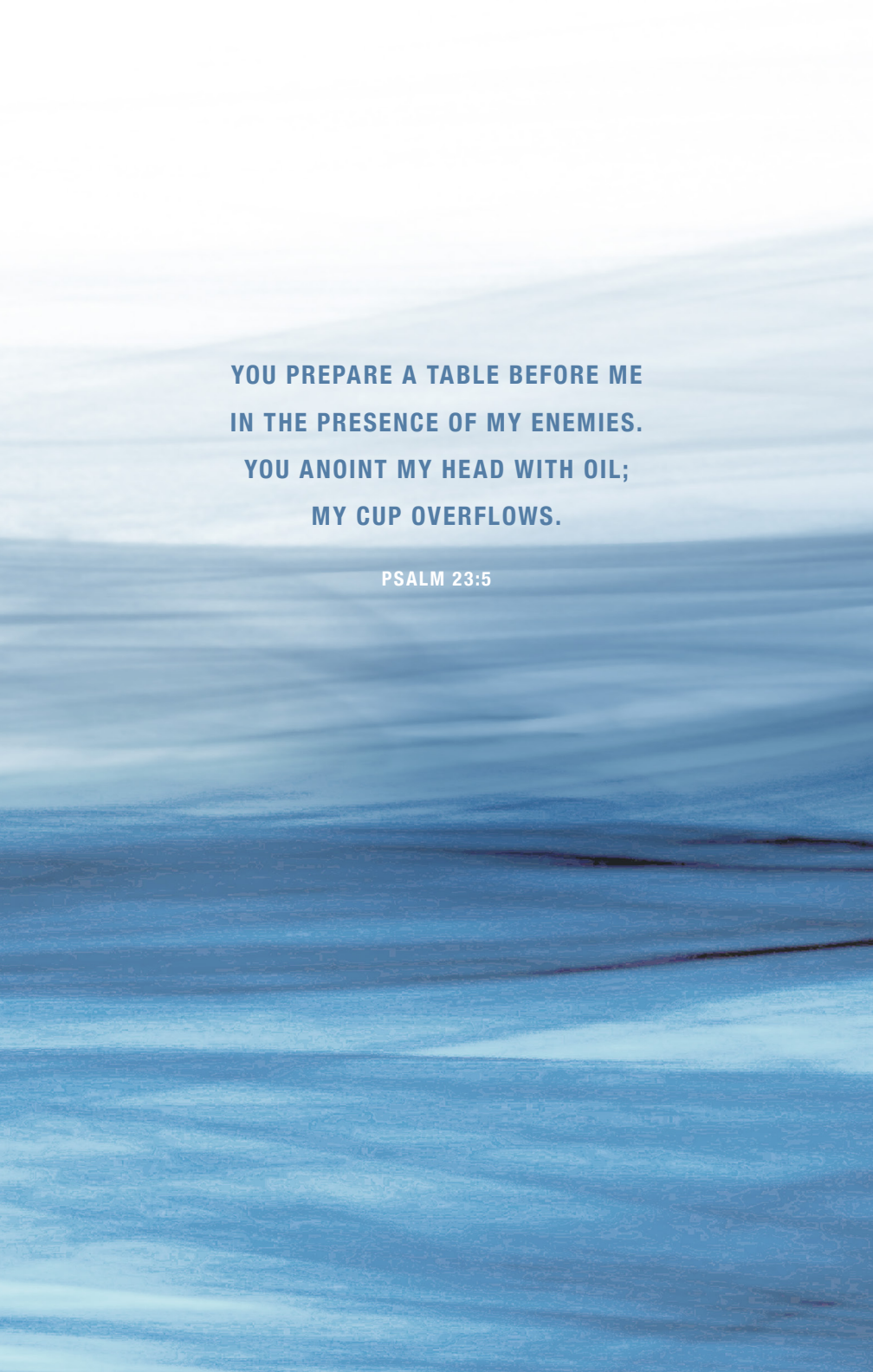




// **OVERFLOW**  
LIVING WATER FOR AN EMPTY AGE

**PRAYER**





**YOU PREPARE A TABLE BEFORE ME  
IN THE PRESENCE OF MY ENEMIES.  
YOU ANOINT MY HEAD WITH OIL;  
MY CUP OVERFLOWS.**

PSALM 23:5

# WHAT IS PRAYER?



SINCE THE BEGINNING, PEOPLE HAVE YEARNED AND SEARCHED FOR THE PRESENCE OF GOD. THE OLD TESTAMENT IS *STORY AFTER STORY* OF LEADERS, KINGS, PROPHETS, AND ORDINARY PEOPLE SEARCHING FOR AND WALKING WITH GOD. IN THE GARDEN OF EDEN, ADAM AND EVE HAD DAILY ACCESS TO GOD. GOD SAW THEIR NEEDS, MET THEIR NEEDS, WALKED WITH THEM, AND TALKED WITH THEM. THIS WAS GOD'S DESIGN; HE IS AN ACTIVE AND PRESENT GOD.

The fall of humankind broke the intimate relationship we were meant to share with our Father.

**// PRAYER IS ABOUT ENTERING THE PRESENCE OF GOD AND COMMUNING WITH A GOD WHO WANTS TO BE AN ACTIVE PART OF YOUR LIFE. //**

Prayer is an experience we are invited into with God. Prayer is something you learn to do by simply doing it. We practice entering the presence of God and communing with our heavenly Father; **we train ourselves to remember God's presence in every action we perform.**

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## **OUR PROMISE TO YOU**

Your endeavor in a life of prayer with God is **worth your effort.** There is no shortcut to Christlikeness, and prayer is a foundational stepping stone to becoming more like Jesus.

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**In your Overflow journal, write three words to describe your prayer life as it is now. Then, write three words you hope to work towards this month as we focus on prayer together.**

**PRAYING WITH FREQUENCY GIVES US THE  
READINESS TO PRAY AGAIN AS NEEDED FROM  
MOMENT TO MOMENT. THE MORE WE PRAY,  
THE MORE WE THINK TO PRAY, AND AS WE SEE  
THE RESULTS OF PRAYER—THE RESPONSES  
OF OUR FATHER TO OUR REQUESTS—OUR  
CONFIDENCE IN GOD’S POWER SPILLS OVER  
INTO OTHER AREAS OF OUR LIFE.**

**DALLAS WILLARD  
*SPIRIT OF THE DISCIPLINES***

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Chances are, since you have entered this season of prayer with us, you know that prayer is important. We all arrive to this point with varying backgrounds. Some of us were brought to church and told to pray, others have had a hard season in life and found God in prayer, or perhaps prayer has always been a struggle for you. **God will meet you wherever you are.**



**What is your childhood memory of prayer?  
How were you taught to pray?**

Regardless of the reason we are beginning this journey together, you are here now because you know prayer is an essential discipline to a life in Christ. This month we will be intentional in our prayer journey together. We will look at different ways to pray, various prayers from the Bible, and the reasons why we know God has called us to be co-laborers with him on this earth.

# A FEW POINTERS & SUGGESTIONS TO USE ALONG THE WAY:



## BE HONEST

To begin, reflect on your current prayer life. If you are a beginner, start at the beginning by simply talking to God.



## BE PATIENT

Remember that this year is for practicing different spiritual disciplines in the life of Jesus.



## BE BRAVE

Growth in discipleship is meant to be lived in and through community. Make a commitment to do this alongside others.



## BE EXPECTANT

Trust God to show up when you speak to him.

# WHY DO WE PRAY?



## WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY ABOUT PRAYER?

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THE CHURCH HAS NOT ALWAYS BEEN A WELCOMING PLACE TO ASK HARD QUESTIONS, BUT GOD HAS ALWAYS BEEN ABLE TO HANDLE WHATEVER QUESTIONS YOU HAVE FOR HIM. IN WHATEVER STAGE OF DISCIPLESHIP YOU FIND YOURSELF, THERE ARE QUESTIONS THAT WE ALL HAVE FOR GOD. MANY ARE ANSWERED IN SCRIPTURE, AND OTHERS ARE ANSWERED IN REFLECTION AND COMMUNION WITH GOD.



# DOES GOD HEAR OUR PRAYERS?



Reflect and record your experiences about how you know God hears your prayers. If you do not have an experience where you are certain God has heard and answered a prayer, recall a story in scripture that tells you God hears your prayers.

Adele Calhoun says that prayer is a word that describes a relationship. Inherently, prayer assumes that God is an active participant in our efforts to commune with him. We assume that God is an active listener. Do we know that he is? Why do we assume that God is listening?

Consider the story of Hannah in 1 Samuel. Hannah wept, fasted, prayed, and begged God for a son. Hannah was desperate and God met her in her desperation and in her faith.

## READ 1 SAMUEL 1-2:11, THEN CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS:



What three words would you offer to describe Hannah's prayer journey?

In 1 Samuel 1:15, Hannah states that she is "pouring out her soul to the Lord."

What does it look like for you to pour your soul out to the Lord?

In your Overflow journal, pick two phrases from Hannah's prayer in chapter 2 that captures how you have experienced God this month.

# DO OUR PRAYERS MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

When Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt, God had been put on trial and tested (Exodus 7-11). Each time, God proved not only his existence, but his care for his people. After leaving Egypt, the Israelites found themselves traveling through the desert as they went to the Promised Land. God heard their cries for food and water, then sent quail and manna to satisfy both their needs and requests (Exodus 16). A few months later, to make it abundantly clear to the Israelites that Yahweh was their protector and provider, he came down to speak to Moses where they could all see and hear the glory of God (Exodus 20:20).

God had one request of Moses, “Tell the Israelites this: You have seen for yourselves that I have spoken to you from heaven. Do not make any gods to be alongside me; do not make for yourselves gods of silver or gods of gold” (Exodus 20:22).

A few weeks later, the Israelites had turned their backs on God. They had pledged themselves to God, they knew of his existence, had experienced his goodness, and still could not be found faithful.



## **READ EXODUS 32, THEN CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS IN YOUR JOURNAL:**

**What have the Israelites done to anger God?**

**What is God’s initial response? (Exodus 32:10)**

**How does Moses urge God to reconsider?**

**What promise does Moses ask God to recall?**

The word **relented** in verse 14 in original Hebrew is **naham**. It means to have compassion, change course, or change your mind. Moses gets God to change his mind. This does not mean that God was wrong in his judgment against the Israelites, but because Moses petitions God's character and love for his people, the Israelites are saved from God's just judgment. God chooses to be moved by us in the way a loving parent is moved by the desires of a child.

## // GOD LISTENS TO YOUR REQUESTS. //



**Reflect, then in your journal consider if you have ever boldly asked something of Lord. It may have been something you needed or something you wanted. Did he grant your prayer?**

# WHAT DID JESUS DO?



JESUS TAUGHT THAT PRAYER IS  
ESSENTIAL, AND HE SHOWED US  
THROUGH HIS EXAMPLE  
IN THE GOSPELS.

In the Gospels of Mark and Luke, Jesus begins his day of teaching by first praying in a solitary place (Mark 1:35; Luke 4:42). After feeding the five thousand, Jesus withdraws to pray (Mark 6:46). And, of course, Jesus petitions God to, “Take this cup from me...” in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:36).



**Where else in scripture do you see Jesus pray?**

**Do you find yourself praying more often in fear or in thanksgiving?**

## **HOW DID JESUS TEACH US TO PRAY?**

**JESUS BREAKS ALL THOSE BARRIERS AND GIFTS US WITH  
THE PRESENCE OF GOD. IN THE WORDS OF PAUL,**

**“The Lord is near.”**

**PHILIPPIANS 4:5**

**JESUS GRANTS US ACCESS TO THE FATHER ALMIGHTY.**

Jesus gives us the Lord's Prayer as a model for how we are to pray. Spend some time looking at the Lord's Prayer and consider the components that Jesus outlines as a model for our prayers (Matthew 6:9-13). If you are working with a group, feel free to use the reflections below to pray together.

## OUR FATHER

God is your loving parent. What does it mean to approach his throne with the confidence of a beloved child? Imagine his love for you. If you are a parent, imagine the love you have for your child, and expand it. That is the closest understanding we have to the love God has for us. You are fiercely loved. Paul reminds us that, "being rooted and established in love, (you) may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge —that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God" (Ephesians 3:17-19).

## IN HEAVEN

Imagine being in God's house of prayer. His presence surrounds you.

## HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME

Praise God for all you have. Give thanks for the blessings that have been bestowed upon you simply because you are a child of God. Give thanks first.



**Reflections:** Together, take turns giving thanks aloud. What does it mean to give thanks before you place your needs before God?

## YOUR KINGDOM COME, YOUR WILL BE DONE, ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN

Ask God to show you what he wants for the world. Be still and allow God to speak to you. Ask him how you can be a co-laborer of his missional work on earth.



**Reflections:** Share together how God reveals his heart for our world. Where are you praying for his will to be done?

## GIVE US EACH DAY OUR DAILY BREAD

Ask God for what you need. He hears your petitions. Ask in faith. Ask with confidence.



**Reflections:** With your group, ask God aloud for specific needs.

## FORGIVE US OUR DEBTS AS WE ALSO HAVE FORGIVEN OUR DEBTORS

Practice being vulnerable before God. Ask him for healing and forgiveness in areas of your life where shame may have entered. Invite his light in.



**Reflections:** What does it mean to pray vulnerably together? Spend some time confessing your needs in a safe space.

## AND LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION BUT DELIVER US FROM THE EVIL ONE

Ask God for protection. Ask God for guidance in knowing how to walk in his will, free of worldly distractions.

# HISTORY TELLS US



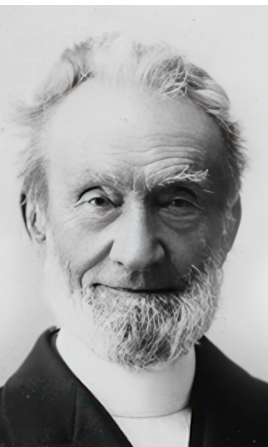
**GEORGE MÜLLER WAS A CHRISTIAN  
EVANGELIST IN BRISTOL, ENGLAND  
WHO LIVED FROM 1805-1889.  
HE HAD GIVEN HIS LIFE TO GOD,  
TRAVELING ACROSS ENGLAND  
TO PREACH AND LEAD SUNDAY  
SCHOOL CLASSES. IN 1836,  
GEORGE AND HIS WIFE, MARY,  
SAW HOW ORPHANS IN THEIR  
COMMUNITIES HAD NEEDS THAT  
WERE UNMET. WHAT BEGAN AS  
THE COUPLE OPENING THEIR HOME  
TO 30 ORPHANED GIRLS GREW  
TO BUILDING AND RUNNING FIVE  
HOUSES THAT WOULD SERVE OVER  
10,000 ORPHANS DURING  
THE MÜLLERS' LIFETIME.**



Müller was able to build these homes and care for these children without going into debt or asking for donations. He never asked for a penny from others. Instead, he asked God for help and devoted his life to prayer.

One of the most famous stories coming from this orphanage recalls an early morning when nothing was available for the children's breakfast. Despite not having provisions, Müller called them to the table to give thanks for the breakfast they were about to receive. As they finished praying, the baker knocked on the door with bread, followed by the milkman who was gifting milk as his axle had just broken down in front of the orphanage. This story seems almost unbelievable, but this is one of the many stories recorded in newspapers and Müller's journals.

A journal entry of Müller's from February 12, 1842, recalls another similar story:



**A brother in the Lord came to me this morning and, after a few minutes of conversation gave me two thousand pounds for furnishing the new Orphan House... Now I am able to meet all of the expenses. In all probability, I will even have several hundred pounds more than I need. The Lord not only gives as much as is absolutely necessary for his work, but he gives abundantly. This blessing filled me with inexplicable delight. He had given me the full answer to my thousands of prayers during the [past] 1,195 days.**

**In your journal, reflect on the following:**



**Before having received their breakfast, the orphans sat down to give thanks. Do you have enough faith to give thanks before receiving what you have petitioned God for in faith?**

# HELPFUL TIPS TO REMEMBER WHILE YOU PRAY

## GOD HAS A NAME

Have you noticed God's name in the Bible? In the beginning God shares his name, Yahweh. But as the Bible was translated the name shifted from Yahweh to God and Lord in an effort to protect God's name from being used in vain. God says to Moses that he is Israel's God. He is the God who comes to be among his people.

I am who I am

I will be what I will be

I will be with you

Consider praying to God using his name. Call him **Yahweh** or call him **Father** as Jesus did. He is a personal God willing to be on a first-name basis with you.

## FIND A PLACE

Find a place where you can still your breathing, rid yourself of distractions, and be mindful of God's presence around you.

Determine where that is and commit to being there daily for the next four weeks. It can be in a quiet car on the way to work or it can be while you take a morning walk. Find where you can concentrate on God and invite him to meet you there.

## START SLOW AND PROGRESS FORWARD

Consider your answer at the beginning (on page 5) where you reflected on your starting point.

Do you need to begin this month praying for five minutes a day? Do that.

During the second week, see if you are comfortable spending 10 minutes in daily prayer.

Be unashamed about where you begin and make forward progress by embracing the uncomfortable. Growth happens when we push ourselves outside our comfort zones.

## WORDS OF SCRIPTURE:

Below is a list of suggested Psalms to pray. If you are a beginner, open your Bible, pick a Psalm, and read it as a prayer aloud. Push yourself to be comfortable speaking to Yahweh. To reach further, memorize a Psalm this month and see how often you can repeat it while doing the mundane tasks of life. What does growth look like from where you are?

Psalm 4

Psalm 34

Psalm 111

Psalm 23

Psalm 90

Psalm 121

Psalm 27

Psalm 100

Psalm 139



**What is your prayer plan for this month?**

**How will you grow in your prayer practice?**

**What will you add? What will you take away to give yourself the space to commune with your Heavenly Father?**

# TYPES OF PRAYERS

\*adapted from Adele Calhoun's *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*

There is no single way to pray. Below is a list of types of prayers for you to consider engaging in this month.

**Circle two types prayers that you will concentrate on this month. Challenge yourself to pick ones that will push you towards growth.**

## BREATH PRAYERS

to pray a simple, one-line and intimate prayer of heartfelt desire before God.

## CENTERING PRAYER

to quiet the heart and rest in the presence of God, allowing your focus to be on God alone.

## CONVERSATIONAL PRAYER

to talk naturally to God in prayer as if speaking to a friend.

## FIXED-HOUR PRAYER

to practice the discipline of stopping throughout your day to spend a few minutes in the presence of God.

## LITURGICAL PRAYER

to open yourself before God through established, traditional written prayers.

## PRAYER OF LAMENT

to take your complaints, anger, and sufferings to God in honest conversation.

## CONTEMPLATIVE PRAYER

to develop restful openness to the Lord that enables you to be your full self before the Most High.

## INTERCESSORY PRAYER

to pray on behalf of the world and the people created by God; to attune your heart to the felt needs of those around you.

## PRAYER OF RECONCILIATION

to rest in God, allowing him to calm and heal the vulnerable places in your life.

# PRACTICE

We have read scripture, reflected on our personal experiences, and studied how Jesus taught us to pray. The next step is to practice.

Sit, be still, and enter the presence of God.

Ask God directly for what you need. Trust him with your petitions.



**In your journal, write down specific prayer requests and petitions. This month keep a list and in week 4, look over the list to see what God has answered and what he has not yet answered.**

### **This month, continually ask yourself:**

What delights me in my prayer life?

What challenges me?

When do I feel closest to God?

# GROUP PRACTICE



**“PRAYER IS THE WAY TO BOTH THE  
HEART OF GOD AND THE HEART OF  
THE WORLD—PRECISELY BECAUSE  
THEY HAVE BEEN JOINED THROUGH  
THE SUFFERING OF JESUS CHRIST.  
PRAYING IS LETTING ONE’S OWN  
HEART BECOME THE PLACE WHERE  
THE TEARS OF GOD’S CHILDREN  
MERGE AND BECOME TEARS  
OF HOPE.”**

**HENRI NOUWEN**



**PRAYER  
INTRO VIDEO**



**PRAYER  
TEACHING VIDEO**

This month the group leader will invite you to experience the Prayer of Examen. The Prayer of Examen has been around for centuries:

- It is a prayer that enables you to notice the ways God has been present to you throughout your day.
- Its purpose is to train your heart and mind to see God in your everyday circumstances.
- The prayer invites you to look back over your day and reflect on where God has been nudging, loving, inviting, and acting on your behalf.

*// The Prayer of Examen is an “opportunity for an intimate meeting with Jesus about your day.” //*

St. Ignatius of Loyola, a priest during the 1500s, felt the Examen so significant that if he could only pray one prayer a day, it would be the Prayer of Examen. The hope is the more we practice noticing God throughout our day, the more we grow in our familiarity of his voice and his presence. Eventually there is not a moment when we do not experience him near.

**“THE EXAMEN PROVIDES A WAY OF NOTICING WHERE GOD SHOWS UP IN OUR DAY. IT IS A PRACTICE THAT ATTENDS TO WHAT WE MIGHT OTHERWISE MISS IN THE PRESS OF DUTIES AND BUSYNESS. THE QUESTIONS OF THE EXAMEN OPEN OUR ATTENTION TO HOW GOD’S INTERNAL MOVEMENT IS PRESENT IN OUR EXTERNAL COMINGS AND GOINGS. THEY LEAD US TO LISTEN DEEPLY TO THE DATA OF OUR LIVES.”**

**ADELE CALHOUN**

There are five movements (steps) of the Prayer:

- 1 // God, thank you for being with me:** Becoming aware of God's Presence with you here in this space. Invite the Holy Spirit to enlighten your mind and warm your heart to bring awareness to his presence.
- 2 // God, help me look at my day:** Review your day objectively, without judgment.
- 3 // Notice Consolations and Desolations:** Identify moments that caused you to feel joyful and grateful, as well as moments when you felt anger or sorrow.
- 4 // God, let me be grateful and ask forgiveness:** When did you respond to his invitations and when did you not respond? Or when did you turn away from God?
- 5 // God, stay close:** What would you like to ask of God for the day ahead?

---

**“O GOD, GATHER ME NOW TO BE WITH YOU AS YOU ARE WITH ME. SOOTHE MY TIREDNESS, QUIET MY FRETFULNESS, CURB MY AIMLESSNESS, RELIEVE MY COMPULSIVENESS. LET ME BE EASY FOR THESE MOMENTS.”**

**TODD LODER  
GATHER ME TO BE WITH YOU**

---



Below is one way to facilitate the Prayer of Examen. Group leaders may follow the prompts below or lead groups through an alternative Prayer of Examen. Alternatively, the group may use their time together to meditate on the Lord's Prayer reflections on page 14. Proceed with the knowledge and freedom that God is present in the midst of your gathering and will listen to your prayers.

## THE PRACTICE

adapted from the Kaleid Summer Contemplative Series\*

*The group leader will read the following aloud, pausing for reflection between movements:*

Find a comfortable sitting position, take some deep breaths, and relax your body. Assume a posture of receptivity. Seek to release distractions—not fighting them when they come, but mentally putting them aside to return to after this time of prayer.

- 1** // Recognize God's presence with you and invite the Holy Spirit to guide you during our prayer.
- 2** // Take a moment to note how you are coming to this time, mentally, emotionally, and physically. Allow yourself to be honest. This is your time to be with the Lord, just you and him.
- 3** // Now, as you begin to review your day, how were you at the beginning of the day? What was your mood? Allow your mind to drift through the morning into the afternoon and evening, recalling events and people.
- 4** // For what moment are you most grateful? When did you feel the most alive, feel the most energy, or when did you feel most like yourself? When did you sense God's Presence with you?

Take some time to consider: ***what about that moment was so life-giving*** for you? Offer thanks to God for those gifts.

**5//** Consider the moment you are *least grateful for yesterday*. When did you feel life draining out of you? When did you give or receive the least love? When did God's presence feel absent or when did you turn away from God?

***What about that moment was so difficult?*** Bring it before God and share it with him. And maybe, if needed, ask for his forgiveness.

**6//** As you look toward today, what would you like to *ask of God for this day*? What do you desire from him? Bring your desire before God and share it with him. There is something special about asking God for what you need and inviting him to share his concern about the details of your day.

After an extended time of silent prayer, the group leader will close the group in prayer, offering thanks to God for his presence and leading. An optional closing prayer is suggested on the following page.

## OPTIONAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What feelings were brought to the surface during the Prayer of Examen?
2. When you consider your day, are you able to see God's fingerprints through interactions with others? Certain unexpected encounters?
3. How did God use you today as a witness to his love and kingdom?

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\* The Kaleid Project is a spiritual formation and mission initiative that empowers Christians to humbly join God in restoring a just and merciful world through sustainable, actionable practices. More information can be found at [thekaleidproject.com](http://thekaleidproject.com).

# CLOSING PRAYER

## A PRAYER OF UNKNOWING BY THOMAS MERTON

My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going.  
I do not see the road ahead of me.  
I cannot know for certain where it will end.

Nor do I really know myself, and the fact  
that I think I am following your will  
does not mean that I am actually doing so.

But I believe that the desire to please you  
does in fact please you.

And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing.

I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.

And I know that, if I do this, you will lead me  
by the right road, though I may know  
nothing about it.

Therefore, I will trust you always though I may seem to be lost and  
in the shadow of death.

I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me  
to face my perils alone.

Amen.

– Thomas Merton, Thoughts in Solitude

## FOR FAMILIES WITH YOUNGER KIDS:

### **MORNING SONGS OF GRATITUDE:**

Start the day with cheerful morning songs, thanking God for blessings like the new day, family, and friends.

### **MEALTIME BLESSINGS:**

Create a catchy and interactive mealtime blessing, involving your child in thanking God for the food.

### **BEDTIME BLESSINGS:**

Establish a calming bedtime routine that includes reading a Bible story and saying a gentle bedtime prayer.

### **NATURE'S WONDERS PRAYER WALK:**

Take your child for a nature walk, teaching them to thank God for each creation.

### **FAMILY HUG CIRCLE PRAYER:**

Gather in a circle, embrace each other in warm hugs, and express gratitude for the uniqueness of each family member.

### **PEOPLE PRAYERS:**

Use five fingers and pray for five people you love.

### **NIGHTTIME STAR GAZING:**

Venture out for star gazing, emphasizing the vast universe and God's presence that watches over your family.

### **DIY PRAYER ROCKS:**

Create prayer rocks adorned with meaningful words or symbols, hold a rock, and say a silent prayer.

## FOR FAMILIES WITH OLDER KIDS:

### **MEALTIME PRAYERS:**

Rotate the responsibility of saying a short blessing before dinner among family members.

### **FAMILY HIKES:**

Engage in nature as a family and thank God for something you see.

### **PRAYER JOURNAL:**

Write down specific things you are praying for and how God has answered them.

### **GPS:**

Use the acronym Grateful, Please and Sorry to structure your prayer time.

### **PHONE PRAYER:**

Change the background on your phone to a prayer or a list of people and things you're praying for.

### **GIVING JAR:**

Develop a rhythm of setting aside a cash amount in a glass jar and pray as a family how to use the funds to love and serve someone.

### **VISUAL PRAYERS:**

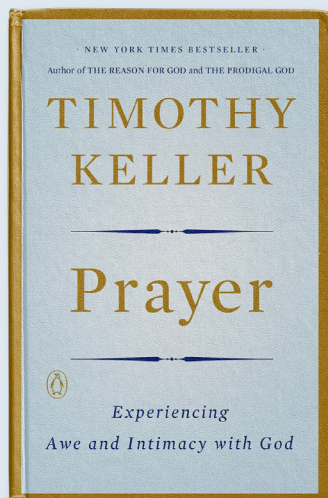
Use a dry erase marker to write what you are praying for on a window or mirror.

### **PICK A "THING":**

Select something as a visual reminder and pray every time you see it (a butterfly, a red car, keys, etc).

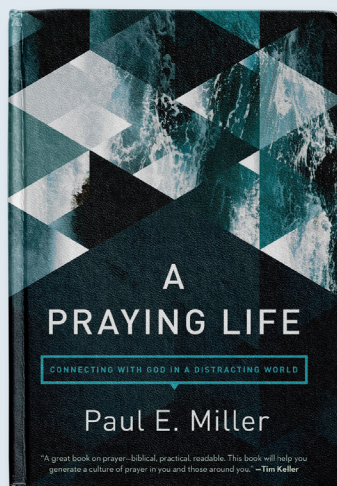
# RESOURCES

Want to go deeper in Prayer Practice? Consider reading one of the suggested resources below:



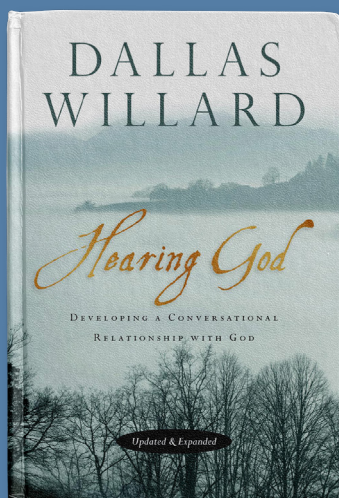
## PRAYER

Tim Keller

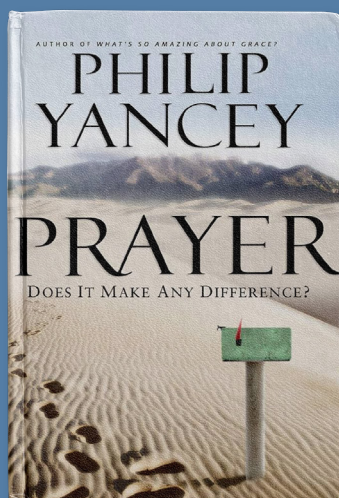


## A PRAYING LIFE

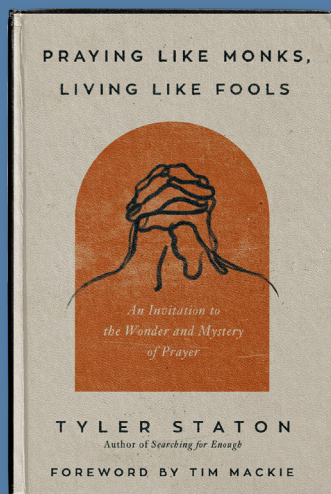
Paul E. Miller



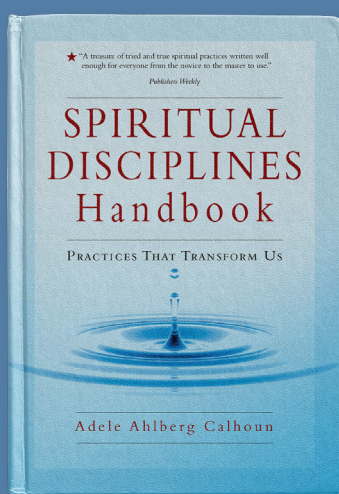
**HEARING GOD**  
Dallas Willard



**PRAYER**  
Philip Yancey



**PRAYING LIKE MONKS,  
LIVING LIKE FOOLS**  
Tyler Staton



**SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINES  
HANDBOOK**  
Adele Ahlberg Calhoun



PEACHTREE  
CHURCH