

02 Pick out a pre-made prayer and talk to God

Try using one of the sources we mentioned earlier.

- **The Lord’s Prayer**
- **The Psalms** — See below for recommendations
- **Scripture** — Find a passage that resonates with your heart and pray it back to God
- **Singing** — Sing acapella, put on a worship album, or play an instrument
- **Liturgy** — *The Book of Common Prayer*, *The Divine Hours* by Phyllis Tickle, or *Every Moment Holy* by Douglas Kaine McKelvey
- **Apps** — Echo, Lectio 365 from 24-7 Prayer, Pray as You Go from the Jesuits, or Hallow

If you don’t have a strong preference, we recommend you start by praying the Psalms or one of the prayers in the Appendix of this Companion Guide.

You can start in Psalm 1 and pray through the book. Or you can pray a psalm based on your emotional or spiritual state that day.

Here are some recommendations.

- **To begin your day with God:** Psalm 5, 19, 20, 23, 25
- **When you are sad:** Psalm 13, 22, 42, 77
- **When you are in distress:** Psalm 57, 60, 86
- **When you are scared:** Psalm 27
- **When you are hurt:** Psalm 10
- **When you ache for more of God:** Psalm 63, 84
- **When you want to repent:** Psalm 51
- **When you are grateful:** Psalm 9, 103
- **When you want to worship:** Psalm 8, 148-150

Whatever you decide, pray at least once a day.

Circle or write what you feel led to try.

Practice

SESSION 01: TALKING TO GOD

Transformation takes more than knowledge—it takes practice. Take a moment to consider what steps the Spirit might be inviting you to take before the next session in response to what you've learned.

01 Create a daily prayer rhythm

Decide on a time and a place to pray, if possible, every day this week.

Decide on and commit to a time duration. Don't overreach. Start where you are. If you don't pray daily, aim for 10-15 minutes. If you pray for 10-15 minutes, consider upping it to half an hour. Just take the next step.

Create routines or rituals you actually enjoy to make your daily prayer habit something you look forward to all day long — light a candle, make yourself coffee or tea, sit by a window you love, go outside, savor the quiet, or put on worship music.

Those of you who are more kinesthetic may find it helpful to pray while walking, inside or in nature, or with something to keep your hands busy, like knitting or drawing.

Ultimately, work with your personality, not against it.

Write your plan here.

Reach Practice

SESSION 01: TALKING TO GOD

We all learn differently. Some of us prefer reading, others listening, and others doing. If you'd like to go deeper, choose what resonates with you and give it a try! Even if you don't try a Reach Practice, remember to journal in the Prayer Reflection section before your next session as a group.

Reading

Read chapters 1-3 of *Praying Like Monks, Living Like Fools* by Tyler Staton (pp. 1-68).

Podcast

Listen to episode 1 of the Prayer series from the Rule of Life podcast by Practicing the Way.

Exercise: Praying the Lord's Prayer

This session's Reach Exercise is to utilize the Lord's Prayer as a template for a longer time of prayer by praying through each line. This should take around 15 minutes to pray, but feel free to take it at your own pace, listening to the Spirit's prompting.

Note: You can do this exercise alone or as a group.

You can follow this QR code to a video tutorial from Strahan Coleman that will guide you step by step, using prayer prompts.

Or you can follow the written tutorial on the following pages.



Reach Practice

SESSION 01: TALKING TO GOD

To begin, find somewhere quiet. Put away your phones or any other distractions, and get into a comfortable, but alert position.

Take a few deep, slow breaths. Become aware of your surroundings, the sounds, how your body is today. Open up to God in this present moment.

Then, praying from what you imagine or feel is a deep place within you, pray like this:

"Our Father"

Think about the idea of God as your loving Parent, one who has good and kind intentions toward you. If you like, imagine him embracing you, or smiling at you. Picture his face. Make eye contact with him.

"In heaven"

Think about the idea that God is all around you. Like oxygen, he surrounds and soaks your body, his Spirit abiding within you like oxygen. As you breathe, imagine that each breath invites God deeper into you, remembering that God loves living here, in you.

**"Hallowed be
your name"**

Sit with your Father in joyful, grateful worship. You might want to sit in silence for a few moments. Or sing a chorus. Or rattle off a list of things you're grateful for. Or praise God with specific things you love about him. You may just want to imagine your whole being caught up into his, and what it feels like to be mingled with the God of love.

If you are in a group, encourage people to make their expressions of praise and gratitude out loud, one at a time. (E.g., "Father, thank you for your kindness." "Father, thank you for loving me.")

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

As we experience God's heart, allow it to inspire prayer for your city/church/community/life. Pray from this place of parental love. Allow the Spirit to lead you towards people, places, and situations that he longs to deliver, heal, and provide for. This type of prayer is referred to as intercession.

If you don't have a sense of God's leading, that's okay, think of specific things you're aware of in your life and others to pray for.

If you're in a group, one at a time, spend time as a group verbally giving to God specific things in your life that you're wrestling with control over. A simple prayer of, "Your will be done in ____," is a great place to start.

**“Give us each day
our daily bread”**

Now spend some time asking God for things you need. Remembering that God is your Father, bring to him the provision, healing, and understanding you need, asking him to intervene. Your daily bread may be physical, relational, financial, emotional, or spiritual. Think of all the places you need him, inviting him to arrive there.

If you are in a group, do this with each person praying silently, out loud one at a time, or all together at once.

**“Forgive us our
debts, as we also
have forgiven
our debtors”**

Knowing that God sees you and longs to heal every part of you, spend a few minutes now in quiet asking God for forgiveness in specific areas in your life. You can do that by speaking out loud the specific areas of sin and shame in your life, or by asking the Spirit to search your heart and reveal them to you.

Once you're done, ask the same for those who have sinned against you, asking the Spirit to help you to continue to forgive them, releasing them to God.

If you are in a group, break into groups of 2-3 to confess sin to each other, only as you feel comfortable, or sit in a few moments of silence together.

**“And lead us not
into temptation, but
deliver us from evil”**

Ask for God's strength and resolve to resist temptation in the three enemies of your soul: the World, the Flesh, and the Devil.

The World: its ideologies, consumerism and materialism, promiscuity, escapism, addiction, and greed. The Flesh: its pride, self-gratification, lust, and prejudice. The Devil: his lies, shaming, hatred, violence, and accusing.

Ask for the Spirit to save you from giving into the temptation of all three, even from what you're unable to see in your life. Ask for God's positive blessings in these spaces, inviting his goodness to lead the way and make itself evident in your every moment.

**“For yours is the
kingdom, the power
and the glory, forever
and ever. Amen”**

Take a moment to verbally declare the reality of this in your own language. Attributing with love all glory to God in your body, your life, and the world around you.

Finish with a prayer of thankfulness and gratitude for God's presence with you during this time.

Prayer Reflection

SESSION 01: TALKING TO GOD

Reflection is a key component in our spiritual formation.

Millenia ago, King David prayed in Psalm 139v23-24:

Search me, God, and know my heart;
test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me,
and lead me in the way everlasting.

Trevor Hudson, a scholar on Ignatian spirituality, has said, “We don’t change from our experience, we change when we reflect on our experience.”

If you want to get the most out of this Practice, you need to do it and then *reflect* on it.



03 Ask

Step into petition and intercession, and ask on behalf of yourself and others. We have two recommended exercises to do this.

- **Prayer Cards**

- Make a deck of index cards with names or situations at the top of each card (or you can do one card with the most important people and situations in your life). We challenge you to consider including your enemies or those you are struggling to forgive, as praying for them can set your heart free to love them.
- Flip through your cards and linger over each one for a few seconds to a few minutes, offering up specific prayers to our Father. Remember, generic prayers make it harder to see God's hand in our life.

- **"Pray the Room"**

- This is a form of imaginative prayer that combines intercession with waiting on and listening for God. The goal is to pray what the Spirit of Jesus is already wanting you to pray from deep within.
- Get to a quiet, distraction-free place if at all possible. Take 5-10 deep, slow breaths.
- Close your eyes and imagine yourself in a room with the Father or Jesus. Take a moment to visualize the room. If no specific room takes shape in your mind, use your memory of a room you love and experience God in.
- Ask the Spirit to bring into the room anyone or anything that he wants you to pray for. Wait and see what comes into your field of vision.
- How do they look? Are they happy? Sad? Bruised? Tired? Scared? Lost? What else do you notice about their appearance or demeanor?
- Then, pray for that person. Make your intercession as specific as possible. You can pray whatever is on your heart for them, or ask the Spirit for further insight into what to pray for them. If you don't know what to pray, just hold them before God with love.
- Consider reaching out to that person to check in or offer a word of encouragement or sense of God's heart for them.

Circle which exercise you'd like to try first.

Reach Practice

SESSION 02: TALKING WITH GOD

We all learn differently. Some of us prefer reading, others listening, and others doing. If you'd like to go deeper, choose what resonates with you and give it a try! Even if you don't try a Reach Practice, remember to journal in the Prayer Reflection section before your next session as a group.

Reading

Read chapters 4–5 of *Praying Like Monks, Living Like Fools* by Tyler Staton (pp. 69–114).

Podcast

Listen to episode 2 of the Prayer series from the Rule of Life podcast by Practicing the Way.

Exercise: Praying your own lament

Praying lament is a deeply personal experience. This exercise has been designed to help you connect with your own feelings and experiences so you can freely express them to God. Don't feel like you need to go deep if you're not ready. Remember, honesty is where the real power is with lament, so try not to filter your emotions and words.

You can follow this QR code to a video tutorial from Strahan Coleman that will guide you step by step, using prayer prompts.

Or you can follow the written tutorial on the following pages.



- 01 **Become aware** — To start, make yourself comfortable and take a few deep breaths. Become aware of your surroundings, the sounds, the temperature, how your body is today. Open up to God.
- 02 **Focus on a feeling** — Let yourself feel your present emotional state, your difficult situations and griefs and losses. You may have a few in your life. See if you can bring your focus to one of those emotions or situations that you're currently feeling hurt or angry about.
- 03 **Sit with it** — Sit with that feeling, without judging it or telling yourself it's good or bad. Just notice how it feels. Can you locate it in your body? Your gut? Chest? Back? Shoulders? What is it like to hold that within you?
- 04 **Bring it to God** — Now, imagine holding it out in your hands as you stand before him, so you can both see it. Tell God exactly how you feel, without a filter, and allow God to feel what you feel in this moment, to acknowledge the pain and grief that exists. Be raw, honest, and vulnerable. Let God hear all that's in your heart. Remember, you're taking your pain to him, on a quest for deeper intimacy, not rebellion. And know that God can bear it, and that he knows what it's like to hurt. Hebrews 4:15 tells us that God sympathizes with us. Give God consent to sympathize with your lament.
- 05 **Express your desires and needs** — Plead with God to act, to change what is, to redeem or vindicate or heal or save or fight on your behalf. Wrestle with God if you feel the permission to do so.
- 06 **Give God your trust** — Then, let go. You might want to say, "Even though I feel [insert your emotion or lament], you are good and I trust you with it." Or "I trust you, help my lack of trust!" Or use the ending to Jesus' own prayer of lament, "Not my will, but yours be done."
- 07 **Be still** — For a few minutes, be still before God and allow him to respond. You may feel a lightness or a peace, you may see a picture or hear a word in your mind or imagination, or you might not. Notice how you feel after letting God hear your lament. Whatever happens, allow God the opportunity to meet you in this moment.
- 08 **Give thanks** — Finally, take a moment to thank God for being with you in this space. For listening, and for caring.

Reminder: Start with where you are. As an alternative to the tutorial above, you can simply pray one of the Psalms of Lament. Scholars have found that approximately two-thirds of the 150 psalms are prayers of lament.

Here are a few we recommend to pray: Psalm 10, 13, 22, 42, 74, 77

Prayer Reflection

SESSION 02: TALKING WITH GOD

Before your next time together with the group for Session 03, take five to ten minutes to journal out your answers to the following three questions.

01 What aspect of last session's exercises were most difficult for you? Gratitude, lament, or asking?

02 Do you have any stories of answered prayer? Or unanswered prayer?

03 Where did I most experience God's nearness?

Note: As you write, be as specific as possible. While bullet points are just fine, if you write it out in narrative form, your brain will be able to process your insights in a more lasting way.

Practice

SESSION 03: LISTENING TO GOD

Now it's time to take what we've heard and put it into practice. The following exercises are key to ongoing development in a rich life with God.

01 *Lectio Divina*

This is an ancient Latin phrase, first used by St. Benedict in the sixth century. It means "spiritual reading." It's a way of reading Scripture slowly and prayerfully, listening for God's word to you.

While you do not need to follow this four-step process, there are four movements to *Lectio Divina* that you may find helpful.

First, get somewhere quiet and as distraction-free as possible. Open your Bible and pick out a passage that's conducive to *Lectio* — a Psalm, a portion of the Gospels, or a section of an epistle (another word for letter, such as Romans, Ephesians, Philippians, etc.). Take a few deep breaths. Then:

- **Read** — A passage of your choice, slowly and prayerfully. Pay special attention to any words or phrases or ideas that jump out to you, or that move you emotionally or deeply resonate.
- **Reflect** — Reread the passage again, slowly. This time, pause over the word(s) or phrase(s) that were highlighted to you during your first reading. Meditate on them. Turn them over in your mind. Savor them.
- **Respond** — Pray your impressions back to God. You can use your own words or simply pray the text directly to God.
- **Rest** — Take a few minutes in silence to breathe deeply and rest in God's loving word to you.

Repeat this 3-5 times this coming week.

If you're doing this as a group, find somewhere quiet and distraction-free and read the four steps above out loud. Share your impressions with one another and pray them together to God.

Prayer of Examen

- 01 **Become aware of God** — Review the day with the eyes of the Spirit, asking God for the light to see. It may seem rushed to you, a blur or chaotic. If you feel overwhelmed or struggle to focus, ask the Spirit to help you see and bring focus to your mind.
- 02 **Look back with gratitude** — As you explore your day, take note of moments where you can thank God for what's been. It may be as simple as noting the provision of food and waking in the comfort of your bed. Think about the people in your day and the connections made. Where was God in each relationship or conversation? Recall the little things about your day, simple everyday pleasures, and discover God among them.
- 03 **Notice your emotions** — Reflect on your feelings throughout the day. What do you notice? Without judging what you felt, did you feel anger? Contentment? Empathy? Happiness? Embarrassment? Trusting that God speaks through our emotions, what do you think God was saying amidst them?
- 04 **Pray from one piece of your day** — Allowing the Spirit to highlight one element of your day, be it positive or negative, ask him to speak to you about it. Consider it with him and allow it to lead you to prayer, whether it's gratitude, intercession, petition, repentance, or praise.
- 05 **Look ahead to tomorrow** — Finally, ask God to prepare your heart for tomorrow. Notice how you feel about it — anxious, excited, nervous, overwhelmed — and invite the Spirit to speak to those joys and concerns. Ask for clarity for the day ahead and for peace to approach it with confidence. Ask for wisdom, for hope, for discernment.

