

# Spiritual Rhythms

## PRAYER

What comes to mind when you think of prayer? Is it twenty minutes before bed or twenty seconds before a meal? Is it alone or in a group? Is it asking God for something you need, giving God praise for something he did, or listening to God in silence? Simply stated, prayer is intentional, two-way communication with God that leads to deeper spiritual life and intimacy with God.<sup>1</sup> As Father, God wants to spend time with us—he delights in welcoming his children through prayer. As Holy Spirit, God provides us with the words, even when we don't know what to say. And as our Savior, Jesus serves as our mediator through whom we can safely approach God's throne, as well as our example in prioritizing time and place for prayer.

For some, prayer can be intimidating and strange. For others, prayer is as intuitive as breathing. For Jesus, though, prayer was a way of everyday life. We hope that this week's rhythm helps you to establish new connections and intimate communication with God, and also that you learn to practice the presence of God throughout the most mundane of circumstances.

### SCRIPTURE BASIS

Read and reflect on Luke 11:1–13.

- Which of these five sections of the Lord's Prayer is most meaningful to you and why?
  - "Father, hallowed be your name"
  - "Your kingdom come"
  - "Give us this day our daily bread"
  - "Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us"
  - "Lead us not into temptation"
- Which section is hardest for you to pray and why?
- What are some character traits of God evidenced in this passage? How does that affect your desire and willingness to pray?

Read and reflect on Romans 8:22–30.

- What do we learn about our identity in Christ from this text? How does this impact our desire and willingness to pray?
- What do you notice about the character of God and the Holy Spirit in this text?
- What can we do to keep our prayers focused on "God's will" and not just our own desires?

### RESPONSE

- On a scale of 1 to 10 (with 1 being "prayer is intimidating and strange" and 10 being "prayer is as intuitive as breathing"), how would you rate yourself? (*Note: All of us are on a journey in our prayer life. There are no right or wrong answers!*)

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<sup>1</sup> Thanks to Dan McClannan, CCC's Executive Director of Next Generation Ministries, for this definition of prayer.

- What would you like to try differently this week to move a little deeper on the prayer scale? Who will you encourage with your prayers? Who will you ask to pray for you or with you?

## CHRISTIAN TRADITION

Susanna Wesley (1669–1742)<sup>2</sup> is our example of daily, faithful prayer. The story is often told of her praying “under her apron,” even while her children played underfoot. This doesn’t seem particularly noteworthy until you hear that she had nineteen children! Susanna often prayed two hours a day, committing to God that “she would never spend more time in leisure entertainment than she did in prayer and Bible study.” Susanna’s commitment to prayer and Bible study led to her leading an in-home Bible study which eventually included hundreds of neighbors. Her faithfulness in prayer no doubt influenced her children (who were taught from a young age not to disturb mama when she was under that apron!) Two of her sons were John Wesley, credited with preaching to millions in his lifetime, and Charles Wesley, a musician who wrote more than 6000 hymns. Both brothers shaped Methodist theology, sometimes referred to as the “Holiness Movement.” The Wesleyan tradition gave birth to many denominational families, including the Christian & Missionary Alliance. Susanna Wesley’s faithful, daily prayer was a catalyst for discipleship and her legacy impacts us today.

## PRACTICE

Try one or more of these exercises in prayer this week:

- **1000 Gifts:** Author Ann Voskamp reminds us that “Gratitude is at the center of a life of faith.” Start your own list of 1000 gifts—things you are thankful for—and let it be a catalyst for prayers of thanksgiving to the God who gives all good gifts (James 1:17).
- **Scheduled Times of Prayer:** Set your alarm for specific times each day to stop and pray (Matthew 6:9 is one version of the Lord’s prayer, so maybe you could pray at 6:09 AM, 6:09 PM, or both). Use the Lord’s Prayer or one of the “Daily Office” books as a guide for short prayers throughout the day (Acts 3:1).
- **ACTS method:** Try the ACTS outline below to shape your prayers.
  - **Adoration**—Praise God for God’s character and faithfulness
  - **Confession**—Admit your sins and struggles to God
  - **Thanksgiving**—Give thanks to God for your blessings and where you’ve seen God at work
  - **Supplication**—Ask God for your needs and for the needs of others (Psalm 25)
- **Prayer Journal:** Write your prayers. Psalms have been used by the church for prayer liturgy for centuries (Exodus 34:8–11b, 27). Use the Psalms as a catalyst for what you want to say to God. Write out a psalm in full and then write out your response to God. Does the psalm raise a question? Give you something to be thankful for? Remind you of your own pain? Remind you of another scripture, or of Jesus’ life?
- **Embodied Prayer:** Use specific postures to help you communicate and experience your prayers in new ways. For example:
  - **Praise & Adoration**—Arms and face lifted to heaven
  - **Confession and Repentance**—Full body on the floor with face to the ground
  - **Surrender**—On your knees with hands facing up
  - **Intercession**—Walking through your neighborhood, praying for those God brings to mind
  - **Thanksgiving**—Head bowed with hands together

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<sup>2</sup> [faithgateway.com/praying-example-susanna-wesley](http://faithgateway.com/praying-example-susanna-wesley)

- **Prayer Retreat:** Schedule a day away in prayer. Leave your computer and phone behind. Pray through a scripture passage, journal, pray through spoken word, or sing some worship music. Spend time with God—depending on your level of experience, schedule this as an hour, half-day, or full day (Mark 1:35).

## PRAYER FOCUS

Use these prompts for deeper prayer life this week:

- **CCC:** Creator God, thank you for being beyond our imagination, and yet as close as a parent who invites us to climb into his lap. Give us simple hearts like children who have complete trust in and love for you. Help us to recognize our need for you as provider, father, and comforter. We pray that every parent at CCC would comprehend your love for them as they consider their own unending and unconditional love for their own children.
- **Omaha:** Almighty God, through Jesus you provide friendship and full communion with you in life, in prayer, in worship. Give us eyes to see those around us as your beloved children. Help us to see your image *in* them so that we offer ourselves *to* them in service as an overflow of our prayer life with you.
- **C&MA<sup>3</sup>:** Savior God, thank you for the gift of your son, Jesus, who died to free us from sin and give us full access to a relationship with you. In our gratitude for that gift, help us to share our testimony with others. Open our eyes to opportunities for evangelism in our own backyards, with people we see every day, but seldom notice. Remind us that your gift is for *all* people and empower us through your Holy Spirit to share your message of love and grace with others. Amen.

## RESOURCES

Books and websites that support this week's practice:

- Podcast, "The Lord's Prayer," [bibleproject.com/podcast/matthew-p10-lords-prayer](http://bibleproject.com/podcast/matthew-p10-lords-prayer)
- Francis Chan, "Recovering the Mystery and Honor of Prayer," (two-minute video), [youtube.com/watch?v=LTNVCEBcCj0](http://youtube.com/watch?v=LTNVCEBcCj0)
- Beth Moore, *Praying God's Word: Breaking Free from Spiritual Strongholds*, (B&H Books, 2009)
- Ann Spangler, *Praying the Names of God: A Daily Guide*, (Zondervan, 2004).
- Richard Foster, *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*, (HarperCollins, 1992).
- Phyllis Tickle, *The Divine Hours: Pocket Edition*, (Oxford Press, 2007).
- Claiborne, Wilson-Hargrove, Okoro, *Common Prayer: A Liturgy for Ordinary Radicals*, (Zondervan, 2010).
- Tish Harrison Warren, *Liturgy of the Ordinary: Sacred Practices in Everyday Life*, (IVP, 2019).
- A. W. Tozer, *Prayer: Communing with God in Everything--Collected Insights from Tozer*, (Moody, 2016).
- 2 Samuel 7:18–29, Psalm 4, Isaiah 63:7–19, Matthew 6:1–4, Luke 18:1–17, John 5:19–30, John 15:1–12, 1 Thessalonians 5:16–25, Ephesians 3:14–21, Philippians 4:4–9, Hebrews 10:19–25

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<sup>3</sup> To sign up for a Christian & Missionary Alliance forty-day prayer resource, visit [cmalliance.org/40days](http://cmalliance.org/40days).

## **NEXT STEPS**

- Reach out for prayer at [cccomaha.org/prayer](https://cccomaha.org/prayer).
- Join the monthly Prayer Night on the first Wednesday of every month at 6:45 PM. To learn about upcoming prayer, visit [cccomaha.info](https://cccomaha.info) and click on “Classes & Events.”
- Join a weekly prayer gathering on CCC’s campus on Wednesdays at 10:30 AM in D127.
- Join a prayer gathering via Zoom every other week on Mondays at 7 PM. To be added to the list, contact Vickie Sutton at [VickieS@cccomaha.org](mailto:VickieS@cccomaha.org).
- Volunteer to serve on the Sunday Prayer Team by contacting Wendell Nelson at [WendellN@cccomaha.org](mailto:WendellN@cccomaha.org).