

Many Ways of Praying

There may be as many ways of praying as there are people and personalities. God comes to each of us as we are in this moment. When you are having difficulty with prayer, it may be time to try a new way of praying. Here are some ideas to get you started.

Song

Think of music as “sung prayer,” whether you are the one doing the singing or playing of an instrument or the one who is listening. For example, the song *Breathe* by Michael W. Smith: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sP3f1_BpsFO

Time in Nature

Many people encounter God and are nourished by time in nature. Take a walk outside, even if you are in the city. Engage your senses: What do you see? What do you hear? What do you smell? What do you feel? What do you taste? Bask in the wonder of creation. If you’re stuck inside, look out a window or look at a photo or painting of nature.

Sight Psalms (photographic inspiration)

Pray with images: <https://www.upperroom.org/> (click on Prayer at the top, then choose Sight Psalms)

Lament

Lament is more than just complaining. It is crying out to God in blunt confusion, anguish, anger, grief or whatever else is weighing us down. It is a structured practice of bringing emotions that sometimes feel overwhelming into the light of the Holy One. Lamenting may start with complaining, but then it moves on. Here is the basic format: Cry out to God. List your complaints, your pain, your confusion. Ask God for help. Affirm your faith that God is with you, in the midst of it all. More here: <https://wingedlifecoaching.com/lament-its-not-just-complaining/>

Printable Finger Labyrinth

Take a mini-pilgrimage. You may bring a question or request with you. As you slowly trace the path with your finger, imagine that you are walking toward God. Spend time with God in the center, and as you trace the path back out, take with you what you've received.

<https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B0RweH-3RyI00EtMdjhaM3I0cEE/edit?resourcekey=0-Dwd8hkOU8p9fEeWiCVEYdA> (source: <http://flamecreativekids.blogspot.com/>)

Breath Prayer

You can do this anytime, anywhere: while sitting, walking, or standing in line, even in the middle of a conversation or meeting. Become aware of your breathing. Using one of the following examples or parts of your own favorite scripture or prayer, repeat one phrase on the inhale, and another on the exhale. Continue for a minute or more, letting your breath prayer come to an end when it feels complete. Examples: Inhale *Breathe on me* Exhale *Fill me*. Inhale *Be still* Exhale *Know God*. Inhale *Come Holy Spirit* Exhale *We need you now*. Inhale *Source of Love* Exhale *Let me be Love*.

Move Your Body to Clear Your Mind and Open to God

Many of us spend long hours on our screens and in meetings and conferences. When you are feeling physically or mentally weary, take a break. Get up, move around. Do some gentle stretches. Open the door or window and take in the outdoors, even if you don't have time for a walk right now. Take a few deep breaths. Let your shoulders drop. Have a drink of water. Consciously relax your body and let your mind clear. Just for a minute or two, let go of task orientation, and remember who you are and Whose you are.

Pray With Inspirational Quotes

These are from Henri Nouwen: <https://www.brainyquote.com/authors/henri-nouwen-quotes>
Choose the first one that grabs your attention. Read it, sit with it: what words particularly stand out for you? Read it again: what feelings arise? Share your feelings with God. Read it again, pray with it: What response is being invited from you today? You can pray with Scripture in the same way.

Self-paced at-home retreats

Many of us struggle to find time for a retreat. Here are two retreats you can take at home in one to four hours, at your own pace, without having to travel to a retreat center:

Contemplative Retreat with Nancy Dibelius (led by video)

<https://vimeo.com/461798695>

Peace Like a River Retreat by Cheryl Lyon (downloadable pdf, with links to more):

<https://wingedlifecoaching.com/#retreat>

Prayers From the Methodist Tradition

Here are two examples.

- A Prayer for God's Gifts (*The United Methodist Hymnal* #489)

O Holy God, open unto me light for my darkness,
courage for my fear, hope for my despair.
O loving God, open unto me wisdom for my confusion,
forgiveness for my sins, love for my hate.
O God of peace, open unto me peace for my turmoil,
joy for my sorrow, strength for my weakness.
O generous God, open my heart to receive all your gifts. Amen.
- A Litany for the Church and For the World: <https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/book-of-worship/a-litany-for-the-church-and-for-the-world>

Trust that God is able to do immeasurably more than all you ask or imagine, and that God's power is at work within you, even when you feel distant from God - for in God we live and move and have our very being. (*Ephesians 3:20; Acts 17:28*)