

Prayer Exercises from Girlfriends' Prayer Breakfast 2011

Lectio Divina (Divine Reading)



One of the most central and ancient practices of Christian prayer is lectio divina, or divine reading. In lectio divina, we begin by reading a few verses of the Bible. We read unhurriedly so that we can listen for the message God has for us there. We stay alert to connections the Holy Spirit may reveal between the passage and what is going on in our lives. We ask, "What are you saying to me today, Lord? What am I to hear in this story, parable, or prophecy?" Listening in this way requires patience and a willingness to let go of our own agendas and open ourselves to God's shaping.

Once we have heard a word that we know is meant for us, we are naturally drawn to prayer. From listening, we move to speaking-- (if you are not comfortable speaking out loud, you can pray silently) -- perhaps in anguish, confession or sorrow; perhaps in joy, praise, thanksgiving or adoration; perhaps in anger, confusion or hurt; perhaps in quiet confidence, trust or surrender. Finally, after pouring out our heart to God, we come to rest simply and deeply in that wonderful, loving presence of God.

Reading, reflecting, responding and resting -- this is the basic rhythm of divine reading.

Praying for the World



People all over the world need prayer. Find a world map. Choose a place on the map and put a small stone on it. Spend your time praying for this location, whether a city, country or general geographical area. You are encouraged to pray for everything from politics to justice issues, the poor in that area and the rich, the social situation to the environmental situation. Lift it all to God.

Praying In Color For Gratitude



If you are word-weary, stillness-challenged, easily distracted, or just in need of a new way to pray, give "praying in color" a try. Men do it; women do it; teenagers do it; and children do it. All you need is paper and colored markers or colored pencils. No words are necessary; no artistic skill is necessary--only a desire and a longing for the presence of God. For this exercise, please select someone you are grateful for and use them as the subject of your prayer. You may, of course, pray for anyone or for any reason.

Directions for the artistically-challenged or anyone needing a boost to get started:

1. Draw a shape.
2. Put the name of a person for whom you are praying inside the shape.
3. Add lines, squiggles, and dots.
4. Add color.
5. Think of each stroke of the pen and each daub of color as a moment of prayer.

Braided Lives

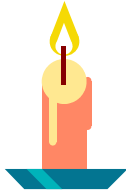


This contemplative prayer exercise will help you focus on the relationship between you, another person and God. Using strips of fabric, yarn or ribbon, you will pray for these relationships in turn as you braid them together. You may use the braid as a book mark when you are finished to remind you of how relationships are interwoven, but held together best when we are in relationship with God.

Directions:

- Slowly start to braid the three pieces and as you do, pray.
- Pray that God would work in the other person's life.
- Pray that God would work in your life.
- Pray that God would bring you and the other person into a deeper relationship that revolves around God.
- Pray for anything else that comes to mind.
- When you have finished the braid, knot the end and use it as a bookmark.

Candle Lighting



Using an ancient practice of lighting candles while praying, light a candle and offer a prayer for:

- Hope
- Healing
- Courage
- Patience
- Perseverance
- Faith

As you light a candle, share that hope with God. Just as the flame and smoke ride up from the candle, envision your prayer rising up to God.

DO NOT LEAVE LIT CANDLES UNATTENDED.

Prayer Walking



Most activities are enhanced when motion is added to them. There is a heightened sense of awareness when the spiritual discipline of prayer is added with walking. Although there is no wrong way to prayer walk, there are things to keep in mind while you are engaged in the activity. Focus is sharper when the people, places and things you pray for are in sight. If you have decided to pray for your neighbors, walking through your neighborhood while you pray will keep your neighbors on your minds.

Here are some general instructions, but feel free to adapt them to your situation.

1. Formulate a plan based on a perceived need. Prayer walking is traditionally done as a means of intercessory prayer. That means praying for the needs of others. Having a focus based on a purpose will help you be consistent in your commitment to praying for others.
2. Make a commitment to a certain time to pray. Choose a day and time to pray when you are least likely to be disrupted. Take into consideration the season and the weather. The cool of the morning will be best for summer, while midday suits the colder weather.
3. Decide on a location and path. Usually the purpose of the prayer commitment will decide the location. Adding some thought to the path you will take can make the time more inspiring.
4. Decide if you will walk alone or invite others to join you. This is a personal choice, but prayer can be more powerful when shared. Having too large a group may take away from the focus. One to five people is the ideal size for a prayer team.
5. Prepare yourself for obstacles and distractions. Self-consciousness is probably the biggest obstacle. If you feel uncomfortable praying aloud, pray silently. After a few sessions you will feel more comfortable with the activity.
6. Have a particular scripture in mind. Prepare for your prayer time with a time reading the Bible. Look up a scripture text that fits the occasion of your prayer time. There are online Bibles that enable one to easily search with keywords.
7. Dress appropriately for the weather or culture, if applicable. Dress modestly and comfortably. Wear proper footwear. Take along bottled water, especially in summer weather.
8. As you walk observe your surroundings and pray as prompted by your senses. Walk at a leisurely pace and take time to take in those around you.
9. Alternate praying out loud with listening for inner promptings. You do not have to be voicing a prayer inwardly or outwardly the whole time. Silence allows for the Holy Spirit to speak to your heart. If you are walking with others take turns praying alternating with times of silence.
10. Greet those you meet along the way and pray for them. If you engage them in conversation tell them what you are doing and ask them if they have prayer needs.
11. Remember the fundamentals of prayer: praise, confession, thanksgiving and requests for yourself and others. Prayer is one-on-one conversation with God, so your prayers should be simple and conversational.
12. At the end of the walk, take time to share if you are praying with another or in a group. To see how and when your prayers are answered, keep a prayer journal.