

Ancient Prayer Rhythms

Draw on the experience of Christians from centuries past. Try these old (but great) ways of connecting with God:

- **LECTIO DIVINA** - Hearing God speak through Scripture
- **THE EXAMEN** - Reflective Prayer for the end of the day
- **USING LITURGY** - Focusing on God through pre-written words and prayers

Lectio Divina

Introduction: 'Lectio Divina' means '*Sacred Reading*'

What do you need: A Bible and some time.

Style of prayer: You can do this on your own or with others.

Where did it come from?

Lectio Divina began in the 3rd Century, led by early church leader **Origen**. He believed that through a practice of reading the Bible thoughtfully and prayerfully you could discover what he called the "higher wisdom hidden in the Word of God". Origen's idea was that Jesus himself was the way by which we can understand the meaning of the Bible and that, if we asked, Jesus would reveal its meaning to us. The practice is about digesting the meaning of the word of God and taking time to think about it.

.HOW TO USE LITURGY:

If liturgy is a new model of prayer for you, here are three thoughts to get you started.

1. Seasons and Rhythms

Like the world around us, our life is seasonal. We have seasons of rest, study, work and fun, or seasons like Advent or Lent within the Church calendar. Themed liturgies can help us to pray during these times.

2. Creativity

You can write your own liturgy! Create your own prayers for different times of day or year, or for experience. If God has highlighted a Bible passage to you, then writing liturgy using it can be a very helpful way to explore its meaning.

3. Ritual

Many writers and thinkers have expressed how important rituals can be. Sometimes doing something familiar together can help us. You may find set rituals from your own tradition helpful or you could adapt others and make them your own.

Using Liturgy

INTRODUCTION: In simple terms, liturgy is a collective or communal way for us to pray, thank or worship. It can give us words to express something to Jesus when we have run out.

WHAT YOU NEED: Pre-written liturgy (or you can create your own) and some time.

STYLE OF PRAYER: This is designed to be prayed together, but can be a helpful tool to connect with God individually too.

WHERE DID IT COME FROM? Liturgy, or praying pre-written prayers, has been part of Christian worship from its beginning.

"Liturgy is like a strong tree whose beauty is derived from the continuous renewal of its leaves, but whose strength comes from the old trunk, with solid roots in the ground." (Pope Paul VI)

Many of the written prayers we can pray together are very old! „The Lords prayer“ is a piece of liturgy put together by Jesus himself

The prayer is something you can recite, expand or even reword

HOW TO PRACTICE LECTIO DIVINA:

1. READ

Choose a passage of scripture (anything from one to 15 verses). Read it through slowly several times. If possible, read it out loud.

2. MEDITATE

Reflect upon the words being read. Listen carefully. Is there one word or phrase which stands out to you? Focus on the words. Repeat them. Allow God to speak to you.

3. PRAY

Respond to God. Tell Him what you think about what you've read. Tell Him how it makes you feel. Tell Him what comforts you and what challenges you. Ask for His help to live out the truths you've uncovered.

4. CONTEMPLATE

Stop. Be still. Stop talking, stop asking and rest. Spend some time in silence sitting with God. Invite the Holy Spirit and allow Him to transform you from within.

The Examen

Introduction: A simple, reflective way of stilling ourselves to pray at the end of a day

What do you need: A quiet place, and some time

Style of prayer: This works best on your own

Where did it come from? Ignatius of Loyola (24.October 1491 – 31. July 1556) was a spiritual father and who co-founded the religious order called the Society of Jesus (Jesuits). He created a spiritual method - The Examen, which concentrates on the cleansing of our spirit. It is a way to exam your day and concentrate on God.

HOW TO PRACTICE THE EXAMEN:

There are many different ways to pray The Examen, but here it is in five, easy to remember steps:

1. **Become aware of God's presence** - take some time to remember that God is present with us in our everyday lives. He has been near to you and with you throughout the events of your day. Invite the Holy Spirit.
2. **Review the day with gratitude** - what are you thankful for? What were the gifts of the day? What did you receive from others? What did you give to others? How has God been at work? Where was He in conversation, in the actions of others, in the events of the day, in nature? Was He speaking?
3. **Pay attention to your emotions** - St. Ignatius emphasised how our emotions can point to the presence of God. Reflect upon how you felt throughout your day.

What might God be saying to you through these emotions? Perhaps there's an area where you need to seek forgiveness. Maybe you were frustrated by an unwanted interruption or responded in anger? Perhaps you resisted God's nudging to offer someone help. Is there a way you could reach out to that person today?

4. **Choose one thing from the day and pray for it** - maybe there's something that particularly stands out to you? It may be a conversation, an event or an emotion. Respond to it in prayer.
5. **Look forward to tomorrow** - how do you want to live differently? How can you become more aware of God's presence?

Throughout history, people have used simple prayers as a way of reflecting on ideas about God and developing simple but deep rhythms for the way they pray. These prayers are helpful for use on your own, or with others. To begin exploring liturgy you could choose one of the three example prayers and carry it with you, or pray one a day for a week to see how God works through the words.

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The Examen

Liturgie



