to getting back into the rhythm.

5. Closing Prayer

Dear God. I'm made my decision to pray more often, but you know as well as I do that the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. Give me your grace to follow through on this decision and to pick myself up and start anew when I forget or am "too tired."

6. Variation. It's nice if other family members can join you in your decision, especially your spouse. They may not want to do it with you, but letting them know of your decision can help you stay accountable to yourself and to God.

Praying for Light

By Christy Olson



Take a walk and explore the use of light in the winter. Conclude with a prayer around a candle.

For

Young Families

Season

Winter

Needed

Paper and pencil, Bible, candle and matches

Activity Plan

1. Take a walk around your house. Pretend you are explorers looking for anything that brings light to your house. One person is scribe and writes down what you find. Be specific. Use words like lamp, ceiling light, e-book reader light, and so on.
2. Find a place to sit together. Use these questions to talk about your list.
 - Why do we need light?
 - Do we need more light in winter than in summer? Why?
 - Let's read our list of things that bring light. Can you think of others that we didn't see?
 - How are the lights connected to power?
3. Read Matthew 5:14 "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden." This is what Jesus taught his disciples.
 - I wonder how we can be a light in the world?
 - What's the power source for us when we bring light to the world?
4. Gather around the candle. An adult lights the candle. Do this echo prayer. Leader reads and others echo.

*God we are your lights.
You are the source of our light.
Help us to shine brightly all winter. Amen.*
5. Variation Have a winter family reading time. Read *The House at Pooh Corner* by A.A. Milne. Learn the *Tiddely pom* poem about snow and cold toes in winter.

The more it snows (Tiddely-Pom)
The more it goes (Tiddely-Pom)
The more it goes on snowing (Tiddely-Pom)
And nobody knows (Tiddely-Pom)
How cold my toes (Tiddely-Pom)
How cold my toes are growing (Tiddely-Pom Tiddely-Pom Tiddely-Pom Tiddely-Pom)