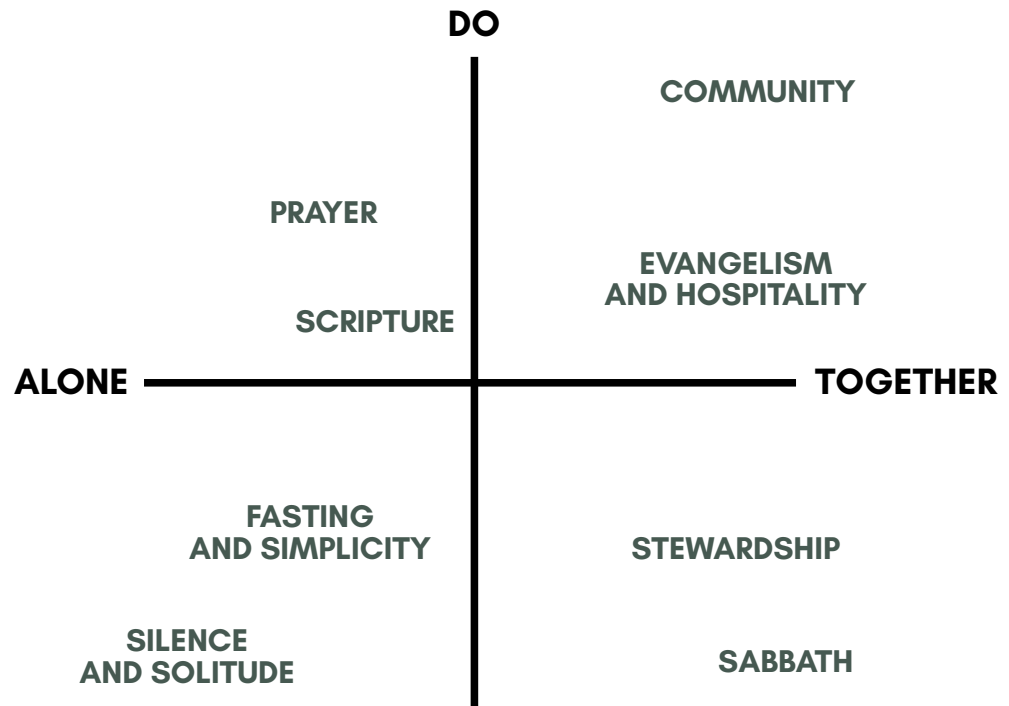




PRAY

WITHOUT CEASING

The Well-Ordered Life Series



Notes

Recommended Schedule

If you're going through *Pray Without Ceasing* with a group, we recommend the following schedule.

Meeting #1

Watch

Sessions 1 and 2

Homework

Choose one way to intentionally abide in God by turning away from something that distracts you from His presence.

Meeting #2

Watch

Session 3

Homework

Practice the Prayer of Examen 5 times this week.

Meeting #3

Watch

Session 4 and Lectio Divina Tutorial

Homework

Practice Lectio Divina 3-5 times this week.

Meeting #4

Watch

Session 5

Homework

Practice breath or centering prayer throughout the week.
You may also choose to continue a practice of Lectio Divina in addition or in place of this homework

Meeting #5

Watch

Sessions 6 and 7

Homework

Leave space in your regular prayer practice to listen for God. This can be joined with Lectio Divina, Prayer of Examen, or any other practice you've been engaging in.



Recommended Schedule

Meeting #6

Watch

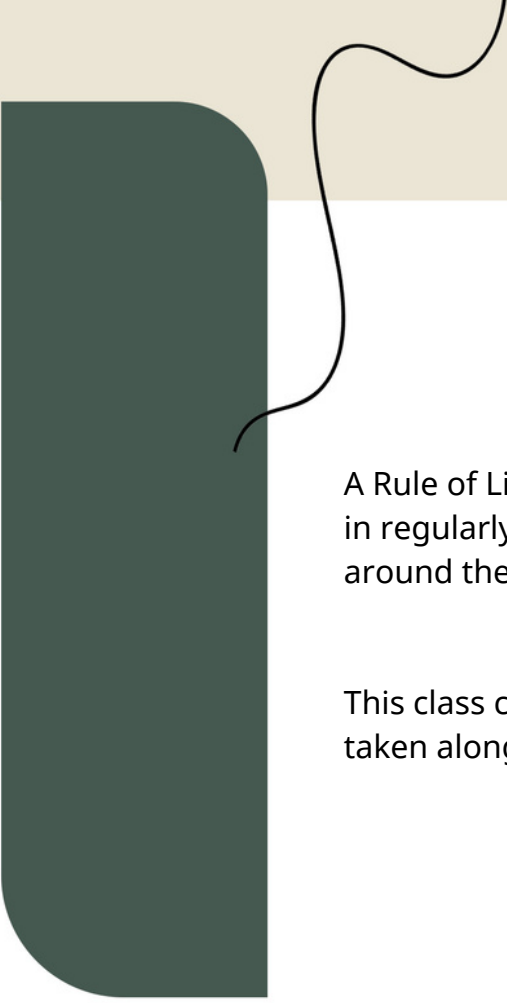
Sessions 8 and 9

Homework

Create a vision for how you will continue what you've learned here to build a life marked by prayer.

Notes

Use the space below to schedule your meeting dates with your group.



Session One | Overview

A Rule of Life is simply a set of practices that Christians engage in regularly to serve as a means to center our whole lives around the God we serve.

This class can be done individually, but it's really meant to be taken alongside others.

DISCUSSION

Describe your current prayer practice.

Is there anything about prayer that has felt uncomfortable, confusing, or missing in your own prayer life?

In what ways are you hoping to grow your own prayer practice?

If you're completing the class in a group, take some time to schedule how you will meet together and complete the class.



Session Two | Abiding in God

“May your life be a prayer.” || **Kayla Craig, *Every Season Sacred***

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”
|| **1 Thessalonians 5:17, ESV**

Orthodoxy: ‘correct belief’

Orthopraxy: ‘correct action’

“Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.” || **Mark 11:24, NIV**

“Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.” || **Matthew 7:7, NIV**

DISCUSSION

What have you understood the purpose of prayer to be?

How do you see prayer used as a way to get what you want, rather than what God wants?

What do you think it might look like to start a process of aligning your heart with God’s?

What does it mean to abide in God?

4 *Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.*

5 *"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. **6** If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. **7** If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. **8** This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples.*

9 *"As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. **10** If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. **11** I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. **12** My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. **13** Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. **14** You are my friends if you do what I command. **15** I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. **16** You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. **17** This is my command: Love each other."* || **John 15:4-17, NIV**

If 'abiding' looks like being connected to God, disconnection looks like:

Intentional Rebellion

Refusing to Be Our True Selves in His Presence

Busyness or Thoughtlessness

Rule-Following and Checking the Boxes

PRACTICE

Pray through the Fruit of the Spirit.

"But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things!" || Galatians 5:22-23, NLT

DISCUSSION

Of the four ways mentioned (intentional rebellion, inauthenticity, busyness, and rule-following), which crops up most for you as a hurdle in abiding in God?

Reread John 15:4-17 (either silently or aloud in a group). What sticks out to you most as Jesus invites you to abide in Him?

How does the description of abiding in John 15 bring a new perspective to what you've previously thought about prayer?

Taking Control

In the work of aligning our hearts to God's, we have to bring God into it through a posture of humility and surrender.

HOMEWORK

Abiding isn't something we force ourselves into, but rather a way we surrender our will to God's will.

Consider the hurdle you identified in your own life during the discussion, and how you might actively confront it through prayer and intentional focus on God.

Examples:

For busyness, you might choose one productive task and replace it with a time of prayer.

For inauthenticity, you might spend time in prayer at the beginning of each day, just naming your current emotional state to God: the good and the bad.

For rule-following, you might spend your time in prayer in silence, just listening for God, replacing a habit of proactivity with receiving God's presence.

Session Three | Why Abiding Matters

DISCUSSION

What action did you take in an effort to more intentionally abide in God?

What change, if any, did you notice in your attention and awareness of God?

Where did you notice difficulty in your practice?

9** "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. **10** If you keep my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commands and remain in his love. **11** I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. **12** My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. **13** Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. **14** You are my friends if you do what I command. || **John 15:9-14, NIV

Why Abiding Matters

The goal of abiding in God is to become more Christlike...



so that we can pour out a likeness of Christ's love to others.

Jesus calls us to be 'friends' alongside Him...



so that we can work to bring about His kingdom on Earth

Our world needs you to pray without ceasing so that you can be a constant source of God's presence in it.

DISCUSSION

What is your initial reaction to the reality that God has invited you to co-labor with Him in bringing about His kingdom through your love for others?

How does this underscore for you the importance of praying without ceasing?



The Prayer of Examen

Introduced by St. Ignatius of Loyola in the 16th century, the prayer of examen encourages you to look for God in the circumstances of your everyday life so that you can grow more aware of His presence and work in harmony with Him.

1. Place yourself in the presence of God.

- Take a moment to breathe, settle your body and your mind, and remind yourself that you are in God's presence.

2. Pray for the grace to understand what God is doing.

- Ask God to give you eyes to see what He is doing in your life. Ask for humility to accept what God shows you, and resolve to act upon anything He might lead you to do differently.

3. Recall your day-specific moments and feelings.

- Go back through your day, remembering as much as you can about what happened, how you felt at different points of the day, how you responded to your circumstances, etc. Pay special attention to where God was present.

4. Reflect on what brought you closer to or further from God.

- Did you respond to or reject the Holy Spirit at any point? Did anything cause you to think of God, seek His advice, or worship Him? Did anything reinforce what God has been teaching you lately?

5. Look to tomorrow.

- In light of what God revealed to you, how would you like to live tomorrow differently? Pray for God's leadership and for the help of the Spirit.

Session Four | Talking to God

DISCUSSION

How did the Prayer of Examen go for you? (frustrating, helpful, a mix of both?)

Were you able to complete the prayer as many days as you'd hoped? If not, why was that? If you did, how do you think consistency aided your practice?

"Prayer is continuing a conversation that God has started through His Word and His grace, which eventually becomes a full encounter with Him."

|| Tim Keller, *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God*

Aspects of Prayer

First, prayer is primarily a response to God.

Second, prayer is ultimately leading us somewhere.

DISCUSSION

How does the idea of prayer as a response to God differ from your current approach to prayer?

Incorporating the Bible into Our Prayer

The idea is to begin in God's word, encountering Him in Scripture and letting Him begin the conversation.

Prayer is a *response* to how God has already spoken to us through His Word and His Holy Spirit.

Prayer doesn't *begin* a conversation; rather, it keeps a conversation with God going.

Let the Bible Inform Your Prayers

- Begin with a prayer to set aside your thoughts.
- Read Scripture and allow God to start the conversation.
- Allow your prayer to be a response to what God had for you in Scripture.

"The wedding of the Bible and prayer anchors your life down in the real God."

|| Tim Keller, *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God*

When we seek God first in the Bible, we encounter a God with whom we want to engage.

Pray with the Bible

- You can pray verbatim many of the prayers given in the Bible, such as the Lord's Prayer or one of the Psalms.
- You can also use the language from just about any passage to put language to what you want to say to God.

PRAYER PRACTICE

Set a timer for 4 minutes and pray through 1 Samuel 2:1-10 (on the following page).

As you pray, adopt the words as your own, amending them when you have something to add.

When your timer is up, spend some time in your group to debrief your experience.

PRAYER PRACTICE | 1 Samuel 2:1-10 (NLT)

1 *Then Hannah prayed:*

"My heart rejoices in the Lord!

The Lord has made me strong.

Now I have an answer for my enemies;

I rejoice because you rescued me.

2 *No one is holy like the Lord!*

There is no one besides you;

there is no Rock like our God.

3 *"Stop acting so proud and haughty!*

Don't speak with such arrogance!

For the Lord is a God who knows what you have done;

he will judge your actions.

4 *The bow of the mighty is now broken,*

and those who stumbled are now strong.

5 *Those who were well fed are now starving,*

and those who were starving are now full.

The childless woman now has seven children,

and the woman with many children wastes away.

6 *The Lord gives both death and life;*

he brings some down to the grave^[b] but raises others up.

7 *The Lord makes some poor and others rich;*

he brings some down and lifts others up.

8 *He lifts the poor from the dust*

and the needy from the garbage dump.

He sets them among princes,

placing them in seats of honor.

For all the earth is the Lord's,

and he has set the world in order.

9 *"He will protect his faithful ones,*

but the wicked will disappear in darkness.

No one will succeed by strength alone.

10 *Those who fight against the Lord will be shattered.*

He thunders against them from heaven;

the Lord judges throughout the earth.

He gives power to his king;

he increases the strength^[c] of his anointed one."

Session Five | Pray Without Ceasing

DISCUSSION

Were you able to practice Lectio Divina? If so, when did you try it? If not, why was that?

For those who did, discuss the passage that you chose, and how it went for you. What were the highlights? Is there anything you'd do differently the next time you try it? What was unique about this prayer practice for you?

"To wish to learn from the Celtic Christian is to wish to sense the passionate presence of God in all of life. It is to find God in the ordinary events of life, love, eating, working, playing. It is to learn... that everything is grace and blessing and we are to aim at bringing into consciousness the holiness of every moment." || **Timothy Joyce, *Celtic Christianity***

"These are the prayer of a people who have so much to do from dawn to dusk from dark to dark, that they had little time for long, formal prayers. Instead throughout the day they make each activity in turn the occasion for prayer, doing what has to be done carefully for its own sake but simultaneously making it into the occasion for prayer. Each thing in turn, however humble, however mundane, can be handed to God, or performed in partnership with the cooperation of the Trinity, saints and angels."

|| **Eleanor Hull, *Poem Book***

"They feel invisible powers before them, and by their side, and at their back, throughout the day and throughout the night." || **Douglas Hyde, *Religious Songs***

Everyday Prayers

While Driving

Father, so much of my life is spent in transit. And yet it's often what happens during the travel that determines how we end at our destination. Help me use this time to calm my heart, humble my spirit and pray in anticipation of what awaits my arrival.

While Doing Laundry

Help me not forget, Father, that there can be beauty in repetition. Just as I will have to rewash and refold these clothes in only a few days' time, so will you have to cause the sun to rise and set again tomorrow. Rather than resent the monotony of the chore, help me remember the love that says "yes" over and over again.

While Responding to Email

I ask you, Lord, to help me remember that the people on the other side of my inbox are made in your image, loved by You, and worthy of my best. Help me to respond to only as many emails as my love can persevere for, and then, lest I begin to turn people into tasks, wait to respond to the rest until Your love fills me up anew.

PRAYER PRACTICE

Pause for 5 minutes to construct your own prayer for a specific act in your day.

When time is up, take a minute or two to share your prayer or the experience you had while writing it.

Do you think you might use this prayer?

What does this practice highlight about the intention of prayer as a whole?

Topic: _____

Prayer:

Centering Prayer

- When your focus has drifted from God
- When you've begun operating out of your flesh, rather than His Spirit
- Used to recenter your heart and mind on God

Common Example:

"Abba. Jesus. Spirit. Healing. Mercy. Lord, Jesus Christ, have mercy on me a sinner."

*"Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things." || **Philippians 4:8, NIV***

Another Example:

Father, Son and Holy Spirit, equal in presence; flesh and spirit harmoniously at work, ground my mind to you, to your presence and your Kingdom.

Draw my mind to my hands that they might extend in care or in the sowing of eternal fruit.

Draw my mind to my feet that I might give care to where I go and what I flee.

Draw my mind to my face that it might reflect the light of your holy presence.

Draw my mind to my tongue, and invite your Spirit to be its gatekeeper.

Draw my mind to my stomach so that it might remember how satisfied it is in you.

Draw my mind to my eyes that I might see the present hurts and concerns of others.

Draw my mind to my soul, the heartbeat of eternity that reminds me that this is not my home.

Father, Son and Holy Spirit – all at once, all together, ever present, ever One. Root me in your Oneness.

PRAYER PRACTICE

Practice breath prayer for four breath cycles. Below are some suggestions, or you can pray your own.

- Inhale: *Here I am*; Exhale: *Here You are*.
- Inhale: *Your grace is sufficient*; Exhale: *my weakness made perfect*.
- Inhale: *I am still*; Exhale: *You are God*

Discuss how you think you may use breath prayer in your own life.

Session Six | Listening to God

DISCUSSION

What practice did you focus on?

In what ways did you notice (or not) being more attentive to God's presence through these practices?

How might you continue (or grow in) this prayer practice?

We can hear from God.

God does not intend to remain hidden from us; rather, He has revealed Himself all throughout history - most profoundly in Jesus.

How does God speak to us?

Through the Bible

"For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart." || Hebrews 4:12, ESV

The Bible records history but also reinvents itself for every moment of history because the author is still alive and still working.

Through Circumstances

"[It is] a disciplined, determined conviction that everything (and I mean, precisely, everything) we do is a response to God's first work, his initiating act. We learn to be attentive to the divine action already in process so that the previously unheard word of God is heard, the previously unattended act of God is noticed... My work is... to discover what he is doing and live appropriately with it."

"What has God been doing here? What traces of grace can I discern in this life? What history of love can I read in this group? What has God set in motion that I can get in on?"

"My work is... to discover what he is doing and live appropriately with it."

|| Eugene Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor*

What's God doing here?

Where do I see evidence of His presence?

What patterns or themes arise?

How might He be directing or redirecting my focus/attention?

Through a Prophetic Word

Why do you want me to know this? To tell that person or to pray this for him/her?

Through Godly Advice

Through Dreams and Visions

Through Listening Prayer

DISCUSSION

Have you ever tried to listen for God's voice?

What is the primary way that you hear God's voice in your life?

What fears/hopes does this type of prayer bring up for you?

Session Seven | Hearing From God

2 “But the one who enters through the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. **3** The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep recognize his voice and come to him. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. **4** After he has gathered his own flock, he walks ahead of them, and they follow him because they know his voice. **5** They won’t follow a stranger; they will run from him because they don’t know his voice.” || **John 10:2-5, NLT**

How Can I Come to Know God’s Voice?

By Experience

“How can you be sure God is speaking to you? The answer is that we learn by experience. The key is to focus more on building our personal relationship with our Creator and less on individual actions and decisions.” || **Dallas Willard, *Hearing God***

Slow Down and Soften Up

Listen to God’s voice with the intention of heeding it.

“Learning to hear Jesus’ voice is one of the great tests of the disciple; learning to obey His voice is an even greater task.” || **John Mark Comer, *Rule of Life Podcast: Prayer***

How Can I Be Sure It’s God’s Voice?

God’s voice will always line up with the Bible.

We should invite godly counsel.

Look for ways for God to confirm His call.

"2 One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. 3 The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the house of the Lord, where the ark of God was. 4 Then the Lord called Samuel.

Samuel answered, "Here I am." 5 And he ran to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

But Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down." So he went and lay down.

6 Again the Lord called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

"My son," Eli said, "I did not call; go back and lie down."

7 Now Samuel did not yet know the Lord: The word of the Lord had not yet been revealed to him.

8 A third time the Lord called, "Samuel!" And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, "Here I am; you called me."

Then Eli realized that the Lord was calling the boy. 9 So Eli told Samuel, "Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening.'" | | 1 Samuel 3:2-9, NIV

PRAYER PRACTICE

Pause for 5 minutes of silence with God.

- 1. Begin by slowing your breath. You might also use a breath prayer to focus your mind.*
- 2. You may spend this time replaying your day and the ways God has spoken to you that you may have missed.*
- 3. You may ask God to speak now, intent on listening and obeying.*
- 4. You might pull up a section of the Bible to hear Him through Scripture.*
- 5. You might simply rest in His presence and love.*

Homework

Create space to listen for God's voice.

This is easily married with other practices we've learned so far, like Lectio Divina, the Prayer of Examen, and Centering Prayer.

Aim to try this every day as we journey toward incorporating God in our everyday lives.

Session Eight | Praying in Community

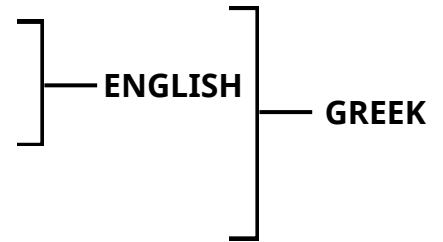
Prayer is an embodiment of our partnership with God.

A Brief Word on Grammar

Active Voice (I am doing something)

Passive Voice (something is being done to me)

Middle Voice (the subject is participating in an action started by someone else)



"I do not control the action - that would be a pagan view of prayer, putting the gods to work by my incantations and rituals. I am not controlled by the action, that would be a Hindu concept of prayer in which I slump passively into the impersonal and fated will of the gods and goddesses. I enter into the action begun by another, my creating and saving Lord, and find myself participating in the results of the action. I neither do it, or have it done to me, I will to participate in what is willed." || **Eugene Peterson, *The Contemplative Pastor***

Praying for One Another

DISCUSSION

What is your comfort level with praying with others?

How do you think this posture towards prayer with others has been formed over time?

How might it benefit your prayer practice to pray with and for others intentionally?

We are to enter into the mind of God.

“True intercession involves bringing the person, or the circumstance that seems to be crashing in on you, before God, until you are changed by His attitude toward that person or circumstance. People describe intercession by saying, ‘It is putting yourself in someone else’s place.’ That is not true! Intercession is putting yourself in God’s place; it is having His mind and His perspective.” || **Oswald Chambers, *My Utmost for His Highest***

We are to allow our hearts to break for what breaks God’s heart.

It allows us to step into our role as ‘friends’ of God.

PRAYER PRACTICE

Each member of the group might share a prayer request for their own spiritual formation following the completion of this class, and join in praying for each other aloud.

You might spend time opening the group to prayer for God’s next step for you to be clear in light of what you’ve learned.

If you are viewing the class individually, you may spend a few minutes in silence, asking God to bring to your attention those He wants you to pray for and then doing so.



Session Eight | Conclusion

DISCUSSION

How will you prioritize your prayer practice in the coming months?

What tools, resources, or habits do you think God is prompting you to focus on?

Appendix | Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina

Choose a short passage of Scripture (usually 6-8 verses).

***Lectio* ("Reading")**

- Read the passage (out loud if possible).
- Pay attention to any words or phrases that stand out to you.
- Reread the passage.
- Pay attention to whether the same words or phrases stand out or not.

***Meditatio* ("Meditation")**

- Reread the passage again.
- Meditate on a word or phrase that stood out to you.
- Talk to God about that word or phrase.
 - Why that word or phrase right now?
 - What image does it conjure?
 - How is your life touched by that word or phrase?

***Oratio* ("Prayer")**

- How do you feel prompted to respond to God?
 - An action
 - A conviction to repent
 - A person to forgive
 - A truth to remember
 - A way to celebrate

***Contemplatio* ("Contemplation")**

- Read the passage one last time.
- Sit in silence before God, listening for Him.

NOTE: Don't be discouraged if you feel like you didn't hear or see anything of significance the first few times. Just keep showing up for your relationship with God.

PRAYER PRACTICE

Psalm 23

- 1 The Lord is my shepherd;
I have all that I need.
- 2 He lets me rest in green meadows;
he leads me beside peaceful streams.
- 3 He renews my strength.
He guides me along right paths,
bringing honor to his name.
- 4 Even when I walk
through the darkest valley,[a]
I will not be afraid,
for you are close beside me.
Your rod and your staff
protect and comfort me.
- 5 You prepare a feast for me
in the presence of my enemies.
You honor me by anointing my head with oil.
My cup overflows with blessings.
- 6 Surely your goodness and unfailing love will pursue me
all the days of my life,
and I will live in the house of the Lord
forever.

1. **Lectio**
2. **Meditatio**
3. **Oratio**
4. **Contemplatio**

Homework

Practice Lectio Divina a few times this week, using passages of your choice.

Recommended Resources

Books

Interior Castle by St Teresa of Avila

Hearing God by Dallas Willard

Sacred Rhythms by Ruth Haley Barton

Praying Like Monks Living Like Fools by Tyler Staton

Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God by Tim Keller

The Celtic Way of Prayer by Esther de Waal

Practicing the Way by John Mark Comer

“Prayer: Does It Make Any Difference?” by Philip Yancey

“Prayer in the Night” by Tish Harrison Warren

“Liturgy of the Ordinary” by Tish Harrison Warren

Podcasts and Courses

Church & Culture Podcast: “On Dreams and Interpreting Dreams”,

Episode 195

Rule of Life Podcast Season 2

24/7 Prayer Course

