



## Simple Practices of Prayer at Home

For millennia, the people of God have patterned their everyday lives around practices of daily prayer, weekly celebrations, seasonal or annual events, and major life passages. Early Christians adopted and adapted Jewish rhythms of prayer in light of the dying and rising of Jesus Christ. These cycles of prayer continue to shape the lives of believers as they seek to be faithful disciples.

This resource provides simple, accessible ideas for Christian prayer and formation in a household setting. The practices described below are based on ancient patterns of prayer but are reimagined with contemporary life in mind. Some are designed for households with children, but most may be used by anyone.

A range of suggestions is offered. We all have different gifts, but they come from one generous Spirit. You should choose (or modify or expand on) those that make the most sense in your particular setting. After some time, if one pattern doesn't seem to be bearing good fruit, try another one. Spiritual practices often change according to the seasons of our lives.

Think of these as possibilities, invitations, or opportunities, not as spiritual homework. It is not recommended that one person or household try to do all of these things all the time! Be flexible, responding to events of the day and situations that arise in everyday life. Be creative, developing new practices that are authentic and engaging to those in your household.

The suggestions are organized around expanding circles of time—the rhythms of the day, the week, and the human life cycle. The document concludes with general guidelines for incorporating these ideas into your own household setting.

### The Day

*The pattern of daily prayer helps us practice the way of Jesus and live out the great mystery of our faith: dying and rising with Christ. This understanding of time, rooted in ancient Jewish and Christian traditions, moves from evening to morning, as death comes before resurrection. It focuses on the “thresholds” of the day—evening and morning—where light and darkness meet.*

#### Evening

*As the sun sets, we give thanks the light of Christ that has come into the world.*

- Coming home from work and/or school is a time of transition (or threshold time). Mark it with a sign of Christ's peace, such as a hug or kiss.
- Light a candle or turn on electric lights when the sun goes down. When practiced prayerfully, this ordinary action can be a sign of faith.
- Put a notecard with an appropriate verse of Scripture, such as “The Lord is my light and my salvation” (Ps. 27:1), near a light switch.
- Sing a light song, such as “We Are Marching in the Light of God” (*Glory to God* #853).
- With younger children, use a picture or an object, such as a battery-powered candle or night light, as a symbol of the light of Christ.

#### Night

*At the end of the day, we give thanks for a time of rest in Christ's peace.*

- Read stories from Scripture (or other spiritually nourishing texts) just before bedtime. This can be a good way to unplug from screens and devices.

- Review the day before sleeping, remembering particular joys and thanksgivings or concerns and regrets. Offer it all to God so that you may sleep in peace.
- Put a notecard with an appropriate verse of Scripture, such as “You alone, O Lord, make me lie down in safety” (Ps. 4:8), near your bed.
- Sing a night song, such as “Day Is Done,” (*Glory to God* #676).
- With younger children, ritual (repeated words and actions) can help to alleviate the anxieties that often come at bedtime. Let this be an opportunity for prayer.

### Morning

*As the sun rises, we give thanks for a new day to follow our risen Lord.*

- Remember that you are beloved child of God when you wash with water. When practiced prayerfully, this ordinary action can be a sign of faith.
- Put a notecard with an appropriate verse of Scripture, such as “[The Lord] leads me beside still waters; [God] restores my soul” (Ps. 23:2–3), near the bathroom sink or mirror.
- Sing a water song, such as “I’ve Got Peace like a River” (*Glory to God* #623).
- With younger children, use a picture or an object, such as a seashell, as a symbol of baptism.
- Leaving for work and/or school is another time of transition (or threshold time). Mark it with a sign of Christ’s peace, such as a hug or kiss.

### Midday

*In the middle of the day, we give thanks for God’s sustaining grace.*

- Give thanks to God at mealtime for the gift of daily bread.
- Put a notecard with an appropriate verse of Scripture, such as “O taste and see that the Lord is good” (Ps. 34:8), near the place where you eat.
- Sing a table song, such as “God Is So God” (*Glory to God* #658).
- Offer prayers of gratitude for God’s blessing and support in the day so far, and pray for God’s guidance and strength for the challenges of the day ahead.
- With younger children, a note or special object in a lunchbox can be a way of saying “I’m thankful for you,” “I love you,” or “I am with you” wherever you go.

### The Week

*The week has its own rhythm of work and school, rest and play. This rhythm is grounded in the Genesis account of creation and echoed in the events of Jesus’ death (on Friday) and resurrection (on Sunday). The first day (Sunday or Lord’s Day) and the seventh day (Saturday or Sabbath) frame the week as a sacred sign of God’s creative and redeeming work in the world.*

### Sunday

*On the first day of the week, we gather to bear witness to Jesus’ resurrection.*

- Prepare for worship. You might read or study the lectionary in advance, listen for a word or name in the readings, practice one of the songs, think about prayers of thanksgiving or intercession, and/or prepare an offering for the service.
- Go to worship. Take your place as a beloved and valuable member of the body of Christ. Be a full and active participant in the work of the people of God. Bring your true self. Come as you are ... but be ready to be transformed by the Holy Spirit.
- Talk about worship. Take note of what brought you gratitude, joy, laughter, surprise, confusion, frustration, tears, awe, wonder, excitement, hope ... Share these feelings with others and listen to their experiences. Ask questions and learn new things.
- If you observe Sunday as a day of rest, find distinctive ways to set this day apart from others. Depending on your interests, this may include extended time outdoors, board games, collaborative meals, music-making, story-telling, or other activities that offer relaxation and bring joy.

## Weekdays

*Throughout the week, we love and serve God and others in our daily lives.*

- From Monday through Friday, the rhythm of the day is primary. See “The Day.”
- Think about how you practice your faith in your weekday life—at school, at work, and at home. What difference does discipleship make in how you go about your learning, labor, and leisure? What difference does it make in your relationships with others? Remember that Jesus said, “Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34–35). Find ways to keep this “new commandment” present in your mind as you go through your daily activities, perhaps through a symbol of Jesus’ love that you wear, keep in a prominent place, or carry with you wherever you go.
- Be mindful of God’s presence and purpose through other regularly occurring events of the week, such as music lessons, sporting events, choir rehearsals, children’s or youth activities, mid-week services, after school programs, and gatherings with friends or neighbors. Connect these routines with biblical texts or spiritual disciplines. For instance, say “Make a joyful noise to the Lord” (Ps. 100:1) before music lessons or choir rehearsals; say “Be strong and let your heart take courage” (Ps. 27:14) before a sports event; practice breath prayer in school pick-up and drop-off lines; discuss (or reflect on) joys, concerns, celebrations, and anxieties on the daily commute to work or school.

## Saturday

*On the seventh day of the week, God rested ... and so should we!*

- Make sabbath-keeping an intentional part of your life in whatever way is most appropriate. This may mean setting aside a particular day of the week for rest and recreation, or it may mean finding smaller segments of time each day throughout the week.
- Think about sabbath as intentional time with God: waiting, watching, and listening for voice of Christ and the movement of the Spirit. Sabbath time can be an opportunity to engage in activities that draw you closer to God and others, bringing you a sense of wonder, peace, and wholeness—particularly those activities that tend to slip through the cracks of our weekday schedules. If nothing else, sabbath can be chance to practice doing one thing at a time and doing it mindfully.
- The practice of sabbath-keeping is also connected with the theme of liberation: God’s promise of deliverance and justice for those who are overburdened and oppressed (see Exod. 20:8–11). In your practice of sabbath, make just and liberating choices in your use of resources, goods, and services. Find ways to contribute to the liberation, dignity, and equality of all people as an integral part of your spiritual disciplines and practices of faith.
- If you observe Saturday as a day of rest, find distinctive ways to set this day apart from others. Depending on your interests, this may include extended time outdoors, board games, collaborative meals, music-making, story-telling, or other activities that offer relaxation and bring joy.

## Human Life

*All of Christian life flows from the sacrament of baptism, which stands at the beginning of our journey of faith and path of discipleship. We remember our baptism as we mark other important passages in life, including birthdays, weddings, ordinations, seasons of personal struggle and growth, times of illness, and at last, at death. These significant occasions are important times to remember that we are beloved children of God, sealed with the Holy Spirit, and marked as Christ’s own forever.*

## Public Worship

- Members of the church are called to surround one another with witness, support, and prayer at significant passages in human life. When attending baptisms, weddings, ordinations, or funerals in your congregation, find ways to remember and reflect on other such events you have attended for other members of your family or community of faith. In this way, these events can become more than

private affairs, but meaningful celebrations within the larger body of Christ. For instance, when witnessing a baptism, talk to children about their own baptisms.

### Household Events

- Celebrate first and last days (of school, work, a place of residence, etc.) with storytelling, singing, special meals, or prayers. Do this in the name of Jesus Christ, who is “the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end” (Rev. 22:13).

### Personal Practices

- Consider keeping a calendar of significant dates in your personal or family history and journey of faith. These might include the births and deaths of ancestors, loved ones, mentors, or inspirational figures; adoption, baptism, confirmation, wedding (and divorce), or ordination anniversaries; and other events that are important in particular communities or cultural contexts. You may also mark these days with storytelling, singing, special meals, or prayers.

### General Guidelines

*These suggestions apply to most or all of the practices described above.*

- Read Scripture (but not too much). The Word of God shapes us as disciples. Find ways to connect words and stories from the Bible with your daily practices of faith. You might use a daily or weekly lectionary, or another schedule of readings. But don’t feel obligated to read long passages every day or at every time for prayer. Focusing on a single verse or phrase, repeating it throughout the day or week, may be more helpful in your formation.
- Connect everyday events with the church’s sacraments. Invite loved ones to remember their baptism in rainstorms, rafting trips, at the ocean, or just when washing with water. Inquire about what people are thankful for (“Eucharist” means “thanksgiving”) when sharing ordinary meals.
- Use “worship words” in your everyday vocabulary. Say “Thanks be to God” when you hear good news, or “Lord, have mercy” when you hear about someone who is sick or in trouble. Other useful “worship words” include “Praise the Lord,” “Peace (be with you),” “Amen,” “Alleluia,” and “And also with you.”
- Pray with your whole body. If there is a certain gesture or movement associated with a particular time of day or occasion for prayer (for instance, open hands at mealtime or a hand on the head as a child leaves for school), there may be times when that gesture alone will be sufficient and speak clearly without other symbols or words.
- Engage the imagination and senses. We pray and practice our faith not just with our minds and mouths, but with our heart, soul, and strength, and with eyes, ears, hands, and even noses. Include art, music, movement, color, smell, flavor, and texture in your life of prayer—especially with young children.
- Practice your faith in the in-between times, such as road trips, carpool, bus rides, walks to school, or waiting in line. These can be opportunities for recounting favorite stories from the Scriptures, asking questions or sharing experiences of faith, singing or listening to sacred music, and practicing or learning prayers for public worship or personal devotion.

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