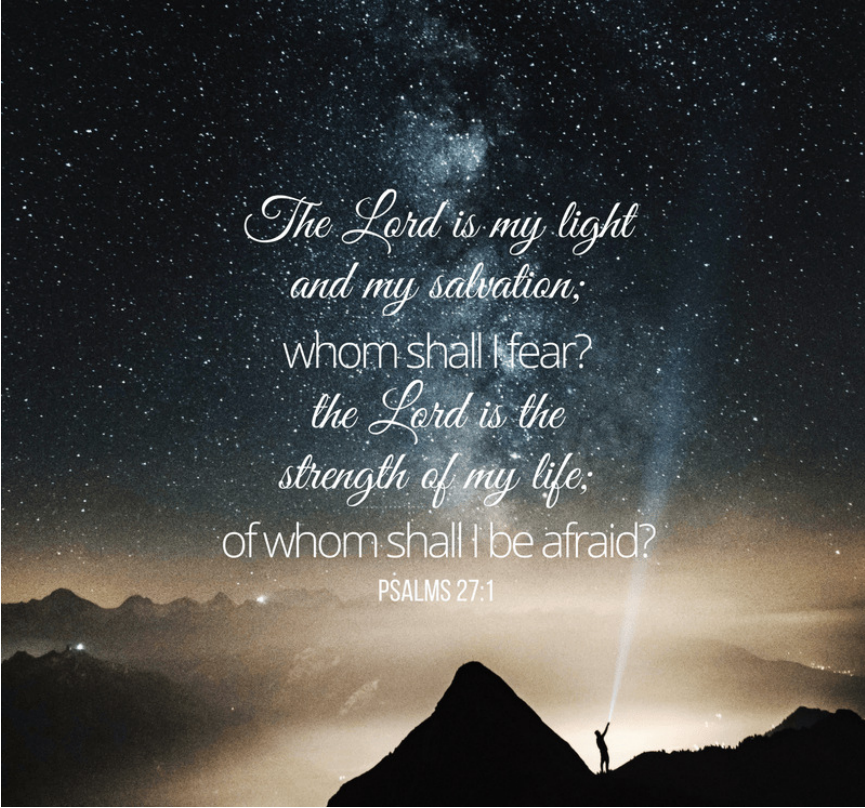


LEARNING TO PRAY

A resource to help foster a personal life
of prayer as you follow Jesus.



**WOODBURY
LUTHERAN**

A night sky with the Milky Way galaxy visible. In the foreground, a silhouette of a person stands on a mountain peak, shining a flashlight beam upwards. The background shows a hazy, mountainous landscape under a starry sky.

*The Lord is my light
and my salvation;
whom shall I fear?
the Lord is the
strength of my life;
of whom shall I be afraid?*

PSALMS 27:1

CONTENTS

ABOUT PRAYER

- WHY A PRAYER BOOK - 4
- GETTING STARTED - 4
- PRAYER TIMES - 5
- FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS - 6

PRAYER RESOURCES

- THE HOUR THAT CHANGES THE WORLD - 7
- DAILY EXAMEN - 8
- PRAYING IN SILENCE - 9
- LECTIO DIVINA - 10
- PRAYER WALKING - 11

PRAYING THE PSALMS

- DAILY PSALM PLAN - 12

PRAYERS

- MORNING PRAYER - 14
- EVENING PRAYER - 16
- NIGHT PRAYER (COMPLINE) - 18

MORE RESOURCES

- MORE PRAYER RESOURCES - 19

WHY A PRAYER BOOK?

Prayer is meant to be an exciting and intimate time with God. Yet, it often doesn't feel that way. Many people record experiences of frustration with prayer. Others wonder how they should actually pray. Numerous disciples have noted that it's easy for prayer to become a chore and a source of guilt rather than an exciting piece of our relationship with God. Yet that is exactly what prayer was made to be. In prayer we actually encounter our loving God. Through dialogue with God, the Holy Spirit transforms us to become more like Jesus. Prayer is meant to be a dialogue with God, not a one-way conversation. It is a conversation with a God who loves us and longs to hear from and speak to us. However, prayer doesn't come naturally. The disciples came to Jesus and said, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples." Prayer is a language and a lifestyle to be learned through time and experience. The best place to start learning to pray is in the Scriptures. It may seem odd at first, but there is a great deal of benefit in actually praying the Scriptures. Doing so forms the language of prayer in us. This prayer guide is meant to use Scriptures, spontaneous prayers, and prayers of others in the journey of faith as a way to grow your dialogue with God.

GETTING STARTED

FIND A QUIET TIME AND PLACE

It's helpful to begin by surveying your schedule and finding gaps of times where you might pray. A good practice is to block off 15 minutes in the morning and around 15 minutes in the evening. If you want to add Scripture readings to your prayer time (highly suggested), you'll want to add extra time to your morning and evening prayer. Don't be too hard on yourself. Your times may vary a bit from day to day. Do not try to cram multiple days in at once. Do the best you can to put prayer time on the calendar of your life.

QUIET YOUR HEART

Breathe. This is not a chore. It's a moment. A conversation. Gather your thoughts and emotions and consider that you are in the presence of your loving heavenly Father. He is near to you, waits for you, and wants to hear from and talk to you.

PRAY

Pray at a pace that feels comfortable. Stay mentally engaged as you pray. Each prayer has various section headings outlined in bold letters. If clarifying instructions are needed, they will be provided in the text. Do your best to pray your way through the entire prayer time.

PRAY WITH OTHERS

While you may pray on your own. You can also pray this with others. For example, you can pray as a family before bed time. Or around the table with friends. If you are praying through the Psalms, the group can speak the verses responsively.

PRAYER TIMES

This booklet contains Morning Prayer, Evening Prayer, and optional Night Prayer. There is no formula or secret reward to praying a certain amount of times a day. Communities of God's people in Scripture and throughout history have prayed at natural times of transition during their day. Morning and Evening are common transition points for all of us. It is good for us to consider God in our times of transition and especially to structure our days around regular time with him.

MORNING PRAYER

Morning prayer is a time of prayer, confession, forgiveness, a Psalm, a word from God, intercessions, the Lord's Prayer, and a closing prayer of thanksgiving. You can pray this in the early morning or early afternoon depending on your schedule.

EVENING PRAYER

Evening Prayer is a time of prayer, confession, forgiveness, a Psalm, a time of recollection, the Lord's Prayer, and a closing prayer. Praying evening prayer right after work or right after an evening meal can be beneficial.

NIGHT PRAYER

This is to be prayed right before bed. It is sometimes known as Compline, a Latin term for completed. It is a short time of prayer. You may want to combine it with the practice of Daily Examen (found on page 8).

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

I DON'T ALWAYS FEEL LIKE I AM INTO PRAYING. IS THIS BAD?

There are days when the prayers will hit you right where you are and others where it might seem like you are distant. Some days you might read a happy Psalm and you are happy or a sad Psalm when you are not sad. However, praying in spite of these feelings helps us remember others who are in desperate places even though we aren't, or who are joyful even though we might not be. Secondly, praying this way keeps us from constantly being motivated by our feelings when we pray. Feelings are absolutely important, however they should not exclusively dictate the way we pray. Otherwise, we will only pray when we feel like it. We need to remember that Jesus constantly used the Psalms when praying. They were constantly spoken and prayed by him. They are beneficial for us as well.

IS PRAYING WRITTEN PRAYERS MERE REPETITION THAT SCRIPTURES WARN US AGAINST?

Jesus spoke against babbling on and on in prayer (Matthew 6:7) referring to the idea that we think we can get God's attention or favor by saying a lot. That is not the aim of prayer. Jesus himself prayed written prayers and even taught us the Lord's Prayer. Written prayer can be beneficial in fostering a life of prayer in us.

WHERE ARE THE PRAYERS IN THIS BOOK TAKEN FROM?

The prayers in this booklet are taken from Scripture and *The Lutheran Book of Prayer*.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I DON'T WANT TO PRAY OR I GET BORED. WHAT DO I DO?

We live in a culture of noise and activity. It's hard to quiet down and spend time with God. As you get into a habit of praying, you will find it easier. Sometimes the best answer to boredom and negative desire is to keep on praying (see Luke 18:1-8). Remember, you are seeking God not an experience or a feeling. If you are struggling, don't forget to ask God for help. It can also be beneficial to pray with a friend during times when it is hard to pray.

THE HOUR THAT CHANGES THE WORLD

Dick Eastman came up with the suggestion of dividing an hour into 12 periods of 5 minutes each in prayer. Below is a summary of the sections:

1. Praise (Ps. 115:1) - worship God for who he is.
2. Wait (Ps. 46:11) - be silent and reflect on God.
3. Confession (Is. 59:1-2) - confess your sins to God.
4. Scripture - pray God's promises back to him.
5. Watching (Col. 4:2) - pray for discernment.
6. Intercession (1 Tim. 2:1-2) - pray for others.
7. Petition (Matt. 6:11) - pray for your personal needs.
8. Thanksgiving (1 Thess. 5:18) - thank God for his blessings.
9. Song (Ps. 100) - sing a song of praise to God.
10. Meditation (Ps. 1:1-2) - reflect on God and his work in your life.
11. Listening (Ecc. 5:2) - Ask, "Lord, what do you expect of me?"
12. Worship (Is. 25:1) - glorify God; declare your trust in his promises.



DAILY EXAMEN

Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) was known for fathering the Prayer of Examen. It is a great way to end a day, by relinquishing all of the events of the past day to Jesus. This is best practiced before bed time.

1. INVITE GOD'S PRESENCE

Begin by praying: *"In the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Amen."*
Ask God to help you see the events of your day in light of who he is.

2. CELEBRATE GOD'S BLESSINGS

Journal for a few minutes and recall the way that God blessed you during the day (small and big things). In a spirit of gratitude, give thanks to God for blessing you.

3. REVIEW THE DAY

Look back at your day. Jot down the following:

Consolations: In what way did you follow God's gracious leading during your day? How did you draw close to God?

Desolations: In what way did you move away from God? What led you to withdraw? (Note: this is not just things you did, but experiences and circumstances that might have caused the withdrawal).

4. OFFER YOURSELF

Offer your consolations and desolations to God. Thank God for the good, ask him to work in the midst of the struggles.

5. PRAY ONE THING

Take one item from the consolations and desolations and pray deeper about it. Talk through the situation. Ask questions of God. Make requests of God. Invite God to take the situation and use it to accomplish his will.

PRAYING IN SILENCE

Throughout history, many Christians have practiced a period where they seek to significantly still their hearts and minds and meditate on God, his presence, and who he is for all of us. To pray in silence is to take a significant period of time to step away from life and spend time in God's presence. Below is an example of what this might look like for a 1-hour window.

1. Identify a **PLACE** where you can be safe and uninterrupted so you can pay attention to God.
2. Begin by **BREATHING** slowly and quieting your heart and mind (5 minutes).
3. Listen to **WORSHIP** music unless you find it distracting. Hear the words and what they declare about God (10 minutes).
4. Write in a journal or draw pictures. Take a walk. **REFLECT** on where you are in life. **EXAMINE** your feelings and reactions to things. Confess when you need to. Reflect on why you are drawn to certain thoughts, emotions, or events in your life. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak (10 minutes).
5. Spend time with a piece of **GOD'S WORD**. Read it over and over again noting what sticks out to you each time you read it (10 minutes).
6. **PRAY** in a way that seems best. It could be written, walking, art, quiet, in your head, or out loud (10 minutes). Reflect in how God had been working in the time you've spent already (5 minutes).
7. Pray in complete **STILLNESS**. Focus on the majesty of God. Bring yourself back gently if your mind wanders (5 minutes).
8. Pray the **LORD'S PRAYER**.
9. **BREATHE** deeply again, thanking God for the breath of life (3 minutes).

LECTIO DIVINA

Lectio Divina (Latin for 'Divine Reading') is a traditional monastic practice of Scripture reading, meditation and prayer intended to promote communion with God through his Word. It finds its beginnings with Origen in the 3rd century. Below are the four movements of Lectio Divina:

1. Lectio (read)

In a calm state of mind, read through a passage of Scripture a few verses long. Read the passage slowly and out loud, perhaps a few times. You may want to read it in a different English translation each time to see what jumps out.

2. Meditatio (meditate)

Take time to meditate on and ponder the passage. Do not assign meaning to the passage, simply contemplate its parts and what stands out. Consider it from various angles. You may take times of meditation after each reading or do the reading all at once and the meditation all at once.

3. Oratio (pray)

Pray to God, taking special account for the Scripture that you have just read and pondered. Confess sins in relation to the passage. Make requests in connection to what you have read and pondered. Let the Word of God be a lamp to your feet and a light to your path.

4. Contemplatio (contemplate)

Take time in silence focusing on love for God and his Word that speaks to and transforms your heart, mind, and life.

PRAYER WALKING


Prayer walking is a way to intercede for a certain area while being physically present in the spaces for which you are praying. Praying as we walk helps us see how God connects with every part of our environment. We listen and allow the Holy Spirit to lead us in praying for our surroundings. We pray for physical buildings and departments, spiritual issues, groups of people, areas of need, etc.

How to do a prayer walk:

1. Block off a time of at least 30 minutes to pray.
2. Take a friend with you to pray. Prayer walks happen better in pairs than alone.
3. Start your time by inviting the Holy Spirit to open your eyes and begin walking. As you walk and pray conversationally, be open to how God might be moving you.
4. Keep your eyes open while you pray. Pay attention to what God is helping you notice. God might even lead you to pray with people.
5. You do not have to physically walk the entire time. As you feel led, you can stop, enter a building, sit down and pray. The point is to listen to the Spirit and interact with what's going on around you.
6. If you are going with another person alternate between silence and praying out loud.
7. Stay in prayer throughout the entire walk.
8. Consider bringing a Bible with you in order to reference and pray Scripture. You might also bring a pen and paper to keep notes.
9. At the end of your 30 minutes, pray together to close.
10. After your time of prayer, share what God impressed upon you as you walked.
11. Consider: through this experience what might God be saying to you and what might you do about it?

DAILY PSALMS

JAN, APR, JUL, OCT			FEB, MAY, AUG, NOV		MAR, JUN, SEPT, DEC	
DAY	MORNING	EVENING	MORNING	EVENING	MORNING	EVENING
1	1	2	59	60	111	112
2	3	4	61	62	113	114
3	5	6	63	64	115	116
4	7	8	65	66	117	118
5	9	10	67	70	119:1-16	119:17-24
6	11	12	68:1-20	68:21-35	119:25-32	119:33-40
7	13	14	69:1-20	69:21-36	119:41-48	119:49-56
8	15	16	71	72	119:57-64	119:65-72
9	17	19	73	74	119:73-80	119:81-88
10	18:1-20	18:21-50	75	76	119:89-96	119:97-104
11	20	21	77	79	119:105-112	119:113-120
12	22	23	78:1-39	78:40-72	119:121-128	119:129-136
13	24	25	80	81	119:137-144	119:145-152
14	26	27	82	83	119:153-160	119:161-168
15	28	29	84	85	119:169-176	120
16	30	31	86	87	121	122
17	32	33	88	90	123	124
18	34	35	89:1-18	89:19-52	125	126
19	36	38	91	92	127	128
20	37:1-18	37:19-40	93	94	129	130
21	39	40	95	96	131	132
22	41	42	97	98	133	134
23	43	44	99	100	135	136
24	45	46	101	102	137	138
25	47	48	103	108	139	140
26	49	50	104:1-19	104:20-35	141	142
27	51	52	105:1-22	105:23-45	143	144
28	53	54	106:1-18	106:19-48	145	146
29	55	56	107:1-32	107:33-43	147	148
30	57	58	109	110	149	150

A photograph of a dense evergreen forest, likely a spruce or fir forest, with a white text overlay in the center. The trees are dark green and brown, creating a textured background.

I KNOW THE LORD IS
ALWAYS WITH ME.

PSALM 16:8

MORNING PRAYER

OPENING PRAYER

In the morning, O Lord, you hear my voice; in the morning I prepare a sacrifice for you and watch. My mouth is filled with your praise, and with your glory all day. O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth shall declare your praise. Amen. (Words taken from Psalms 5:3, 51:15, 71:8).

CONFESSION

Father God, you are the one who leads us from darkness into light, from captivity into freedom, from anxiety into peace, from despair into joy. Yet we long to break free, choosing independence, convinced of our own wisdom, forgetting your love and grace. Forgive us, draw close to us, embrace us once again in your loving arms, and enable us to follow you in worship and grateful service today. Amen.

WORD OF FORGIVENESS

It says in your Word: "If we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wickedness" (1 John 1:9). Thank you for your forgiveness. Amen.

PRAY THE MORNING PSALM

Psalms are found on page 12.

STUDY OR MEDITATE ON A PASSAGE OF SCRIPTURE

You can find regular Bible reading plans at biblegateway.org/read-plans.

INTERCESSIONS

Pray about the area of need to the Lord for each day of the week.

SUNDAY

For believers in Jesus, for unity in God's Church, for those who suffer persecution, for those God has placed in our lives with whom we might share our faith.

MONDAY

For our work, our family's work, our school, and the things that will fill our schedules during the coming week.

TUESDAY

For missionaries and leaders in the Church. For the people they minister to: children, adults, families, men, women, from any tribe and any tongue.

WEDNESDAY

For local, national, and world leaders. That God would bring an end to evil and injustice and guide all leaders with wisdom and truth.

THURSDAY

For the relationships God has placed in your life: family, extended family, friends, your small group, co-workers, classmates, etc.

FRIDAY

For faithfulness to follow God's leading no matter what, for clarity for all of God's people to hear his Word and respond, trusting in God's mercy.

SATURDAY

For our neighbors, our community, our city, for teachers and other community leaders who raise up our children, for healthy marriages among husbands and wives, for unity and growth in families, for flourishing in the places we live.

PERSONAL NEEDS

Pray for any personal needs during this time.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

CLOSING PRAYER

I thank you my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, your dear Son, that you have kept me this night from all harm and danger; and I pray that you would keep me this day also from sin and every evil, that all my doings and life may please you. For into your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let your holy angel be with me, that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

EVENING PRAYER

OPENING PRAYER

Let my prayer rise before you as incense, the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice. Jesus Christ is the Light of the world, the light no darkness can overcome. Stay with us, Lord, for it is evening, and the day is almost over. Let your light scatter the darkness and illuminate your Church. Amen. (Words taken from Psalms 141:2, John 8:12, John 1:5, Luke 24:29, 1 Corinthians 4:5, 2 Corinthians 4:6).

CONFESSION

Holy and gracious God, I confess that I have sinned against you this day. Some of my sin I know—the thoughts and words and deeds of which I am ashamed—but some is known only to you. In the name of Jesus Christ I ask for forgiveness. Deliver and restore me that I may rest in peace. Amen.

WORD OF FORGIVENESS

It says in your Word: “‘Come now, let us settle this,’ says the Lord. ‘Though your sins are like scarlet, I will make them as white as snow. Though they are red like crimson, I will make them as white as wool’” (Isaiah 1:18). Jesus, thank you for your forgiveness. Amen.

PRAY THE EVENING PSALM

Psalms are found on page 12.

RECOLLECTION

Turn your mind and heart back to the events of the day. Where did you see God working? How did the Word you read in the morning shape your day? If you have not done a Bible reading for the day, now is a good time.

You can find regular Bible reading plans at biblegateway.org/read-plans.

PERSONAL NEEDS

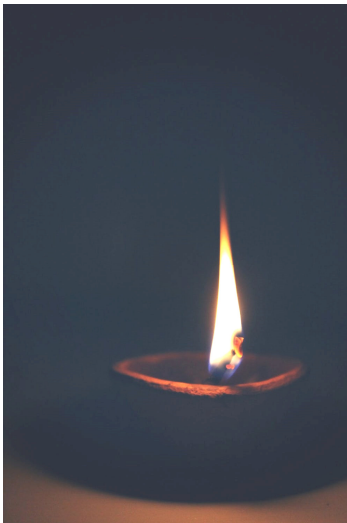
Pray about the area of need that has come up during the day.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

CLOSING PRAYER

O God, from whom come all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works, give to us, your servants, that peace which the world cannot give, that our hearts may be set to obey your commandments and also that we, being defended from the fear of our enemies, may live in peace and quietness; through Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.



NIGHT PRAYER (COMPLINE)

OPENING PRAYER

The Lord Almighty grant us a quiet night and peace at the last. It is good to give thanks to the Lord, to sing praise to your name, O Most High; to herald your love in the morning, your truth at the close of the day. You have said, "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid (John 14:27). Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit. You have redeemed me, O Lord, God of truth. Amen.

NIGHT PSALM

Pray Psalm 4, 31, 91, or 134.

THE WORD OF GOD

"Then Jesus said, 'Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light'" (Matthew 11:28-30).

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven; give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

CLOSING PRAYER

I thank you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ, your dear Son, that you have graciously kept me this day; and I pray that you would forgive me all my sins where I have done wrong, and graciously keep me this night. For into your hands I commend myself, my body and soul, and all things. Let your holy angel be with me that the evil foe may have no power over me. Amen.

MORE PRAYER RESOURCES

A Year with the Church Fathers. Scott R. Murray. Concordia Publishing House, 2011.

Prayer: Does it make any difference? Philip Yancey. Zondervan, 2016.

Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God. Tim Keller. Penguin Books, 2016.

Prayer: Finding the heart's true home. Richard Foster. HarperOne, 2002.

Treasury of Daily Prayer. Christine Sprowl Tetak. Concordia Publishing House, 2012.

The Hour that Changes the World. Dick Eastman. Chosen Books, 2002.

The Lutheran Book of Prayer. Concordia Publishing House, 2005.

WLC
DISCIPLESHIP  PATH



WORSHIP



GROW



SERVE



REACH

