

FORMED BY PRAYER



**the way of faith
in a world of sight**



Passion Creek
CHURCH

**Formed by Prayer:
the way of faith in a world of sight**

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“TEACH US TO PRAY”

It’s pretty significant that the one time we’re told the disciples ask Jesus to teach them something, they say, “Teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1).

After everything they saw Jesus doing—preaching, performing miracles, healing, casting out demons—what caught their attention was the devotion and commitment Jesus seemed to have when it came to prayer.

For most of us, if we’re honest, prayer isn’t the first thing we’d want to learn more about from Jesus. Maybe we’re new to the faith and prayer seems less important than studying our Bibles or gathering with community. Or maybe we’ve been following Jesus most of our lives, but prayer still feels boring and more like a chore. We might like the idea of prayer, but it feels more tedious than life-giving, more empty than empowering.

But the disciples saw something in Jesus’ habits of prayer that most of us miss—for Jesus, prayer wasn’t simply a spiritual practice to add on to an already busy life. Prayer was the source and center of everything He did.

Regardless of where we find ourselves on our spiritual journey, the invitation of prayer is an invitation to experience the type of communion with God that Jesus Himself experienced. To center ourselves on the presence of God rather than allow ourselves to be

decentered by the worries and anxieties of the age (Mark 4:19). To hear the voice of God in our day-to-day lives. To draw power from our relationship with God that sustains us and enables us to accomplish what He's called us to do. And to do our part in bringing the Kingdom of Heaven down to earth.

Prayer is the sacred practice of delighting in God's presence, discerning God's heart, depending on God's power, and directing God's hand.

Most of us have only learned about one type of prayer, which is why it can feel boring and empty. But throughout Scripture, and in the life of Jesus Himself, there are many ways the people of God commune with Him, hear from Him, center themselves on Him, and see His Kingdom break through in prayer. Whether you're skeptical about the possibility of enjoying prayer, hungry for the experience of God that comes through prayer, or hurt by the pain of unanswered prayer, we hope you learn to experience the presence and power of God in fresh ways.

How to Use this Guide...

This Prayer Guide is meant to help you learn about prayer by actually practicing it. Each week will emphasize a specific way to pray by introducing you to a concept of prayer and then giving you some practical ways to implement that type of prayer into your daily rhythm. To that end, each practice will include both a base and a reach practice.

A base practice is like a starting point.

It's a simple way to begin a prayer habit that almost anyone can do. These are realistic, simple, and regular. Think of these as a baseline—they serve to set the foundation for a prayer habit.

A reach practice is one that might stretch you outside of your comfort zone.

It's for those who might feel as if the base practice is too simple or who are interested in going a little further in prayer. These practices are invitational. They're designed for those who might already have an established rhythm of prayer and are best for those who are reasonably acquainted with Scripture.

Engaging with the reach practice doesn't make you more mature or "godly," just as committing only to the base practice doesn't make you less mature. We'll all fluctuate between base and reach practices depending on how God is uniquely inviting us to grow.

DELIGHTING IN GOD'S PRESENCE

Most of us have heard prayer defined simply as “talking to God.” And while this is true, prayer is much deeper than that.

When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, the first thing He told them to do was address God as a Father. “Our Father in heaven...” as the prayer goes. Many of us know it by heart, but this was a radical move on Jesus’ part. In a culture full of both reverence and uncertainty about the divine, Jesus was demonstrating to His disciples a very simple, yet radical truth: God is knowable. He’s not simply “up there” in the clouds, nor is He passively waiting for us to approach Him with the right words, mantra, or sacrifice. God is near, and we can talk to Him the same way a child would talk to their father.

The starting point of prayer is delight.

We can’t develop the kind of prayer life Jesus had until we get our heads and hearts around the truth that God wants to be near us in prayer more than we want to be near Him. When we approach Him in prayer, it’s not to get His attention. It’s to respond to His attention toward us. We pray to talk to God, to hear from Him, to depend on His power, and to direct His hand. But first, we pray simply to be in His presence. To approach Him like a child approaches their father, waiting to be welcomed, embraced, and loved.

Base Practice: Establish a Daily Prayer Rhythm

The easiest and most simple way to begin delighting in God's presence is to simply schedule time with Him. While this may seem formal and unintimate, this is actually the way Jesus developed deep intimacy with the Father. Throughout the Gospels, it seems as if Jesus made it a regular habit to go to a solitary place to pray (Matthew 14:23, Mark 1:35, Luke 4:42, John 6:15). This pattern of prayer was intentional, not spontaneous, and happened frequently enough that all four Gospel authors give examples.

Spontaneous prayer is good, healthy, and shouldn't be neglected. But relying on our spontaneity is often why most of us feel distant from God.

Our "spontaneity" is usually just a response to a need. But by orienting our daily schedules around intentional moments of prayer like Jesus, we can slowly begin to develop a relationship with God that extends beyond simply talking at Him.

Most scholars agree that the regular rhythm of prayer practiced by the Jews in the Old Testament, as well as the first disciples in the New Testament, was three fixed times a day—morning, noon, and nighttime.

For example, the Psalmist in Psalm 55 groans and complains to God in prayer morning, noon, and night (Psalm 55:17). Daniel built a habit of

praying three times a day on his rooftop to give thanks to God (Daniel 6:10). In the New Testament, the disciples heal a man who can't walk while they're in the temple for their regular noonday prayer (Acts 3:1).

If we want to learn how to delight in God's presence, we can learn from the patterns of the earliest followers of Jesus. New Testament scholar and historian Scot McKnight says, "The blessings of life that enter most deeply into our soul do not come by our finding more free time or more leisure. Those blessings enter the soul when we let soul rhythms, the sacred rhythms of prayer, shape the structure of our day."¹

Here's a simple way to establish a Daily Prayer Rhythm:

1. Decide when you'll pray. To keep with the practice of the early church, you could pray in the morning, at noon, and just before bed. Or, if three times a day is unrealistic for you, consider just one fixed time a day. The goal is consistency, not intensity.

2. Set a realistic goal. Don't aim for 30 minutes of prayer if you've never prayed before. Set an alarm or reminder for the time you've committed to pray. When you pray, start small with 1-5 minutes and go from there.

3. When it's time to pray, simply talk to God. Pause whatever you're doing, and allow the interruption of your scheduled prayer to close that gap between your awareness of God and the reality of your daily routine. Tell Him what's going on, what you're stressed about, or what you're grateful for.

Reach Practice: Abiding Prayer

If you have an intimately close relationship with a friend or family member, such as a spouse, at some point your relationship with that person is no longer dependent on your conversation. Simply being in the same room, in the presence of the one you love, is enough to maintain your connection to them. This is true of our relationship with God as well. Throughout church history, this concept most often has been called Abiding Prayer.²

Abiding Prayer, like all practices, can be abused and misunderstood. Some take this type of prayer in a mystical and unhelpful direction. Others scoff at any type of prayer that doesn't directly involve Scripture or our own words. But if the goal of prayer is to delight in God's presence, then at some point, just like all our deep relationships, our prayers will become less about talking at God and more about being with God.

In its most basic form, Abiding Prayer is silent prayer.

We don't speak, and we're open to listening, but our true goal is simply to spend a few moments still and aware of God's presence. This type of prayer is what the Psalmist refers to in Psalm 46:10— "Be still and know that I am God." It's a way of seeing the glory and presence of God with "unveiled faces," as Paul describes in 2 Corinthians 3:18, or a way to "waste time with God" as the spiritual writer and theologian Henri Nouwen once said.³ In Abiding Prayer, we learn to metaphorically be still and sit in the same room with God our Father.

There's no perfect model for how to practice Abiding Prayer, but here's a simple way to start:

1. Find a place to pray. Prepare to set aside around 5 minutes to begin with. Sit in a comfortable chair where (if we're being real) you're least likely to fall asleep. Or, if you're more of a kinetic person (meaning you have trouble sitting still) you could prayer walk.

2. Center your attention on God. We're holistic beings, and our mind's anxieties often express themselves through our bodies (wandering minds, quick heartbeats, restless legs, etc.). To calm our whole selves and bring our awareness to God's presence, take a few deep breaths in and out.

3. Bring your awareness to God's presence near you. If you're a visual person, it might be helpful to imagine Jesus physically in the room/space with you. This will look and function differently for everybody, but the goal here is simply to make yourself aware of the fact that God is here.

4. When (not if) your mind wanders, use a prayer word.

Distractions will come. It's inevitable, so don't feel bad. When you find your mind wandering, simply use a prayer word such as "Father" or "Jesus" to redirect yourself back to God.

5. After 1-2 minutes, offer a short prayer of thanks. Try to resist the urge to analyze your experience right away. The goal isn't to accomplish anything, nor is it to receive anything from God. It's simply to practice slowing down, resting, and then gazing at and being with God.

DISCERNING GOD'S HEART

If the goal of prayer is to delight in God's presence and develop deeper communion with Him, few of us want to settle for a one-sided relationship. At some point in our prayer journey, we'll want to actually hear from Him. This is what Scripture calls *discernment*. And while prayer is about delighting in our personal relationship with God by sharing our hearts with Him, it's also about learning His heart for us and for those around us.

When we pray to discern God's heart, we're asking to know God's will.

But we're also asking that God would form and shape us into the kinds of people who are actually capable of accomplishing it. This means discerning God's heart is less about finding the right path when faced with a decision and more about tuning our hearts and desires to God's heart and desires. This is partly what Jesus means when He tells His disciples to pray, "Your Kingdom come Your will be done..." (Matt. 6:10). Discerning God's heart is about surrendering our will to God's. We want His will, not ours, to be done in our lives, in the lives of those around us, and in our world. Praying this way is about alignment. We want to bend our desires to God's desires. And not just for ourselves. We want to develop the heart God has for those around us as well.

We want to hear from God, we want to respond to His voice, and we want to become people who carry out His will.

Base Practice: Praying the Examen

Pastor and author Tyler Staton suggests the best way to begin discerning God's heart and will is by reflecting on how He might have already been revealing Himself to you in hindsight.⁴ In fact, God seems to speak frequently not in the big, miraculous moments, but in the small mundane ones. Elijah hears God in a whisper in a cave, Samuel hears God in the middle of the night and thinks it's his sleeping mentor, and the disciples on the road to Emmaus almost miss the resurrected Jesus in the flesh during their commute (1 Kings 19:12, 1 Samuel 3:5, Luke 24:16). In each of these cases, God is revealing Himself to people in the midst of their ordinary routines. One simple and practical way to discern God's heart in our daily lives is to pray the Examen.

The Examen is an ancient prayer model that involves looking back on our day to see where God was moving, where we may have wandered from His will, and where we need to pay more attention to ourselves and to God.

By praying the Examen, we're training ourselves to recognize the patterns, activities, and events God might be using to get our attention regularly, but that we might miss.

Here's a simple way to pray the Examen. Set aside 5-10 minutes at the end of your day to pray through these steps:

1. Reflect. Work back through the moments and events of your day. Think about meetings you were in, conversations you had, moments you sinned, or anything else the Holy Spirit brings to mind. You can even use your calendar or schedule to help you remember important meetings, interactions, and tasks from the day's schedule.

2. Review. As you reflect on your day, begin to review where you may have felt God's presence the most. Were there any conversations that still linger in your heart and mind? Was there a prompting of the Spirit you obeyed or ignored? Review what moments or events God may have been using to try to get your attention.

3. Repent. A key part of our ability to discern God's heart is repenting from our sin. As you review your day, repent from any sin that may have kept you from hearing or responding to God.

4. Rejoice. End your prayer with gratitude, thanking God for all of the blessings you experienced this day.

Reach Practice: Listening Prayer

James Dobson, the Christian author, psychologist, and founder of Focus on the Family, had a simple way to practice listening to God. He would often get on his knees and say, "Lord, I need to know what You want me to do, and I am listening. Please speak to me through my friends, books, magazines I pick up and read, and through circumstances."⁵ This intentional posture of listening to God is a large part of what it means to discern the heart of God.

We believe God still speaks today. He speaks through Scripture, the person of Jesus, and through those in our communities. But we also believe God has direct access to our hearts and minds through the Holy Spirit.

It's the Holy Spirit who reminds us of what Jesus teaches, and it's the Spirit who redirects our hearts and minds back toward God. This is what the Bible calls conviction (John 14:26, 16:8). It's rare that we slow down and tune our ears to God's voice. To do so requires us to silence the inner and outer noise we experience. It also requires us to know our Bibles well enough that we know who God truly is. For this reason, we consider Listening Prayer a reach practice. Listening Prayer, like Abiding Prayer, is silent prayer.

We simply ask God to speak to us, and we give space to listen to what the Spirit might be saying to us.

Here's a simple way to do that:

1. Find a quiet and comfortable place to pray. Settle your mind and body by taking a few deep breaths in and out, and invite the Spirit to quiet the noise and distractions you might experience.

2. Choose a passage of Scripture to respond to. If you have a daily reading practice, choose a verse or passage to respond to as you practice listening to God. If not, consider reading a few verses from a Gospel or the Psalms to help anchor your mind.

3. Ask God to speak. You can use this question to prompt your listening: "God, in light of this verse, what do You want me to know about You, myself, or another person today?"

4. Write down what you hear. If something specific comes to mind, such as a word, thought, phrase, image, or Scripture, write it down. We're not looking for new revelation when we listen. We're simply inviting the Spirit to convict us, remind us of what we know, or direct our hearts and minds to align with God's heart as revealed through His Word.

5. Test what you hear against Scripture and community. We're told throughout the Scriptures to always test and discern what we hear and learn about God against Scripture and community (1 Thessalonians 5:21, 1 John 4:1, 1 Corinthians 14:19). If you feel like God is speaking to you, invite other mature believers or pastors to help you discern whether it might be true. Ultimately, as followers of Jesus, we submit ourselves to the authority of God's Word.

DEPENDING ON GOD'S POWER

In the middle of His teaching on how to pray, Jesus tells His disciples to ask God, “Give us today our daily bread...” and later to, “deliver us from the evil one” (Matthew 6:11, 13).

Daily bread and deliverance seem to represent two ends of a spectrum.

On one end, daily bread represents the mundane, obvious needs that we wouldn't think to invite God into. We need food for the day, we need a safe commute to work, or we need to finish our to-do list. On the other end of the spectrum, deliverance represents the monumental needs we can't attain on our own. Healing from deep wounding, reconciliation in our marriages, or freedom from the bondage of sin. But Jesus doesn't seem to differentiate between the two needs. Both daily bread and spiritual deliverance are given to us by God through His power.

In a sermon on these exact verses, the famous preacher Charles Spurgeon noted, “...asking is the rule of the Kingdom.”⁶

If God really is our Father, then He often wants us to ask. For the big things and the small things. Daily bread, and deliverance. Because asking reveals our humility. It takes honesty and vulnerability to tell God we need His help and that we're solely relying on His power.

Prayer is a means by which we show our dependence on God's power in our lives.

When we come to God in prayer, asking for both the mundane and the monumental, God responds. Not always the way we want, and not always at once. But Jesus Himself reminds us, "Who among you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him" (Matthew 7:9-11).

Base Practice: Petitioning Prayer

If the key to unlocking prayer is accepting the fact that God is our Father, then asking our Father for our daily wants and needs is like opening the door. But many of us are too afraid to ask God for certain things that will allow us to experience the goodness of a Father who truly loves us and desires our deepest joy. To help us break free from this fear, we practice Petitioning Prayer.

A petition is a formal request made to an authority.⁷

When we practice Petitioning Prayer, we're naming our needs and wants to our ultimate Authority, God Himself. But we're doing it specifically and intentionally. Petitioning Prayer includes the small things, like daily bread that we wouldn't normally think to ask God for, as well as the big things, like spiritual deliverance that we'd normally be too afraid to ask God for. The goal of Petitioning Prayer is to learn to bring all our needs, big and small, to God in prayer. It works best when we present prayers specific enough to leave us either dazzled or disappointed by God.⁸

To practice Petitioning Prayer, simply spend some time during your day asking God for the things you need and the things you want.

Don't shy away from both the mundane and the monumental needs you have. Petitions can be made for safe travels, deliverance from evil, rent payments, reconciliation with a family member, or anything

in between. By presenting all of our needs to God in prayer, we slowly train ourselves to trust in God as a Father who desires to “give good things to those who ask him” (Matthew 7:11).

As you intentionally practice prayers of petition this week, here are some things to keep in mind:

1. Asking God for our wants and needs may feel selfish, but that’s okay. God already knows the deepest desires of your heart.

2. Praying in faith means praying with confidence that God hears us and desires our greatest good. If God doesn’t answer a petition, it doesn’t mean you didn’t use the right words or pray strongly enough. It simply means God knows what’s best for you.

3. If you find yourself doubting when asking for something, present that to God as well. Like the man asking for deliverance for his son, we too can pray, “[We] believe; help [our] unbelief!” (Mark 9:24).

4. If God answers a prayer for petition, give thanks! If He doesn’t, submit to His will and continue asking, seeking, and knocking (Matthew 7:7).

Reach Practice: Healing Prayer

For some of us, the most difficult things to ask for aren't the mundane, but the monumental. The things we don't actually know if God can or wants to answer. More often than not, these are petitions for physical healing.

When it comes to physical healing, there are a wide variety of theological beliefs and opinions. There are also a lot of fears, hurts, and negative experiences.

But Scripture is clear that healing is a sign of God's Kingdom (Luke 10:9). In fact, though it may not happen here on earth, as followers of Jesus we have full confidence that God will one day ultimately heal all physical ailments, illnesses, and injuries (Revelation 21:4). When we pray for healing, we're asking God to bring part of that promised future into the present. Regardless of our opinions on healing in the here and now, our prayers for healing ultimately point us to our faith that God desires for all in His Kingdom to one day be fully healed.⁹

There is no formula for Healing Prayer.

Sometimes healing comes through medical intervention, other times through the in-breaking of the Kingdom here and now. Even in Scripture, miraculous healing comes through different means and methods. For example, Jesus heals a centurion's servant from a distance while only speaking a word, but then He heals Peter's mother-in-law by touching her hand (Matthew 8:5-15). In the book

of Acts the disciples practice healing by speaking to those in need, laying hands on them, or simply by having their shadows and clothes touch them (Acts 14:10, 28:8, 5:15, 19:12). So when we practice Healing Prayer, it might be answered in a moment, over time, through medicine, or it might not be answered at all. For every person Jesus healed, there were countless others he didn't even interact with. But our ultimate hope isn't in healing. It's in the future restoration of the world through the finished work of Jesus on the cross. In other words, healing isn't our end goal. It's simply a sign that points to the victory Jesus has over sin, Satan, and death.

Though there's no formula in Scripture for healing, here are some practical things to keep in mind if you'd like to practice Healing Prayer:

1. Healing for yourself:

- **Asking God for physical healing is a huge step of faith, especially when you're the one in need of it.** But remember the woman who reached out to touch Jesus' robe in the middle of a crowd—her faith in the person and work of Jesus moved Jesus' heart in compassion toward her (Matthew 9:20-22).
- **Resist the temptation to believe that a physical illness or ailment is the result of your sin.** Sometimes physical ailments can result from our own sinful decisions, but Jesus makes it clear that illnesses and ailments aren't punishments for sin (John 9:3).
- **Be persistent in your asking.** Paul asked multiple times to be healed of his suffering before God directly answered him (2 Corinthians 12:8). Jesus tells us to ask, to seek, and to knock, and to be persistent in crying out to Him with our needs (Matthew 7:8, Luke 18:7).

2. Healing for others:

- **If someone asks you to pray for healing over them**, there's biblical precedence for placing your hands on them (appropriately) and asking God to heal them.
- **Be specific in what you're asking.** If there's a particular illness or chronic pain, name it and ask God to heal it specifically.
- **There also seems to be a correlation between our holiness and God's healing.** If there's sin that's unconfessed before God, it's possible that healing won't happen through you (James 5:15-16).
- **Sometimes, healing happens slowly (see Mark 8:23-25).** If you're praying for someone, consider asking if there's any difference. If not, pray again.

3. Asking for healing prayer:

- **If there's a chronic illness, pain, or ailment** you'd like to experience healing from, the Bible is clear that it's okay to ask for others to pray for healing over you (James 5:14).
- **Consider going to the pastors/elders** and asking them to pray over you.
- **Consider also asking a wise, mature, believing friend** to pray over you as well.

DIRECTING GOD'S HAND

"Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

There are two implications to this part of Jesus' prayer (Matthew 6:10). First, God has a will. It's distinct from our will and from the will of others. Second, God's will isn't fully done here on earth yet. There's still sin, brokenness, evil, and darkness that plague humanity and keep the lost from experiencing freedom from sin (2 Corinthians 4:4). Simply put, God's plan for redemption didn't end with the resurrection of Jesus. The end of the biblical story is God bringing heaven and earth together fully.

In Exodus 32, after receiving the 10 Commandments, Moses prays on behalf of the Israelites and God responds (Exodus 32:9-14). In 1 Samuel 9, the prophet Samuel prays on behalf of the Israelites, and they're rescued by God from the Philistines (1 Samuel 7:5-10). In the New Testament, Jesus prays for Peter's faith not to fail, and God seems to respond (Luke 22:32). And in Acts 12, when Peter is imprisoned, God answers the prayers of the church by rescuing him (Acts 12:5-11). If you track the theme of prayer throughout the biblical story, one thing becomes abundantly clear: prayer moves the hand of God to action. It's our prayers, usually on behalf of others, by which God advances His Kingdom to push back the darkness in the world around us.

Prayers may not change God's mind, but they do affect how He acts and what He does in the world. Put simply, God responds when we pray.

Prayer is so important because it allows us to delight in God's presence, discern His heart, and depend on His power. But prayer is so powerful because it actually directs God's hand. When we pray, prayer moves our heart and will to align with God's heart and will. Prayer turns us into people who see the world the way God sees it, and it makes us care about what God cares about.

By praying bold prayers that just might move God's hand to action, we practice turning our inward-focused minds, hearts, and bodies into outward-acting agents of God's kingdom.

Base Practice: Intercessory Prayer

Intercession is the practice of praying on behalf of others.

When we aim our prayers at the needs of others, we participate in asking God to bring His Kingdom and will down here on earth as it is in heaven. Intercessory Prayer moves our hearts and minds away from our own needs, wants, and desires, and allows us to develop God's heart for others.

Author Ruth Haley Barton writes, "Intercessory prayer is not primarily about thinking that I know what someone else needs and trying to wrestle it from God. Rather, it is being present to God on another's behalf, listening for the prayer of the Holy Spirit that is already being prayed for that person before the throne of grace, and being willing to join God in that prayer...As I enter into the stillness of true prayer, it is enough to experience my own groaning about the situation or person I am concerned about and to sense the Spirit's groaning on their behalf."¹⁰ In other words, when we intercede for others in prayer, we're joining in on what God is already doing in their lives. We're asking God to close the gap between His Kingdom and their reality.

We intercede for others in many ways. Sometimes we ask God for healing on their behalf. Other times, we ask God to meet a specific need.

We might practice Listening Prayer to discern what God might want to say to someone else. But most commonly, we intercede for the lost, those who don't yet have a relationship with Jesus. Interceding for the lost, contending on their behalf, is a way to match our hearts with God's.

Here's how to practice Intercessory Prayer:

1. Mark out time in your day to pray for others. If you're sticking with a daily prayer rhythm, you could make Intercessory Prayer the focus of one of your scheduled times to pray. For example, every day at noon, set an alarm that goes off reminding you to pray for others. It's helpful to hold someone specific in mind when you pray this way.

2. Ask God who you should pray for. If there's someone in your life you want to see come to know Jesus, such as a friend, family member, or coworker, pray for them. If you don't know anyone who's lost, ask God to bring to mind someone you could pray for.

3. Pray specifically and honestly. Ask for what you want to see God do in their lives on their behalf. Whether it's for physical healing, a need to be met, or for their salvation, ask God boldly while trusting that He ultimately desires all to be saved (1 Timothy 2:4).

4. Contend. Intercessory Prayer shouldn't be practiced once. God often responds to our persistence, especially our persistence on behalf of others. Contending looks like saying to God, "I'm not going to stop praying until your will is done" (Genesis 32:26). This doesn't mean we'll get what we pray for. But it does mean that we trust in God's desire for His will to be done in the lives of those around us.

Reach Practice: Prayer Cards

Using Prayer Cards is a practical way to keep Intercessory Prayer consistent in our daily lives. Prayer Cards are simply specific requests for others written down on an index card or piece of paper that we carry with us throughout the day. During our day, we set aside time to pray through each card specifically. This could happen in the morning, during lunch, before bed, or at any other point during the day. The goal is to use a tangible card/paper that serves as a reminder to direct God's hand on behalf of others.

Here's a simple way to use Prayer Cards: "

1. Write down the name of the person you're praying for. If you don't have someone specific in mind, ask God who He might want you to contend for.

2. Write down a passage of Scripture. Think of something from Scripture that you want to see become real in this person's life.

3. Write their specific need. If it's something tangible, write it down. If it's for salvation, a change in their heart, or something they're asking God for, write it down as well. If you'd like, write the date so you can reflect later on when you began contending for this person.

4. Carry your cards with you throughout the day.

It's recommended to use 3-4 Prayer Cards to start. Use them as tangible reminders to redirect your heart toward them in prayer.

Additional Tips and Practices

Putting It All Together

It can feel overwhelming trying to integrate all of these prayer practices into a daily rhythm, but it's not impossible. There's absolutely no pressure to do this, but if you'd like to try integrating most of these prayer practices daily, here's one example of what that might look like:

Morning: Abiding, Listening, & Petitioning Prayer (10-20 mins)

- Spend 5 minutes in silence and Abiding prayer.
- After reading Scripture, spend a minute or two in Listening Prayer.
- End with Petitioning Prayer by asking God to meet specific needs for the day.

Noon: Intercessory Prayer (5 mins)

- Use prayer cards or just ask God to bring to mind someone you can pray over.

Evening: Praying the Examen (5-10 mins)

- Before bed, reflect on your day using the Prayer of Examen.

Pre-Written Prayers

Sometimes prayer seems intimidating because we simply don't have the energy or focus to come with our own words. Followers of Jesus throughout the centuries have used pre-written prayers to anchor their prayers when words were too difficult to come up with. The book of Psalms, for example, has been used as a kind of prayer manual for centuries. Here are some recommended pre-written prayers you could use as needed:

Psalms

- As you read through a Psalm, pause after every verse to reflect and pray it back to God.
- Ex) Psalm 23:1 — “Lord, you are my shepherd. You give me everything I need to be content. Help me to trust that you will provide for me.”

The Lord's Prayer

- Pray through the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6:9-13 line by line.
- Ex) “Lord, may Your Kingdom come and Your will be done in my life today. Help me to submit myself to Your will and surrender to You in every moment.”

Prayer Books and Ancient Prayers

- Resources such as the Book of Common Prayer can help structure our daily Scripture or prayer habits.
- Additionally, the early church fathers and mothers often wrote elaborate and theologically rich prayers that can help aid us when we don't know what to pray: St. Patrick's Breastplate Prayer; St. Francis of Assisi's “Make Me an Instrument” Prayer; St. Teresa of Ávila's “Guidance Prayer”

Breath Prayers

A Breath Prayer is a short phrase that can be repeated throughout the day as a way to orient yourself around God in prayer. These types of prayers are great because they don't require much time or energy. You're simply tuning your soul (mind, heart, and body) to the presence of God as you go about your day.

Here are a few examples of common breath prayers:

- Lord, help me (Psalm 40:13)
- Come, Lord Jesus
- Jesus, have mercy on me (Luke 18:38)
- Jesus, I'm tired, give me rest (Matthew 11:28)
- Open my heart, to trust your love
- Speak Lord, I'm listening (1 Samuel 3:9)

Lectio Divina

There's an ancient practice of reading Scripture prayerfully called Lectio Divina which puts us in a posture to be formed by Scripture rather than simply informed by it. Reading Scripture slowly allows us to combine the practice of being formed by Scripture with our practice of prayer.

Lectio Divina is best practiced with a smaller portion of Scripture, such as a Psalm or a small narrative from the Gospels, but it can be practiced using any passage from the Bible.

Here are the basic steps:

- **Read.** Read the passage once, taking note of words, phrases, thoughts, or ideas that stand out to you from the text.
- **Reflect.** Read the passage again, this time stopping at the words or phrases that caught your attention before. Reflect on these words or phrases by meditating on them, letting them get soaked up into your mind and heart (Psalm 1:2, Job 1:8).
- **Respond.** Ask the Spirit how He might want you to respond to what you've read. It could be a sin you should repent from, a reminder to take with you, an insight to ponder, or a word to share with someone you know.
- **Rest.** Spend a few moments in silent prayer, allowing what you just read and prayed through to sink from your head to your heart before getting up and ending your time in prayer.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Scot McKnight, "Praying with the Church" pg. 42.
- 2 <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/family-qa/questions-and-concerns-about-contemplative-prayer/>
- 3 Henri Nouwen, "Spiritual Formation" pg. 19-20.
- 4 Tyler Staton, "The Familiar Stranger" pg. 130.
- 5 James Dobson, "The Will of God," radio broadcast, December 3, 1982, as cited in Dallas Willard, "Hearing God" pg. 259.
- 6 <https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/sermons/ask-and-have/#flipbook/>
- 7 <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/petition>
- 8 Staton, "Praying Like Monks, Living Like Fools" pg. 111.
- 9 <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/we-should-pray-for-healing>
- 10 Ruth Haley Barton, "Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership" pg. 146
- 11 Adapted from Paul E. Miller, "A Praying Life" pg. 278-279.

RECOMMENDED READING

A Praying Life

by Paul E. Miller

Hearing God

by Dallas Willard

Prayer

by Richard Foster

Praying the Bible

by Donald Whitney

How to Pray

by Pete Greig

Prayer

by Timothy Keller

We don't
pray before
the work.
Prayer is
the work.