

Additional Activities

One-Minute and Five-Minute Experiments in Prayer

(pages 11.10—11.11 in *Living Well*)

1. Conduct a demonstration of each of the “experiments in prayer” on pages 11.10—11.11 in *Living Well*.
2. Explain the One-Minute process and then provide a demonstration. Do the same for the Five-Minute process.
3. Give the participants examples of how they can integrate each prayer practice into their daily lives. Then give them a few minutes to consider how they can use each of these prayer practices in their daily lives.

Contemplative Centering Prayer

(page 10.12 in *Living Well*)

1. Prepare an environment that is conducive to Contemplative Centering Prayer (instrumental music, dimming the lights).
2. Introduce Contemplative Centering Prayer using the description on page 10.12.
3. Share the two Scripture passages: Psalm 63:1-5 and Romans 8:26-27.
4. Explain the process and then guide people through an experience of Contemplative Centering Prayer.
 - Choose a quiet space where you can be comfortable and where you can be uninterrupted and uninhibited.
 - Once you are comfortable, light a candle, take a few deep breaths, and relax. Then set the timer or stop watch for twenty minutes.
 - Close your eyes and recall your desire to just be in God’s presence.
 - Choose a simple word, phrase or verse from Scripture that expresses your desire for God (e.g., love, peace, grace, Jesus, Good Shepherd).
 - When thoughts or feelings come into your mind, let them go. Do not give into them or allow them to take you away from God’s presence. Distractions will come; this is normal. Think of this kind of prayer as the prayer of “letting go.” Don’t be surprised if you spend the whole prayer period letting go of thoughts and feelings. Over time you will experience something happening in your life: a new sense of peace, a new awareness of God’s great love for you. Be patient! Prayer takes practice.
 - Rest in the center of God’s love. Trust that the Holy Spirit, who abides in the depths of your spirit, will connect you with God.
 - When your prayer has ended, slowly come back to the here and now.
5. Give the participants examples of how they can integrate a contemplative prayer practice into their daily lives. Then give them a few minutes to consider how they can use this prayer practice in their daily lives.

Scriptural Prayer

(page 10.12—10.13 in *Living Well*)

1. Prepare an environment that is conducive to Scriptural Prayer. Light one or more candles.
2. Introduce Scriptural Prayer using the description on pages 10.12—10.13.
3. Share the two Scripture passages: Psalm 119:105-106 and Ephesians 5:19-20.

4. Explain the process and then guide people through an experience of Scriptural Prayer.
 - Choose a passage from Scripture, about five to ten verses in length. You might choose one of your favorite passages, a Scripture reading from the previous or coming Sunday, or use an index to help you locate a passage that seems to be appropriate for the time or occasion.
 - Choose a comfortable place where you can be uninterrupted and uninhibited.
 - Light a candle. Take a few moments to get your body in harmony with your spirit. Sometimes it helps to take a few deep breaths or stretch your body, then relax.
 - Acknowledge God’s presence with you. Ask God to send the Spirit to be with you and guide you in this time of reflection.
 - Read the passage you have chosen slowly, out loud, listening carefully to it. You might want to pause after a sentence or phrase.
 - Say the words or phrases that struck you. Do not discuss them, just say them.
 - Read the passage a second time, slowly and prayerfully.
 - Consider the message the passage might have for you: a challenge, an affirmation, or an insight. If you are doing this with others, you could invite them to share what comes to mind.
 - Read the passage a third time, slowly and prayerfully.
 - Pause for about ten minutes of silence and allow the Spirit to speak to you. If no words or thoughts come, just sit in the silence. Sometimes God touches us in ways we cannot know.
 - Following your quiet time, consider how the passage calls you to action. Is there something you need to do to make the Scripture alive for you here and now?
 - Close with a brief prayer of thanksgiving or praise to God for the gift of the Spirit.
5. Give the participants examples of how they can integrate a scriptural prayer practice into their daily lives. Then give them a few minutes to consider how they can use this prayer practice in their daily lives.

Intercessory Prayer

(page 10.13 in *Living Well*)

1. Prepare an environment that is conducive to prayer. Light one or more candles.
2. Introduce Intercessory Prayer using the description on page 10.13.
3. Share the two Scripture passages: Ephesians 6:18 and Philippians 4:4, 6-7.
4. Invite people to take several minutes to recall the needs and concerns they want to pray for. Provide the group with the following categories to guide their reflection:
 - the needs and concerns of your family/household and friends,
 - the needs and concerns of people in your local church and community,
 - the needs and concerns of people around the world.
5. Begin with an opening prayer and then ask people to offer their prayer intentions. The response to each prayer petition can be “Lord, hear us.”
6. Close by praying the Our Father together as a group.
7. Give the participants examples of how they can integrate an intercessory prayer practice into their daily lives. Then give them a few minutes to consider how they can use this prayer practice in their daily lives.

Praise Prayer #1

(page 10.14 in *Living Well*)

1. Prepare an environment that is conducive to prayer.
2. Introduce Praise Prayer using the description on page 10.14.
3. Share the Scripture passage: Psalm 95:1-2, 6-7.
4. Invite people to take several minutes to compose one or more prayers of praise. Provide the group with the following examples:
 - “God, you are good and wonderful. We praise you.”
 - “God, we praise you for the mystery that is you.”
 - “God, we believe that you are holy and awesome.”
 - “We praise you for your majesty, O God.”
5. Begin with an opening prayer and then ask people to offer their prayers of praise.
6. Close by praying Psalm 95:1-2, 6-7. or other Psalm of praise.
7. Give the participants examples of how they can integrate a praise prayer practice into their daily lives. Then give them a few minutes to consider how they can use this prayer practice in their daily lives.

Praise Prayer #2

(Everyone will need a Bible or a copy of Psalm 103.)

1. Introduce this prayer experience by saying: *Many of us pray when we want to ask God for something either for ourselves or someone else. Sometimes it is difficult to just give compliments to God. Prayers of praise give praise to God for being good, for the mystery and majesty of God. Prayers of praise can be a challenge for us to think about God in terms of someone who deserves our praise. It forces us to not take God for granted. Prayers of praise reflect our own attitude and ability to recognize others for their goodness, especially our ability to just praise God for being God.*
2. Explain to the group that they will be using Psalm 103 as a Prayer of Praise. Psalm 103 is one of those priceless treasures that becomes more precious as we spend time with it in reflection and contemplation. The Psalm has four main parts:
 - Personal blessings received from God (1-5)
 - National blessings received from God (6-14)
 - A reminder of our human frailty and utter dependence upon God (15-18)
 - A declaration that all creation praises God (19-22)
3. Pray the Psalm with the group. (You may want to reproduce the Psalm so that everyone can pray it together. You can also organize the participants into two groups. Ask group one to read verses 1-5 and 15-18; group two reads verses 6-14 and 19-22.)
4. Ask the participants to use Psalm 103 to write their own psalm of praise to God. Invite them to use the four-fold structure of Psalm 103 in their own prayer. Remind them that prayers of praise give praise to God for being good, for the mystery and majesty of God. Prayers of praise can be a challenge for us to think about God in terms of someone who deserves our praise. It forces us to not take God for granted. Prayers of praise reflect our own attitude and ability to recognize others for their goodness, especially our ability to just praise God for being God.
5. After the individuals have composed their prayer of praise to God, ask them to take a few moments to reflect (and perhaps talk) about how it felt to offer God praise.
6. Invite the participants to share their psalms of praise.

Prayers of Thanksgiving

(page 10.14 in *Living Well*)

- Prepare an environment that is conducive to prayer.
- Introduce Thanksgiving Prayer using the description on page 10.14.
- Share the Scripture passage: Psalm 92:1-4.
- Invite people to take several minutes to compose one or more prayers of thanksgiving. Families can work together to compose their prayers.
- Begin with an opening prayer and then ask people to offer their prayers of thanksgiving. Respond to each prayer of thanksgiving with: “We thank you, God” or “We are grateful for your goodness.”
- Close by praying Psalm 92:1-4 or other Psalm of thanksgiving.
- Give the participants examples of how they can integrate a thanksgiving prayer practice into their daily lives. Then give them a few minutes to consider how they can use this prayer practice in their daily lives.

Praying the Psalms

Select five to eight Psalm passages in advance. The passages can reflect a common theme, or they could be diverse. Participants should have Bibles or you will need to write the passages on a sheet of newsprint or provide copies of the Psalms on a handout. It is important to identify each passage with a brief excerpt from the Psalm so that the participants will have some basis on which to make a choice. Provide each person with a sheet of paper, and pen or pencil.

1. Select one of the Psalm passages that you feel most comfortable with. (Allow time for the participants to reflect on and respond to the passage.)
2. Read the Psalm passage you selected in quiet. Read every word, pausing when necessary in order to let every word present itself to you. Read the words as if you had never read or heard them before. Be open to new insights that may come. Read the words as if they were the words of your own prayer. Whenever you read “I,” “my,” “me,” etc., read it as if that meant *you*.
3. From the passage you have read, select a phrase, a verse or two verses to be the words you will use to begin your own prayer. Write those words down and then continue writing an additional sentence or two of your own continuing the thoughts and feelings begun by the words of the Psalmist.
4. Let us now spend a few minutes in prayer sharing the words of the Psalmist we selected and the words of prayer we have written. (Individuals read their prayers aloud as they feel motivated to share.) Potential Psalms to use:

Psalm 8:1-7	“What is man, that you think of him?”
Psalm 11:1-7	“I trust in the Lord for safety.”
Psalm 16:1-11	“I am always aware of the Lord’s presence.”
Psalm 23:1-6	“The Lord is my shepherd.”
Psalm 25:1-14	“Keep your promise, Lord, and forgive my sins.”
Psalm 30:1-12	“Lord...I will give you thanks forever.”
Psalm 32:1-11	“Happy are those whose sins are forgiven.”
Psalm 62:1-12	“God alone protects and saves me.”
Psalm 63:1-8	“O God...My whole being desires you.”
Psalm 86:1-13a	“Teach me, Lord what you want me to do.”

Psalm 103:1-14 “Praise the Lord, my soul!”

Psalm 121:1-8 Teach me, Lord, what you want me to do.”

Psalm 139:1-12 “Lord, you have examined me and you know me.”

Lectio Divina: Prayerful Bible Reflection

Use “Lectio Divina” in the handout to guide participants through an experience of Lectio Divina. Select an appropriate passage from the Bible for the experience.

Step 1. Lectio (Reading)

Read the Bible passage to the group. Read it a second time. Invite people to let the words really sink in deeply. Ask them to open their minds and hearts to the meaning of the words; and let the passage speak to them.

Step 2. Meditatio (Meditation)

Invite people to reflect on the Bible passage. Ask questions such as the following:

- What does this passage say to me?
- Who am I in this Scripture?
- What do I see and hear?
- What do I think?
- Which character do I most relate to?
- What do I need to learn from this passage?

Step 3. Oratio (Prayer)

Move into the heart of the matter. Consider the following questions to help people respond to God.

- What do you want to communicate to God?
- What do you most want in your relationship with God?
- What emotions do you want to express to God? joy? fear? gratitude? grief?

Step 4. Contemplatio (Contemplation)

Provide quiet time for people to rest in the presence of God. Play some quiet instrumental music.

Step 5. Action (Action)

Conclude by inviting people to decide on a course of action and make a commitment to follow through with their plan.

- How is God challenging me?
- Is there a good thing that God is calling me to do?:
- Is there a harmful thing that God wants me to stop doing?
- What is the next step I need to take?

Paying Attention to God in Daily Life

(Adapted from *The Art of Discernment: Spiritual Practices for Decision-Making* by Elizabeth Liebert)

The Prayer of Examen helps us look for traces of God's actions in our daily life, individually or as a household. It is usually done in the evening, looking back over the day, or it can be done as a household at the evening meal. Allow between five and fifteen minutes for this spiritual exercise. Eliminate distractions during this time: no TV, radio, phones, social media, etc. This is a time of quiet to spend alone or with each other in the presence of God.

Note the gifts God has given you today. Give thanks for all God's gifts and benefits.

Pause for reflection.

Ask God that this reflection be a time of special grace and revelation. You can use these words:

Be near us now Lord. Let us look together at the day.

Pause for reflection.

Review the day with God. Look at the stirrings of your heart, your thoughts, your choices as the day progressed. Which have been of God? Which not? What does God want to say to you about both?

Pause for reflection.

Give God thanks and ask for forgiveness for any failure or omission, and for healing from their effects. Use these or similar words:

Gracious God, everything is a gift from you.

I give you thanks and praise for the gifts of today, such as

I ask your forgiveness and mercy for

I ask your healing in

Pause for reflection.

Look forward to the next day, and plan concretely with God how to live it according to God's desire for your life. Ask for the graces you desire for tomorrow.

Lord God, continue to be present with me in my life each day.

Pause for reflection.

10 Praying

Living

For prayer to bring strength when we need it, we must pray regularly, even when we think we don't need it at all. Prayer is a habit of life that leads us to reflection, to the consciousness of God, to the hope that is the lighthouse of the soul guiding us always through all the dark places of life.

(Joan Chittister)

How do we move from recognizing the importance of prayer in our life and in the life of our family or household, to the actual practice of prayer in our daily lives? How do we become more skilled at seeing God in all we do?

It is important to remember that prayer takes practice and gradually, we find the rhythm and pattern of prayer that works for us and/or our family. There are many ways to pray. Henri Nouwen reminds us “there are as many ways to pray as there are moments in life. Sometimes we seek out a quiet spot and want to be alone, sometimes we look for a friend and want to be together. Sometimes we like a book, sometimes we prefer music. Sometimes we want to sing out with hundreds, sometimes only whisper with a few. Sometimes we want to say it with words, sometimes with a deep silence.” (Henri Nouwen, *With Open Hands*)

Use the following guide to prepare for prayer and to experience a variety of prayer activities—alone or with your family or household. Try all of these activities so that gradually you will find the rhythm and pattern that works for you. Remember, this is only a start. There are dozens of additional ways to pray that you can learn as you grow in the practice of prayer. (For additional prayer activities, see the other chapters in *Living Well: Christian Practices for Everyday Life*.)

Preparing to Pray

Very early the next morning, long before daylight, Jesus got up and left the house. He went out of town to a lonely place, where he prayed. But Simon and his companions went out searching for him, and when they found him, they said, “Everyone is looking for you.”

—Mark 1:35–37

The news about Jesus spread all the more widely, and crowds of people came to hear him and be healed from their diseases. But he would go away to lonely places, where he prayed.

—Luke 5:15–16

At that time Jesus went up a hill to pray and spent the whole night there praying to God. When day came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them.

—Luke 6:12–13

1. A Prayer Time

Set aside a time for daily prayer. This is the single most important thing you can do. When we establish a regular routine for prayer, we will make sure that our prayer life is not done “on the run.” Ten minutes a day is a good start; twenty minutes is better. Set aside a regular time: morning, noontime, before dinner, or before going to sleep at night.

■ When I will pray:

■ When our household will pray:



2. A Prayer Place

We can pray anywhere. We all find places that are special to us, that help us to pray. Jesus did give us wise advice, though, when he taught us to withdraw to our rooms to pray. A sacred space need not always be confined to inside the house or church.

Take advantage of outdoor settings, such as a labyrinth or prayer path at a local church. Walk in a park or on a hiking trail; even a corner of your own yard can be a regular place for prayer. Go for a walk at your lunch break. If you drive to work, leave early and spend time with God, quietly sitting in the parking lot before going in. If you spend a lot of time in your car, make every drive a unique time to meet with God by playing instrumental music as you pray. Personalize your prayer space—keep a Bible, a cross, an icon, a special picture, or a candle nearby.

■ Where I will pray:

■ When our household will pray:

Create a home altar for prayer and ritual. Find a place in your home (e.g., in the kitchen or family room) that you can set aside and decorate as your home altar or prayer space. Include items such as a Bible, candles, art, photographs, prayer books, and prayer petitions on your altar.

3. A Prayer Posture

If we can pray anywhere, we can also pray in any position. Sometimes we have to experiment to discover the prayer posture that works best for us: lying down, kneeling, sitting, or walking.

■ How I will position myself for prayer:

■ How we will position ourselves as a household for prayer:

10 Praying

4. A Prayer Mood

The Lord instructs us to “be still and know that I am God.” We cannot pray well unless we slow down and create the proper mental climate. We must first relax. Creating a relaxed mood for prayer is the last preparation for praying—after we have made time, found a place, and assumed a comfortable position for our prayer. Here are three popular methods for relaxing before prayer:

- *Awareness of our senses.* Sit on a straight chair. Assume a comfortable position. Close your eyes. Take a deep breath, hold it momentarily, and then let it go. Relax your body. Begin with your neck muscles, then your shoulders, your chest and back, your arms and legs. Feel the clothes on your shoulders and back, the press of your legs on the chair. Note your posture. Be aware of your legs, your feet, your hands. Feel the heat or coolness of the room. Repeat this pattern of awareness a second and third time. Feel the tension drain out of your body. Dwell on the part of your body that is most tense. Relax the forehead, the jaw, the neck. Let your arms and legs rest. Come to total stillness. Now you are ready to pray.
- *Breathing.* Take a relaxing position, seated or lying down. Let the tension drain from your body. Now focus on your breathing. Observe your breathing. Note how fast or slow it is. Notice the air as it comes in and goes out. Don't try to control your breathing. Just observe it for a few quiet, peaceful moments. Be aware of how it comes in to fill your lungs, and how it goes out of your nostrils. After a short time spent observing your breathing, begin to count your breaths silently. Count “one” as you inhale; “and” as you exhale. Count “two” as you breathe in again; “and” on the exhalation. Continue your count to 15 or 20.
- *Listening.* Take a comfortable position. Close your eyes. Relax the tension in your body. Feel the tightness drain from your face, your neck, your shoulders, your arms and legs. Feel the air on your skin. Be aware of each breath that you take in and let out. Block

your ears with your thumbs. Listen to each breath as you take it in and let it out. After ten breaths, let your hands rest on your lap. Now be attentive to all the sounds around you. Hear them all, the ones close to you and the ones in the background, the big sounds and the little noises. After a bit, listen to the sounds blend together. Let them penetrate you. Continue with this until you are at rest and ready to turn to prayer.

■ How I will relax myself for prayer:

■ How will we relax as a household for prayer:

A One-Minute Experiment in Prayer

There is a beautiful simplicity in learning to seize moments here and there to connect with God's presence. Even pausing to say the word “Jesus” on occasion, mulling over what he means to you for a few seconds, can have a great impact. This may not come completely naturally for you, though, so here are a few suggestions that can help you pursue the practice until it is woven into the fabric of your daily life.

- *Be intentional.* Start by considering times when you might pause to pray during your day; for example, at meals or at certain times, like 9 AM, noon, and 6 PM. You can also decide simply to think about God in small ways throughout the day whenever an opportunity presents itself.
- *Be God-centered.* One of the most important things we can do to is get to know God. It might be helpful to choose one of God's attributes—such as kindness, mercy, forgiveness, or love—on which to focus for a day or even a week. You could write out Scripture passages that speak of this attribute on cards and carry them with you.



- **Establish “triggers.”** Think of ways your everyday life can be a reminder to meet God in the moment. For example, you might tape a card with a Scripture verse on the steering wheel of your car and glance at it when you stop for a red light, or tape it to your bathroom mirror and pause to reflect on it each time you brush your teeth or comb your hair or wash your hands. You can also practice thinking of God while noticing the beauty of creation—a sunset, a fragrant flower, or a smiling child—when helping a person in need, or when faced with a difficult task or situation.
- **Welcome God’s presence.** God speaks to us often during the day. Take a few moments whenever you can to listen, be attentive to the divine presence, and open your heart to God. Present any issue or situation in which you seek God’s wisdom. Ask if God has something to reveal to you. Be grateful for God’s presence. You can do all of this in a minute’s time, and before long it will become a habit you won’t want to do without.

(Adapted from Tricia McGary Rhodes, *Sacred Chaos: Spiritual Disciplines for the Life You Have*)

Five-Minute Experiments in Prayer

One habit that takes minimal effort but can produce great results is to develop a discipline of taking time when we awaken and when we lay down to sleep, to connect and commune with God. While you may plan other five-minute spaces throughout the day, beginning and ending it in God’s presence lays a foundation and establishes a perspective that affects your entire day.

Upon Waking

- Plan to spend your first conscious moments in the presence of God. If you wake up before your alarm or if you don’t normally set one, quietly affirm that God is present with you as soon as you begin to stir, being grateful that God has been with you through night. (If you wake up to an alarm, quiet your mind first by taking a few deep breaths.)
- Spend a few moments acknowledging the beauty of Jesus, perhaps by focusing on one of his many names in Scripture. You may want to plan for this in advance by choosing one name to focus on for a week or more.
- Offer your day to God as you go about your waking-up routine. Listen for God’s voice, and be open to what God might be saying to you.
- Thank God for all that will happen during this day. Ask God to make his presence known in and through you as you interact with others.

Before Going to Sleep

- Praise God for the ways he has blessed you today. These can be anything from a good meal, a phone call from a friend, the solution to a difficult problem, or an answer to a specific prayer. Try to name at least five things.
- Reflect on your day. Ask God to show you how he has worked in and through you, and thank him for these gifts. Look inside yourself to see if there was an occasion of sin during this day. If so, ask God for forgiveness and healing.
- Speak to God about the people on your mind—your children, spouse, friends, parents, and others—and pray for them accordingly.
- Offer your sleep to God. Ask God to speak to you even as you rest, and enable you to awaken mindful of his presence.

(Adapted from Tricia McGary Rhodes, *Sacred Chaos: Spiritual Disciplines for the Life You Have*)

Ways to Pray

Contemplative Centering Prayer

*O God, you are my God,
and I long for you.
My whole being desires you;
like a dry, worn-out, and waterless land,
my soul is thirsty for you.
Let me see you in the sanctuary
let me see how mighty and glorious you are.
Your constant love is better than life itself,
and so I will praise you.
I will give you thanks as long as I live;
I will raise my hands to you in prayer.
My soul will feast and be satisfied,
and I will sing glad songs of praise to you.
—Psalm 63:1–5*

*In the same way the Spirit also comes to help us, weak as we are. For we do not know how we ought to pray; the Spirit himself pleads with God for us in groans that words cannot express. And God, who sees into our hearts, knows what the thought of the Spirit is; because the Spirit pleads with God on behalf of his people and in accordance with his will.
—Romans 8:26–27*

Centering prayer is a form of contemplative prayer where we seek to quiet scattered thoughts and desires in the still center of Christ's presence. In this prayer we open our minds and hearts to the presence of God within us. God calls us to friendship. In this kind of prayer we let go of the things that get in the way of our friendship with God. We wait for God as we would wait for a friend. It takes time to become intimate friends. Our relationship with God takes time, too.

In centering prayer we take time to just be with God, realizing that God is beyond all human thoughts, feelings and concepts. In this kind of prayer we do not use thoughts or words. Rather, we let go of any thoughts or feelings when they come to mind so we can make a space for God. The following steps will help you to pray in this way.

- Choose a quiet space where you can be comfortable and where you can be uninterrupted and uninhibited.
- Once you are comfortable, light a candle, take a few deep breaths, and relax. Then set the timer or stop watch for twenty minutes.
- Close your eyes and recall your desire to just be in God's presence.
- Choose a simple word, phrase or verse from Scripture that expresses your desire for God (e.g., love, peace, grace, Jesus, Good Shepherd).
- When thoughts or feelings come into your mind, let them go. Do not give into them or allow them to take you away from God's presence. Distractions will come; this is normal. Think of this kind of prayer as the prayer of "letting go." Don't be surprised if you spend the whole prayer period letting go of thoughts and feelings. Over time you will experience something happening in your life: a new sense of peace, a new awareness of God's great love for you. Be patient! Prayer takes practice.
- Rest in the center of God's love. Trust that the Holy Spirit, who abides in the depths of your spirit, will connect you with God.
- When your prayer has ended, slowly come back to the here and now.

Scriptural Prayer

*Your word is a lamp to guide me
and a light for my path.
I will keep my solemn promise
to obey your just instructions.
—Psalm 119:105–106*

*Speak to one another with the words of psalms,
hymns, and sacred songs; sing hymns and
psalms to the Lord with praise in your hearts. In
the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, always give
thanks for everything to God the Father.
—Ephesians 5:19–20*

As Christians, we believe that one of the ways God is manifested to us is through Scripture. When we prayerfully read the Scriptures, we open our minds and hearts to the Spirit of God. We can be both challenged and affirmed by the Word of God.

Praying with Scripture can be done alone or with others. When done with others, it can be a means of sharing more deeply the faith you attempt to live out day by day. The following steps will help you to use Scripture in prayer.

- Choose a passage from Scripture, about five to ten verses in length. You might choose one of your favorite passages, a Scripture reading from the previous or coming Sunday, or use an index to help you locate a passage that seems to be appropriate for the time or occasion.
- Choose a comfortable place where you can be uninterrupted and uninhibited.
- Light a candle. Take a few moments to get your body in harmony with your spirit. Sometimes it helps to take a few deep breaths or stretch your body, then relax.
- Acknowledge God's presence with you. Ask God to send the Spirit to be with you and guide you in this time of reflection.
- Read the passage you have chosen slowly, out loud, listening carefully to it. You might want to pause after a sentence or phrase.
- Say the words or phrases that struck you. Do not discuss them, just say them.
- Read the passage a second time, slowly and prayerfully.
- Consider the message the passage might have for you: a challenge, an affirmation, or an insight. If you are doing this with others, you could invite them to share what comes to mind.
- Read the passage a third time, slowly and prayerfully.
- Pause for about ten minutes of silence and allow the Spirit to speak to you. If no words or thoughts come, just sit in the silence. Sometimes God touches us in ways we cannot know.
- Following your quiet time, consider how the passage calls you to action. Is there something you need to do to make the Scripture alive for you here and now?
- Close with a brief prayer of thanksgiving or praise to God for the gift of the Spirit.



Intercessory Prayer

Do all this in prayer, asking for God's help. Pray on every occasion, as the Spirit leads. For this reason keep alert and never give up; pray always for all God's people.

—Ephesians 6:18

May you always be joyful in your union with the Lord, I say it again: rejoice! Don't worry about anything, but in all your prayers ask God for what you need, always asking him with a thankful heart. And God's peace, which is far beyond human understanding, will keep your hearts and minds safe in union with Christ Jesus.

—Philippians 4:4, 6–7

One of the time-honored types of prayer is that of intercession, or asking God for what we and others need. Intercessory prayer invites us into God's care and concern for us, our families and friends, and the entire world. No concern is too trivial for God to receive with loving attention. Intercessory prayer, however, is not a means of manipulating God into doing our will. Rather, it is a way we become aware of God's prayer for a person and join in that intercession.

Pray for

- the needs and concerns of your family/ household and friends,
- the needs and concerns of people in your local church and community,
- the needs and concerns of people around the world.

Respond "Lord, hear us" to each petition

Consider keeping a household prayer list on a wipe-off board and placing it where everyone will see it. Encourage everyone to write brief notes about problems or situations for which they would like the household to pray, as well as the names of people for whom they would like everyone to pray.

10 Praying

Praise Prayer

*Come, let us praise the Lord!
Let us sing for joy to God, who protects us!
Let us come before him with thanksgiving
and sing joyful songs of praise.*

*Come, let us bow down and worship him;
let us kneel before the Lord, our Maker!
He is our God;
we are the people he cares for,
the flock for which he provides.
—Psalm 95:1–2, 6–7*

We give praise to God for divine goodness, for the mystery and majesty of God. Prayers of praise can be a challenge for us to think about God in terms of someone who deserves our praise. It forces us to not take God for granted. Prayers of praise reflect our own attitude and ability to recognize others for their goodness, especially our ability to simply praise God for being God.

Offer prayers of praise:

“God, you are good and wonderful.
We praise you.”

“God, we praise you for the mystery
that is you.”

“God, we believe that you are holy
and awesome.”

“We praise you for your majesty, O God.”

Thanksgiving Prayer

*How good it is to give thanks to you O Lord,
to sing in your honor, O Most High God;
to proclaim your constant love every morning
and your faithfulness every night,
with the music of stringed instruments
and with melody on the harp.
Your mighty deeds, O Lord, make me glad;
because of what you have done, I sing for joy
—Psalm 92:1–4*

We are grateful to God for the many gifts God shares with us. It is good for us to reflect on the many good things that are ours, which we enjoy and sometimes take for granted, and give thanks to God for all we have and are. It can be

a challenge to thank God for what we need even before we have it, trusting that God will provide for our needs in ways that are best.

Offer thanks to God:

“We thank you, God.”

“We are grateful for your goodness.”

■ Prayer styles I will use:

■ Prayer styles our household will use:

Praying in Families with Children

Prayer needs to be modeled and taught in very simple ways at home. All of the prayer activities in this chapter can be used in a family over the course of a year with increasing intensity and depth. For example, one family joins hands every night before the evening meal. Their prayers are simple, acknowledging God’s presence during that day, giving gratitude for good grades, good weather, good food, good playtime; offering intercessions for those who are in need; and asking to recognize God’s will for each family member. Sometimes this prayer is preceded by a short reading from the Bible or other book of prayers, and is usually followed by a simple song.

Although prayer time takes only a few minutes, its daily repetition acknowledging God’s presence within the family is important and nurtures everyone. At bedtime one family member can lead a short prayer with each child and give a nighttime blessing. Sometimes children like to talk about their problems and concerns; the family can also ask for God’s assistance and for the strength to live as God wants us to.



Online Resources for Daily Prayer

Upper Room

Daily Reflections:
www.upperroom.org/DAILY

Daily Devotional:
www.upperroom.org/devotional

Prayer Resources:
www.upperroom.org/methodx/thelife

Taize

Daily Bible readings and meditation:
www.taize.fr/en_article1000.html

Prayer for Each Day:
www.taize.fr/en_article5806.html

Sacred Space

Daily Prayer Online: [/www.sacredspace.ie/](http://www.sacredspace.ie/)

Daily Lectionary Readings

Online: www.usccb.org/nab/today.shtml

Podcast: www.usccb.org/nab/nabpodcast.shtml

iTunes: "Daily readings from
 the New American Bible"

Pray-As-You-Go: Daily Prayer for Your MP3 Player

www.pray-as-you-go.org

Creighton University

Daily Bible Reading and Reflections:
www.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/daily

Prayer is a way of connecting our lives with God's life and God's will for us. Here are several help suggestions for guiding your children in their prayer life:

- Pray as you can in the midst of your busy day.
- Call the child's name in prayer so they know they are important to you and to God.
- Establish patterns of prayer in family life that nurture the practices of prayer in your child from the earliest ages.
- Help children learn to pray by imitation—by watching you pray and imitating you.
- Remember that the repetition of prayers nurtures familiarity and security in children.
- Teach children to use their own words in prayer.
- Encourage children to pray anytime, anywhere, under any circumstance, and to say anything to God they want to say.
- Guide children in experiencing a variety of prayer forms—praise, thanksgiving, spontaneous, petition, and contribution.

Resources for Living the Christian Practice of Praying

Go to our project web site
www.lifelongfaith.com
 for exciting ideas, practical resources,
 and recommended books
 and web sites to help you live the
 Christian practice of Praying.

10 Praying

Praying

Prayer for the Journey

Dear God,
I do not know where you are leading me.
I do not even know what my next day,
my next week or my next year will look like.
As I try to keep my hands open,
I trust that you will put your hand in mine
and bring me home.
Thank you God for your love.
Thank you.
Amen.

(Henri J.M. Nouwen, *With Open Hands*)



A Contemporary Lord's Prayer

Abba in heaven,
your name is holy!
Your justice come,
your will be done,
on earth as in the heavens.
Fill us this day
with all that we need.
Teach us to heal
as you have healed us.
Bring us not to the test,
but deliver us always
from the power of evil.
You alone are God,
and all belongs to you!

(Edward F. Gabriele, *Gathered at the Table in Prayer and Song*)