

Living Well: Christian Practices for Everyday Life

Small Group Guide: “Praying”

(LifelongFaith Associates)

Advanced Preparation

1. Review the prayer activities in Part 4 and determine which ones you want to include in your small group session. Some of the activities require a leader to guide the process. This person or team should be selected in advance, so he or she can prepare. Have an individual or team present each activity that is selected.
2. Once you have selected the learning activities then you will need to make copies of the handouts (where applicable) and find any supplies or materials you need for the learning activities. Consider using all of the handouts to make a booklet of prayer practices that people can bring home with them, together with the *Living Well* book. The following handouts are included with this session:
 - *Prayer in Our Lives*
 - *Scriptural Prayer Activities*
 - *Scripture Meditation Process*
 - *Scripture Meditation Example: Luke 17:11-19*
 - *Intercessory Prayer*
 - *Intercessory Prayer @ Home*
 - *Prayers of Praise*
 - *Prayers of Praise @ Home*
 - *Prayers of Thanksgiving @ Home*
 - *Lectio Divina: Prayerful Bible Reflection*
3. Develop a display table of prayer that individuals and families can use in their daily lives. Review Resource List included with this document.

Part 1. Yearning: Stories of Praying

Over 70% of all Americans say they pray regularly. People pray for personal needs, family needs, the needs of others and of our world; they pray when they lose a loved one, at the end of a relationship, for healing and recovering, in gratitude for blessings received, and for so many more reasons. We all recognize the need for prayer; sometimes we are actually moved to pray. But how does prayer become part of our daily life, our daily walk with God? How can we grow in our relationship with God through prayer?

Begin the session by reading or presenting the opening stories on pages 10.2—10.3 in *Living Well*: “Starting the Day,” “Listening for God’s Voice,” “Prayer Can Wear Many Faces.” Use a different reader for each story, especially “Prayer Can Wear Many Faces” which includes 8 different vignettes.

How do these stories reflect your experiences with praying? Share your reflections with your small group.

Part 2. *Reflecting*: Prayer in Our Lives

The handout, *Prayer in Our Lives*, gives you an opportunity to name your current experience of praying by using the following six questions. Take a few minutes to complete the worksheet. (The complete set of questions is found on page 10.4 in *Living Well*.)

1. How is your prayer life today?
 - When do you pray?
 - Where do you pray?
 - What do you do during your prayer time: read the Bible, contemplate, listen to music, be silent, recite traditional prayers, etc.?
 - What do you pray for or pray about?
2. How has your prayer life changed or grown or evolved over the course of your life? What was your prayer life like when you were a child? a teenager? a young adult? a parent? a midlife adult? a grandparent? an older adult? (Answer as many as apply to you.)
3. Which prayer traditions have been helpful to you?
4. What new ways of praying have you tried? Have they been helpful?
5. When were the prayer times when you felt closest to God? Why?
6. Would you say that prayer is an integral part of your everyday life today?

After you complete the worksheet, take a few minutes to review your responses to the six questions and identify what you have learned about your prayer life in your life.

Then, share 2-3 insights about prayer with your group. This is a faith-sharing experience so be sure to give each person time to share his or her insights without interruptions or discussion.

Part 3. *Exploring*: The Christian Practice of Reading the Bible

The Exploring section of the "Praying" chapter in *Living Well* (pages 10.5—10.7) is organized into five understandings or insights about prayer, each with several quotes from authors who through their writing serve as guides to the practice of prayer.

1. Prayer is relationship with God.
2. Prayer is opening our lives to God.
3. Prayer is being changed by God.
4. Prayer is being attentive to God and others.
5. Prayer is living.

Organize your group into 5 teams. Each team will take one of the five understandings of prayer and read the quotes in the *Living Well* book for their particular understanding of prayer. Then prepare a short presentation summarizing the content and explaining why this understanding of prayer is important for us.

Alternative Presentation Methods

Consider one of these other approaches for creating a presentation of your understanding of prayer:

- **Artwork.** Artwork provides a way to engage people in creatively presenting the understandings of prayer in *Living Well*. They can use a wide variety of art forms, depending on the interests and abilities of the individual or group: paintings, posters (with painting or photos or a blend of art forms), a photo essay, a collage, a banner, a mobile, etc.
- **Advertisement.** Have each team create an advertisement that communicates the importance of praying, using the content from the *Living Well* book and the results of their table group

discussion. People can use a variety of advertising methods, e.g., a 30 second TV or radio ad, a song, an ad in a magazine, poster advertisement, a billboard, etc. Here are several suggestions for creating an ad:

1. *Focus the Ad:* In short phrases clearly identify what you want to communicate.
 2. *Select the Advertising Approach:* Think about all the types of advertisements in magazines and on the radio and television. Select your approach.
 3. *Design the Ad:* Combine your content or message with your advertising method to create your unique promotion. Add color or artwork or whatever else will enhance your promotion.
- **Drama.** Create a dramatic enactment or role play to illustrate an understanding of prayer: create a storyline, identify characters, write a script, add music (if appropriate), and develop the production. To be successful when conducting a role play or drama, it helps to know different ways to set it up (scripting):
 - *Free form.* Prepare a general scenario and ask the actors to fill in the details themselves.
 - *Prescribed.* Prepare a script with a well-prepared set of instructions that state the facts about the roles they are portraying and how they are to behave.
 - *Partially prescribed.* Provide extensive background information about the situation and the characters to be portrayed but do not tell the actors how to handle the situation.
 - *Replay life.* Ask the actors to reenact an actual situation that they have faced.
 - *Dramatic reading.* Provide the actors with a previously prepared script to act out.

When each team is ready, begin with theme 1 and have each group present their summary.

After the last presentation discuss the following questions as a group:

- What wisdom about prayer did you gain from the spiritual guides in the *Living Well* book?
- What does prayer mean to you now?
- What are two or three things you need to keep in mind when you think about prayer?

Part 4. *Living*: Application of the Christian Practice to Daily Life

Part 1. Developing the Practice of Praying

The “Living” section in the “Praying” chapter (pages 10.8—10.14) serves as a guide for developing or enhancing one’s prayer life. The following activities provide a way to experience a variety of prayer styles and practices that people can integrate into their daily prayer life. Each activity has a suggested process for conducting the activity.

Activity 1. One-Minute and Five-Minute Experiments in Prayer (pages 11.10—11.11 in *Living Well*)

- Conduct a demonstration of each of the “experiments in prayer” on pages 11.10—11.11 in *Living Well*.
- Explain the One-Minute process and then provide a demonstration. Do the same for the Five-Minute process.
- Discuss how you can integrate each prayer practice into your prayer life.

Activity 2. Contemplative Center Prayer (page 10.12 in *Living Well*)

- Prepare an environment that is conducive to Contemplative Centering Prayer (instrumental music, dimming the lights).
- Introduce Contemplative Centering Prayer using the description on page 10.12.
- Share the two Scripture passages: Psalm 63:1-5 and Romans 8:26-27.

- Explain the process and then guide people through an experience of Contemplative Centering Prayer.
 1. Choose a quiet space where you can be comfortable and where you can be uninterrupted and uninhibited.
 2. Once you are comfortable, light a candle, take a few deep breaths, and relax. Then set the timer or stop watch for twenty minutes.
 3. Close your eyes and recall your desire to just be in God's presence.
 4. Choose a simple word, phrase or verse from Scripture that expresses your desire for God (e.g., love, peace, grace, Jesus, Good Shepherd).
 5. When thoughts or feelings come into your mind, let them go. Do not give into them or allow them to take you away from God's presence. Distractions will come; this is normal. Think of this kind of prayer as the prayer of "letting go." Don't be surprised if you spend the whole prayer period letting go of thoughts and feelings. Over time you will experience something happening in your life: a new sense of peace, a new awareness of God's great love for you. Be patient! Prayer takes practice.
 6. Rest in the center of God's love. Trust that the Holy Spirit, who abides in the depths of your spirit, will connect you with God.
 7. When your prayer has ended, slowly come back to the here and now.
- Discuss how you can integrate Contemplative Centering Prayer into your prayer life.

Activity 3. Scriptural Prayer (page 10.12—10.13 in *Living Well*)

- Prepare an environment that is conducive to Scriptural Prayer. Light one or more candles.
- Introduce Scriptural Prayer using the description on pages 10.12—10.13.
- Share the two Scripture passages: Psalm 119:105-106 and Ephesians 5:19-20.
- Explain the process and then guide people through an experience of Scriptural Prayer.
 1. Choose a passage from Scripture, about five to ten verses in length. You might choose one of your favorite passages, a Scripture reading from the previous or coming Sunday, or use an index to help you locate a passage that seems to be appropriate for the time or occasion.
 2. Choose a comfortable place where you can be uninterrupted and uninhibited.
 3. Light a candle. Take a few moments to get your body in harmony with your spirit. Sometimes it helps to take a few deep breaths or stretch your body, then relax.
 4. Acknowledge God's presence with you. Ask God to send the Spirit to be with you and guide you in this time of reflection.
 5. Read the passage you have chosen slowly, out loud, listening carefully to it. You might want to pause after a sentence or phrase.
 6. Say the words or phrases that struck you. Do not discuss them, just say them.
 7. Read the passage a second time, slowly and prayerfully.
 8. Consider the message the passage might have for you: a challenge, an affirmation, or an insight. If you are doing this with others, you could invite them to share what comes to mind.
 9. Read the passage a third time, slowly and prayerfully.
 10. Pause for about ten minutes of silence and allow the Spirit to speak to you. If no words or thoughts come, just sit in the silence. Sometimes God touches us in ways we cannot know.
 11. Following your quiet time, consider how the passage calls you to action. Is there something you need to do to make the Scripture alive for you here and now?
 12. Close with a brief prayer of thanksgiving or praise to God for the gift of the Spirit.
- Discuss how you can integrate Scriptural Prayer into your prayer life.

Alternative Activity: Use the handout, *Scripture Meditation*, to guide the group through a second form of scriptural prayer. You can use as an alternative to Activity #3. The process is outline on the handout with an example of the process in action using Luke 17:11-19.

Activity 4. Intercessory Prayer (page 10.13 in *Living Well*)

- Prepare an environment that is conducive to prayer. Light one or more candles.
- Introduce Intercessory Prayer using the description on page 10.13.
- Share the two Scripture passages: Ephesians 6:18 and Philippians 4:4, 6-7.
- Invite people to take several minutes to recall the needs and concerns they want to pray for. Provide the group with the following categories to guide their reflection:
 - the needs and concerns of your family/household and friends,
 - the needs and concerns of people in your local church and community,
 - the needs and concerns of people around the world.
- Begin with an opening prayer and then ask people to offer their prayer intentions. The response to each prayer petition can be “Lord, hear us.”
- Close by praying the Our Father together as a group.
- Discuss how you can integrate Intercessory Prayer into your prayer life.

Alternative Activity: Use the handout, *Intercessory Prayer*, for a second way to teach intercessory prayer.

At Home: The handout, *Intercessory Prayer @ Home*, has a number of activities that you can use in a session or send home with people.

Activity 5. Praise Prayer (page 10.14 in *Living Well*)

- Prepare an environment that is conducive to prayer.
- Introduce Praise Prayer using the description on page 10.14.
- Share the Scripture passage: Psalm 95:1-2, 6-7.
- Invite people to take several minutes to compose one or more prayers of praise. Provide the group with the following examples:
 - “God, you are good and wonderful. We praise you.”
 - “God, we praise you for the mystery that is you.”
 - “God, we believe that you are holy and awesome.”
 - “We praise you for your majesty, O God.”
- Begin with an opening prayer and then ask people to offer their prayers of praise.
- Close by praying Psalm 95:1-2, 6-7. or other Psalm of praise.
- Discuss how you can integrate Praise Prayer into your prayer life.

Alternative Activity: Use the handout, *Prayers of Praise*, for a second way to teach intercessory prayer.

At Home: The handout, *Prayers of Praise @ Home*, has a number of activities that you can use in a session or send home with people.

Activity 6. Prayers of Thanksgiving (page 10.14 in *Living Well*)

- Prepare an environment that is conducive to prayer.
- Introduce Thanksgiving Prayer using the description on page 10.14.
- Share the Scripture passage: Psalm 92:1-4.
- Invite people to take several minutes to compose one or more prayers of thanksgiving. Families can work together to compose their prayers.

- Begin with an opening prayer and then ask people to offer their prayers of thanksgiving. Respond to each prayer of thanksgiving with: “We thank you, God” or “We are grateful for your goodness.”
- Close by praying Psalm 92:1-4 or other Psalm of thanksgiving.
- Discuss how you can integrate Thanksgiving Prayer into your prayer life.

At Home: The handout, *Prayers of Thanksgiving @ Home*, has a number of activities that you can use in a session or send home with people.

Activity 7. Lectio Divina: Prayerful Bible Reflection

Use the handout, *Lectio Divina*, to guide participants through an experience of Lectio Divina. Select an appropriate passage from the Bible for the experience.

Part 2. Developing a Plan for Living the Practice

1. Reflecting on the Prayer Experiences

Reflect on your experience of the prayer activities using the questions below.

- Which prayer styles did you like best? Why?
- Which ones did you like least? Why?
- How did you feel God’s presence through these prayer experiences?
- Which prayer styles do you (or your household) want to start using in your prayer life?

Share your reflections on the questions with the group. Remind people that this is a storytelling experience so be sure to give each person/family time to share their story without interruptions or discussion.

3. Developing a Prayer Plan (Living Well pages 10.8—10.10)

Take several minutes to plan for how you are going to strengthen your practice of Praying. Review the variety of prayer styles that can be part of your prayer life and create your own prayer plan.

1. Prayer Styles

Which prayer styles do you want to include in your prayer plan?

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| • One-Minute Prayer | • Prayers of Praise |
| • Five-Minute Prayer | • Prayers of Thanksgiving |
| • Contemplative Prayer | • Lectio Divina |
| • Scriptural Prayer | • Spontaneous Prayer |
| • Intercessory Prayer | |

2. Prayer Time

When will you make time for prayer in your day or week (upon rising, before bedtime, meal time—breakfast or dinner, etc.)?

3. Prayer Place

Where will you pray (at the table, in the car, outdoors, quiet room in the house, etc.)?

After everyone has created their prayer plans, share ideas from you plan with the group.

Part 5. Praying: Prayer for the Practice

Conclude in prayer using the prayers in the “Praying” chapter on page 10.16 in *Living Well*.

Prayer in My Life

*Complete this reflection as an individual, focusing on your personal prayer life,
or as a whole family, focusing on family prayer.*

1. How is your prayer life today?

- When do you pray?

- Where do you pray?

- What do you do during your prayer time: read the Bible, contemplate, listen to music, be silent, recite traditional prayers, etc.?

- What do you pray for or pray about?

2. How has your prayer life changed or grown or evolved over the course of your life? What was your prayer life like when you were a child? a teenager? a young adult? a parent? a midlife adult? a grandparent? an older adult? (Answer as many as apply to you.)

3. Which prayer traditions have been helpful to you?

4. What new ways of praying have you tried? Have they been helpful?

5. When were the prayer times when you felt closest to God? Why?

6. Would you say that prayer is an integral part of your everyday life today?

Scripture Meditation

1. Introduce the Scripture Meditation activity using the following information (feel free to put this in your own words): *Christians believe that the Bible is the living Word of God. For this Word to speak to us, though, we must read and reflect on it. We must hear what the Lord is saying to us through the particular Scripture reading. Meditation uses the mind and the heart to help us hear the word of the Lord. It engages the faculties of thinking and imagination (our minds), the love we have for God (our hearts), and also the resolutions we make to live better Christian lives (our "hands and feet").*

St. Ignatius of Loyola taught an approach to mediating on the Scriptures. He deeply believed in the value of fully engaging our imaginations in our reading and reflecting on the meaning to be found in the Bible. This is the practice Ignatius called "Application of the Senses." The pray-er "applies" each of his or her senses to the reading, using imagination to "hear" the words and sounds of the scene, to "see" the sights, to "smell" the smells, to "taste" the food, dust, and drink, and to "feel" textures, dirt, skin, etc.

2. **Select a Scripture passage.** Choose a Scripture passage that is conducive to meditation. Examples:

- The Young Jesus (Luke 2:41-50)
- Temptation in the Desert (Matthew 4:1-11)
- Calling of the First Disciples (Luke 5:1-11)
- Calming of the Storm (Mark 4:35-41)
- The Woman in Simon's House (Luke 7:36-50)
- Jesus Instructs the Disciples (Mark 6:7-13)
- The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7)
- Miracle of Cana (John 2:1-12)
- "Who Do People Say I Am?" (Matthew 16:13-17)
- Curing of the Blind Man of Jericho (Luke 18:35-43)
- The Miracle of the Loaves (John 6:1-13)
- Woman Caught in Adultery (John 8:1-11)
- Jesus and Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10)
- The Woman at the Well (John 4:5-42)
- The Man Born Blind (John 9:1-41)
- Raising of Lazarus (John 11:1-44)
- The Rich Young Man (Matthew 19:16-22)
- Driving Out the Money Changers (Mark 11:15-17)
- Washing the Apostles' Feet (John 13:1-20)
- The Mount of Olives (Luke 22:39-46)
- The Crucifixion (Luke 23:33-49)
- The Disciples on the Way to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35)

3. **Settle down.** Take a few minutes to help everyone settle down in the place of prayer. Encourage them to sit with their spine straight, feet on the floor, knees slightly apart, hands on your lap, eyes closed. Ask them to breathe deeply and slowly; to be aware of the sounds around them; to quiet themselves and be still. Play some quiet instrumental music to set a prayerful environment.
4. **Pray to the Holy Spirit.** Remind the group that they are in God's presence. Ask them to feel the warmth and the love. As they slowly inhale and exhale, ask the Holy Spirit to help them pray and to hear what the Lord is saying to them.

5. **Read the Scripture passage slowly and meditatively.**

6. **Meditate on the Scripture passage.**

- **Observe.** Ask everyone to step into the story and become a part of it. Imagine yourself as one of the disciples traveling with Jesus. What is happening? What kind of day is it? Who is with Jesus? What is Jesus doing? What does he say? What is the crowd or individual saying or doing?

Depending on the passage or story selected, ask everyone to imagine themselves as the person who encounters Jesus. Why do you approach Jesus? What does Jesus say or do to you? What happens to you? What are your feelings? What do you do after your encounter with Jesus? etc. Invite them to write their observations in a journal or on paper.

- **Reflect.** Invite everyone to reflect on the meaning of the passage or story. What does this story mean? What is Jesus saying to us? What is his challenge to us? What is the Gospel author stressing in this story? What strikes you as the main point? etc. Invite them to write their reflections in a journal or on paper.

- ▶ **Listen.** Invite everyone to apply the story or passage to their lives. What word is being spoken to you in this Bible passage? Are you willing to listen to Jesus' answer? Prayerfully ask, "What, Lord, are you saying to me in this reading?" Invite them to write their response to the question in a journal or on paper.

7. **Make a resolution.** Now invite everyone to resolve to do something about the insights they have gained. Whatever the resolution, ask them to thank the Lord for the moments he spent with them and for any insights they received. Invite them to write their resolution in a journal or on paper.

8. **Reflect together on the experience.** Invite everyone to share their feelings and reflections on the meditation experience.

Example: Luke 17:11-19

1. Settle down.

Take a few minutes to help everyone settle down in the place of prayer. Encourage them to sit with their spine straight, feet on the floor, knees slightly apart, hands on your lap, eyes closed. Ask them to breathe deeply and slowly; to be aware of the sounds around them; to quiet themselves and be still. Play some quiet instrumental music to set a prayerful environment.

2. Pray to the Holy Spirit.

Remind the group that they are in God's presence. Ask them to feel the warmth and the love. As they slowly inhale and exhale, ask the Holy Spirit to help them pray and to hear what the Lord is saying to them.

3. Read the Scripture passage slowly and meditatively.

4. Meditate on the Scripture passage.

- **Observe.** Step into the story and become a part of it. What is happening? What kind of day is it? Hot? What is the road like? Dusty? Who is with Jesus? Imagine yourself as one of the disciples traveling with Jesus. You can't wait to get to town to get a drink of water. See the diseased men, the sores on their arms and faces. They cover their faces. Perhaps they ring a bell to warn travelers away. Then, suddenly, you hear them cry out to Jesus. He looks at them. What is his reaction? Does he approach them? What is your reaction? Do you want your friend and teacher Jesus to shy away from them? Are you afraid he will catch their disease? Are you afraid that you will? Listen to his words. What do they mean? Do you think the men will be cured? What is their reaction? How are the other disciples reacting?

Now imagine that you are one of the sick persons. You walk away to go to the priests when suddenly you are cured. What do you do? Do you come back and thank Jesus? If you don't, what do you do? Why?

Now focus on the Samaritan. He grabs Jesus' feet. He cries with joy. He thanks Jesus and praises him. Listen to Jesus' words. Does he sound disappointed with others who were also cured? What does he mean when he says, "Your faith has saved you"?

Invite them to write their observations in a journal or on paper.

- **Reflect.** What does this story mean? Is it about physical sickness or spiritual sickness? Does it focus on the mercy of Jesus, his compassion for the rejected ones? Is it a call to faith? Is it about gratitude? courage? obedience to the word of the Master? What is Luke stressing in this story? What strikes you as the main point? Invite everyone to write their reflections in a journal or on paper.
- **Listen.** What word is being spoken to you in this Bible passage? Do you have a spiritual sickness eating away at you that Jesus wants to touch and cure? Do you have the courage to approach Jesus to ask for his help and salvation? Are you willing to listen to his answer? What you need for the cure? Are you weak in faith? Do you need Jesus to strengthen your faith? Or perhaps he is telling you to say thank you for all that you have been given. Will you be like the Samaritan who came back to offer thanks? Or are you like the ones who take their healing for

granted? Prayerfully ask, "What, Lord, are you saying to me in this reading?" Invite everyone to write their response to the question in a journal or on paper.

5. Make a resolution.

Now invite everyone to resolve to do something about the insights they have gained. Perhaps they will acknowledge that they are a sinner who needs to approach the Lord and ask for his forgiveness. Perhaps they will resolve to thank God for their good health. Perhaps they will think of a person who has done something for them, and will now take an opportunity to make some gesture of thanks to this person. Whatever their resolution, invite the young people to thank the Lord for the moments he spent with them and for any insights they received. Invite them to write their resolution in a journal or on paper.

6. Reflect together on the experience.

Invite the participants to share their feelings and reflections on the meditation experience.

Additional Scripture Example: John 8:1-11

Another good passage to use is: **John 8:1-11—The Woman Caught in Adultery**. Call the participants to imagine details such as the dust in the wind, the feeling of dirt under fingernails (when Jesus bends over to draw in the sand), the look on the faces of the men who drag her forward, and the "thud, thud" of the rocks hitting the ground.

Intercessory Prayer

If you ask me for anything in my name, I will do it. (John 14:14)

Advance Preparation

On a very large sheet of paper (two newsprint or poster board sheets attached) draw four concentric circles. Be sure the innermost circle has plenty of room inside. Label the innermost circle: family; the second circle: friends; the third: local community; and the fourth: world.

Prayer Activity

1. Use the following introduction to set the context for the prayer activity (use your own words): *One of the time honored kinds of prayer is that of petition or asking God for what we and others need. Intercessory prayer challenges us to recall our dependence on God. We cannot get along without God. We believe that God knows our needs even before we ask. Yet, we offer prayers of petition because it helps us remember that we need God above all. When we offer prayers of petition, we do so with a spirit of openness, trusting that God will hear and answer our prayers in the way that is best. Sometimes it seems like the answer never comes or it comes in ways that we do not anticipate. However, we trust in the promise of Jesus, "ask and it will be done for you."*
2. Prayerfully read Matthew 7:7-11 or Luke 11:9-13.
3. Give each person four post-it notes (2x3 size)—one for each of the four circles. Make available additional post-it notes if needed. Invite each person in silence to write at least one prayer for the needs or concerns of people in each of the four circles. Play some quiet instrumental music in the background while participants write their prayers.
 - Write a prayer for the needs or concerns of your family that you want to remember.
 - Write a prayer for a friend or group of friends that you want to remember.
 - Write a prayer for the needs and concerns of your local community that you want to remember.
 - Write a prayer for the needs and concerns of people in our world.
4. As they complete their prayers, ask the participants to attach their prayers to the appropriate circle. Then invite the participants to share one (or two) of their prayer petitions. After each prayer petition, ask the group to respond, "Lord, hear us."
5. Close by inviting the participants to share feelings or thoughts about the prayer experience

Intercessory Prayer @ Home

One of the time honored kinds of prayer is that of petition or asking God for what we and others need. Prayers of petition challenge us to recall our dependence on God. We cannot get along without God. We believe that God knows our needs even before we ask. Yet, we offer prayers of petition because it helps us remember that we need God above all. When we offer prayers of petition we do so with a spirit of openness, trusting that God will hear and answer our prayers in the way that is best. Sometimes it seems like the answer never comes or in ways that we do not anticipate. However, we trust in the promise of Jesus, "ask and it will be done for you."

Activity 1

When you are gathered for a meal or in the car, talk about the times when you pray prayers of petition. What are some of the needs and concerns you have brought to God's attention? Have your prayers been answered? Were they answered in the way you expected them to be? If they were not answered, did you give up asking? How has your faith been challenged or strengthened by this kind of prayer?

Activity 2

On a large sheet of paper draw four concentric circles. In the innermost circle write some of the needs and concerns of the family/household members that you want to remember in prayer. In the next circle write some of the needs and concerns of your local parish, neighborhood or community that you want to remember in prayer. In the next circle write some of the needs and concerns of our nation, and in the most outer circle write some of the needs and concerns of our world. Post the paper some place where you can be reminded of the things you are asking of God.

Activity 3

When you gather for a meal or other event, pause to pray for one of the needs and concerns you have identified in each of the four categories of Activity 2 above. You might have each member identify one and other members respond, "Lord, hear us" to each petition. Or, set aside a different day to pray for the needs and concerns listed in each of the circles so that one day is dedicated to the concerns of the family/household; another day for parish, neighborhood, community; another for nation; another for world.

Prayers of Praise

Advance Preparation

Everyone will need a Bible or a copy of Psalm 103.

Prayer Activity

1. Introduce this prayer experience by saying: *Many of us pray when we want to ask God for something either for ourselves or someone else. Sometimes it is difficult to just give compliments to God. Prayers of praise give praise to God for being good, for the mystery and majesty of God. Prayers of praise can be a challenge for us to think about God in terms of someone who deserves our praise. It forces us to not take God for granted. Prayers of praise reflect our own attitude and ability to recognize others for their goodness, especially our ability to just praise God for being God.*
2. Explain to the group that they will be using Psalm 103 as a Prayer of Praise. Psalm 103 is one of those priceless treasures that becomes more precious as we spend time with it in reflection and contemplation. The Psalm has four main parts:
 - Personal blessings received from God (1-5)
 - National blessings received from God (6-14)
 - A reminder of our human frailty and utter dependence upon God (15-18)
 - A declaration that all creation praises God (19-22)
3. Pray the Psalm with the group. (You may want to reproduce the Psalm so that everyone can prayer it together. You can also organize the participants into two groups. Ask group one to read verses 1-5 and 15-18; group two reads verses 6-14 and 19-22.)
4. Ask the participants to use Psalm 103 to write their own psalm of praise to God. Invite them to use the four-fold structure of Psalm 103 in their own prayer. Remind them that prayers of praise give praise to God for being good, for the mystery and majesty of God. Prayers of praise can be a challenge for us to think about God in terms of someone who deserves our praise. It forces us to not take God for granted. Prayers of praise reflect our own attitude and ability to recognize others for their goodness, especially our ability to just praise God for being God.

Give them several minutes to compose their prayer.
5. After the individuals have composed their prayer of praise to God, ask them to take a few moments to reflect (and perhaps talk) about how it felt to offer God praise.
6. Gather in a circle around a lighted candle. Dim the lights. Invite the participants to share their psalms of praise.

Prayers of Praise @ Home

Many of us pray when we want to ask God for something either for ourselves or someone else. Sometimes it is difficult to just give compliments to God. Prayers of praise give praise to God for being good, for the mystery and majesty of God. Prayers of praise can be a challenge for us to think about God in terms of someone who deserves our praise. It forces us to not take God for granted. Prayers of praise reflect our own attitude and ability to recognize others for their goodness, especially our ability to just praise God for being God.

Activity 1

Try for a week to offer only prayers of praise when you gather for meals or other events. Use phrases such as: "God, you are good and wonderful. We praise you." "God, we praise you for the mystery that is you." "God, we believe that you are holy and awesome." "We praise you for your majesty, O God." Be creative and make up some of your own.

Activity 2

As you practice giving praise to God also practice giving praise to each other. Look for opportunities to compliment one another for qualities that are unique to each person as well as for what they do. Be sincere. When you receive a compliment, thank the person giving it.

Activity 3

After trying a time for giving praise to God and each other, take time to talk about how it felt. Was it hard to not ask God for something when you prayed? How did it feel to receive compliments from others? Were you embarrassed? Were you able to receive a compliment graciously? Were you able to offer compliments to others with sincere affection? If not, why was it hard?

Activity 4

As a family or household, write a prayer of praise that you could use from time to time when you are gathered for a meal or other event. It could be in the form of a litany with a response such as those suggested in Activity One above. It could be in the form of a poem, a song, or just a brief paragraph. Be creative. If you have lots of ideas, write more than one and alternate the use of them.

Prayers of Thanksgiving @ Home

Thanksgiving is not the only time of the year that we can take time to be grateful to God for the many gifts God shares with us. Prayers of thanksgiving are one of the four types of prayers. Sometimes it is good for us to reflect on the many good things that are ours, that we enjoy and sometimes take for granted and give thanks to God for all that we have and are. It can be a challenge to thank God for what we need even before we have it, trusting that God will provide for our needs in ways that are best.

Activity 1

Gather some pencils, pens, crayons or markers; some pieces of paper about 3 ½ X 5; and a basket or bowl, and invite the family or household to come together. After a brief introduction (you can use the one above) invite them to think about the gifts they have for which they could give thanks to God. They can then use the paper to write or draw a symbol, one per paper, of the things that come to mind. The papers can be collected in the basket or bowl so that there is a visible sign that our “cup runs over” because of the goodness of God. The basket or bowl could be placed in a prominent place.

Activity 2

When the family or household gathers for a meal, one or more of the papers could be drawn and shared as part of the thanksgiving prayer before or after the meal.

Activity 3

The family or household could gather for a special prayer of thanksgiving. The papers created in Activity One could be the source for a litany of thanksgiving. To each item, the rest of the family could respond with an appropriate phrase such as, “we thank you, God” or “we are grateful for your goodness.”

Activity 4

When the family or household is in the car together, offer thanks to God for the things that you see as you drive. You could express gratitude for nature, things, or other people. For example, when you pass a hospital, you could be grateful for access to such a facility, for the doctors, nurses, and others who care for the sick, etc.

Lectio Divina: Prayerful Bible Reflection

Use Lectio Divina to guide people in a prayer reflection on a Biblical story or text and in imagining how they will live the story or text in their daily life.

Step 1. Lectio (Reading)

Read the Bible passage to the group. Read it a second time. Invite people to let the words really sink in deeply. Ask them to open their minds and hearts to the meaning of the words; and let the passage speak to them.

Step 2. Meditatio (Meditation)

Invite people to reflect on the Bible passage. Ask questions such as the following:

- What does this passage say to me?
- Who am I in this Scripture?
- What do I see and hear?
- What do I think?
- Which character do I most relate to?
- What do I need to learn from this passage?

Step 3. Oratio (Prayer)

Move into the heart of the matter. Consider the following questions to help people respond to God.

- What do you want to communicate to God?
- What do you most want in your relationship with God?
- What emotions do you want to express to God? joy? fear? gratitude? grief?

Step 4. Contemplatio (Contemplation)

Provide quiet time for people to rest in the presence of God. Play some quiet instrumental music.

Step 5. Action (Action)

Conclude by inviting people to decide on a course of action and make a commitment to follow through with their plan.

- How is God challenging me?
- Is there a good thing that God is calling me to do?:
- Is there a harmful thing that God wants me to stop doing?
- What is the next step I need to take?

Spontaneous Prayer @ Home

There are many ways to pray. Sometimes we use memorized prayers. Prayers that we hold in common and that are known to all help us to pray together as a community of faith. Sometimes the memorized prayers do not quite say what is in our heart. When this occurs, we need to let the Spirit lead us in prayer, to let the prayer flow out of our deepest self. It is not hard to pray spontaneously. However, we might be shy about doing it in public, even with those we know and love. In an atmosphere of trust and respect we can pray spontaneously. Sometimes we need to encourage one another in our prayer life, to affirm the attempts and efforts of prayer. Praying takes practice.

Activity 1

Recall that there are four kinds of prayer: prayers of petition, praise, thanksgiving and contrition. Choose one of the kinds and invite family members to write a prayer that reflects that kind of prayer. Take turns sharing what has been written.

Activity 2

Recall the four kinds of prayer (see Activity One). Invite members to write a prayer that reflects one of them. Take turns sharing what has been written. Also, post one each day on the refrigerator.

Activity 3

When the family gathers for a meal, event or a journey in the car, invite everyone to pause for a moment of quiet to consider what you are about to do. Ask if someone would like to offer a spontaneous prayer for the occasion.

Activity 4

Practice brief spontaneous expressions of faith throughout the day. For example: At the sight of a beautiful sunrise or sunset you might offer a spontaneous prayer of praise or thanks to God for the gift of eyesight that enables you to behold such beauty. When a family member has a special need or concern, you might offer a spontaneous prayer of petition asking for God's grace at this time. When a loved one comes or goes from the home, you might offer a spontaneous blessing. Simply make a sign of the cross on his or her forehead, lay your hands on his or her head or shoulders, give a hug and ask God to bless his or her coming or going.

Online Prayer Resources

Upper Room

- Daily Reflections: www.upperroom.org/DAILY
- Daily Devotional: www.upperroom.org/devotional
- Prayer Resources: www.upperroom.org/methodx/thelife

Taize

- Daily Bible readings and meditation: www.taize.fr/en_article1000.html
- Prayer for Each Day: www.taize.fr/en_article5806.html

Sacred Space

- Daily Prayer Online: [/www.sacredspace.ie/](http://www.sacredspace.ie/)

Daily Lectionary Readings

- Online: www.usccb.org/nab/today.shtml
- Podcast: www.usccb.org/nab/nabpodcast.shtml
- iTunes: "Daily readings from the New American Bible"

Pray-As-You-Go: Daily Prayer for Your MP3 Player

- www.pray-as-you-go.org

Creighton University

- Daily Bible Reading and Reflections: www.creighton.edu/CollaborativeMinistry/daily

Resources for Developing the Christian Practice of Praying

A Beginner's Guide to Prayer. Richard J. Beckmen. Minneapolis: Augsburg-Fortress, 1994.

Many of us would like to enrich our spiritual journey through prayer disciplines. This book looks at the rhythms of the prayer life, the sense of God's absence and presence, the Holy Spirit and prayer, the language we use, and the Lord's Prayer. Within this practical, yet comprehensive book, are woven Jesus' practice and teaching about prayer, other biblical examples, and experiences of people today.

The Blessing Candles: 58 Simple Mealtimes Prayer-Celebrations. Gaynell Bordes Cronin and Jack Rathschmidt. Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 2000.

Each of the 58 prayer-celebrations include a gathering prayer, the lighting of two candles, a reading and a prayerful response to it, reflection questions and a sending prayer. These mealtime rituals are organized into several categories: Blessings for Everyday, Blessings for Special Needs, Blessings for Special Occasions, and Blessings for the Year.

Creating a Life with God: The Call of Ancient Prayer Practices. Daniel Wolpert. Nashville: Upper Room Books, 2003.

"This book is truly about life with God: a life in which the awareness and consciousness of God sweep us off our feet the way a lover would. It is about taking on the mind of Christ, a process that is a journey, the journey of prayer." So begins Wolpert's invitation to fully experience the lifeline God offers us in prayer. *Creating a Life with God* goes beyond the rote prayers that so many of us have experienced and found wanting. In fact, Wolpert admits that his own frustration with the formula prayers and his unsettled longing immediately after college led to his search for a different kind of prayer, one that's "a deep conversation with God beginning with communion and leading to transformation." Prayer illuminates our minds, enabling the love of God to permeate all that we do. The purpose of this book is to nourish a deeper, more satisfying prayer life. Wolpert explains 12 prayer practices and introduces you to historical figures who best illuminate each practice. You'll discover new ways to pray through experiencing solitude and silence, using your mind and imagination, using your body and creativity, and connecting with nature and community. You'll discover how classical approaches to God can deepen your prayer life today. An appendix offers step-by-step instructions for practicing the Jesus Prayer and the prayer of examen, for walking the labyrinth, and more. *Creating a Life with God* is suitable for both individual and small group study.

Leading a Life with God: The Practice of Spiritual Leadership. Daniel Wolpert. Daniel Wolpert. Nashville: Upper Room Books, 2003.

"A group of people who pray together can change the world." A community's deepening prayer life depends on an effective spiritual leader. Many are willing to assume this role, but some aspiring guides have trouble making the transition from an individual practice to leading a group. Wolpert demonstrates how personal devotion can evolve into leadership practice. Bestselling spiritual leadership books "provide insights from secular leadership disciplines and then add a paragraph about how these disciplines should be 'led by the Spirit,'" writes Wolpert. "I have yet to find a resource describing in depth how to be led by the spirit. Such is the purpose of this volume." *Leading a Life with God* grew out of Wolpert's previous book, *Creating a Life with God*, which focuses on different prayer practices and how individuals can integrate them into their personal devotions. Like his previous title, *Leading a Life with God* focuses on forms of prayer that offer ways to discern God's calling and introduces you to historical figures

who best illuminate each practice. These include: the Jesus Prayer, the examen, contemplative prayer, praying the Bible, praying among nature, creativity as prayer. Make prayer an effective component of your congregation's spiritual life and ministry. As Wolpert concludes, "The spiritual life is way too precious to keep to ourselves but rather is a banquet to be shared." *Leading a Life with God* contains detailed appendix material, including "A Step-by-Step Guide to the Prayer Practices" and "A Retreat Model."

Paths to Prayer: Finding Your Own Way to the Presence of God. Patricia D. Brown. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2003.

With step-by-step instructions for over forty ways to pray, this valuable guide contains a wealth of timeless spiritual prayer practices that Christians have used over the last 2000 years from cultures around the world. Among the prayer practices you'll encounter in this book are the daily office, the prayer shawl, praying with icons, centering prayer, fasting, prayer beads, walking a labyrinth, pilgrimage, anointing for healing, and praying the scriptures. *Paths to Prayer* offers a whole-person approach to prayer that takes into account each person's individuality and doesn't assume we all relate to God in the same way. A prayer styles self-assessment will help you reflect on your life, your preferences, and your unique way of interacting with the world. Chapters include: An Invitation to Prayer, Foundations of Prayer: One Size Doesn't Fit All, How Do You Pray? Finding Your Prayer Type, Searching Prayers, Experiential Prayers, Relational Prayers, and Innovative Prayers.

Prayer. Joyce Rupp. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2007.

Joyce Rupp writes, "My goal for this book is that it encourage each reader in his or her relationship with God, that it help each one pray in whatever way seems most suitable... I hope the chapters inspire you to nurture your interior realm each day and that you will grow in cherishing your life with the Holy One. May you be led forth to be a blessing of compassion in a world crying out for loving kindness and courageous justice." Chapters include: Entering into a Relationship, The Tidal Patterns of Prayer, Keeping the Vigil of Mystery, Turning Prayer Inside Out, and A Kernel of Corn and a Little Teapot.

Prayer: Find the Heart's True Home. Richard J. Foster. San Francisco: Harper/San Francisco, 1992.

Best-selling author Richard J. Foster offers a warm, compelling, and sensitive primer on prayer, helping us to understand, experience, and practice it in its many forms—from the simple prayer of beginning again to unceasing prayer. He clarifies the prayer process, answers common misconceptions, and shows the way into prayers of contemplation, healing, blessing, forgiveness, and rest. Coming to prayer is like coming home, Foster says. "Nothing feels more right, more like what we are created to be and to do. Yet at the same time we are confronted with great mysteries. Who hasn't struggled with the puzzle of unanswered prayer? Who hasn't wondered how a finite person can commune with the infinite Creator of the universe? Who hasn't questioned whether prayer isn't merely psychological manipulation after all? We do our best, of course, to answer these knotty questions but when all is said and done, there is a sense in which these mysteries remain unanswered and unanswerable . . . At such times we must learn to become comfortable with the mystery." Foster shows how prayer can move us inward into personal transformation, upward toward intimacy with God, and outward to minister to others. He leads us beyond questions to a deeper understanding and practice of prayer, bringing us closer to God, to ourselves, and to our community.

Praying in Color: Drawing a New Path to God. Sybil MacBeth. Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2009.

Need help communicating with God? Maybe you hunger to know God better. Maybe you love color. Maybe you are a visual or kinesthetic learner, a distractable or impatient soul, or a word-weary pray-er. Perhaps you struggle with a short attention span, a restless body, or a tendency

to live in your head. This new prayer form can take as little or as much time as you have or want to commit, from 15 minutes to a weekend retreat." A new prayer form gives God an invitation and a new door to penetrate the locked cells of our hearts and minds," explains Sybil MacBeth. "For many of us, using only words to pray reduces God by the limits of our finite words." The book introduces the active, visual prayer practice the author calls "praying in color." The book provides a little bit of memoir and theology and a lot of how-to. Step-by-step instructions in Chapter 3 introduce "praying in color" as a way to do intercessory prayer. Additional chapters explain how the practice can be applied to learning Scripture, keeping Advent and Lent, practicing lectio divina, and praying in other ways.

Sacred Rhythm: Arranging Our Lives for Spiritual Transformation. Ruth Haley Barton. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2006.

Do you long for a deep, fundamental change in your life with God? Do you desire a greater intimacy with God? Do you wonder how you might truly live your life as God created you to live it? Spiritual disciplines are activities that open us to God's transforming love and the changes that only God can bring about in our lives. Picking up on the monastic tradition of creating a "rule of life" that allows for regular space for the practice of the spiritual disciplines, *Sacred Rhythms* takes you more deeply into understanding seven key disciplines along with practical ideas for weaving them into everyday life. Each chapter includes exercises to help you begin the practices—individually and in a group context. The spiritual disciplines include: Solitude, Scripture, Prayer, Honoring the Body, Self-Examination, Discernment, and Sabbath. The final chapter, A Rule of Life, puts it all together in a way that will help you arrange your life for spiritual transformation.

Sacred Chaos: Spiritual Disciplines for the Life You Have. Tricia McCary Rhodes. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2008.

Life is often chaotic. And no matter how hard you try to find space, to slow down, the chaos always seems to win. Tricia Rhodes's life is chaotic too. But in the midst of a time of household turmoil, Tricia learned to see God and communicate with him in whole new ways—not on a spiritual retreat, but right in the midst of the chaos of life. She offers us here a fresh view of connecting to God, one that focuses on quality time and frees us from the rigidity of a devotional life that may feel stifled, grow stagnant or bring about guilt when we can't keep up. These pages will help awaken you to the reality of God's presence in your life—just as it is—providing new ways to pray, to listen to God, to view others the way God sees them, to be guided by God. Ideas at the end of each chapter and suggestions for prayer experiments give practical suggestions for connecting with God and noticing his work throughout each day. God is not afraid of chaos. If a chaotic life has you running, let Tricia's words offered here help you run to God in the midst of it and discover the ways he can turn even chaos into something sacred.

The Sacred Way: Spiritual Practices for Everyday Life. Tony Jones. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005.

This book mines the rich history of the church for spiritual disciplines that have been largely forgotten in the practice of Christianity. After introductory material that considers the human longing for spirituality and setting a working definition of the term ("To be enlivened by God's Spirit is the goal of Christian spirituality."), there is a historical and theological exploration of sixteen different ancient practices. How can ancient approaches to faith help my relationship with God today? In *The Sacred Way*, Tony Jones mines the rich history of 16 spiritual disciplines that have flourished throughout the ages and offers practical tips for implementing them in your daily life. Find encouragement and challenge through time-tested disciplines such as: silence and solitude, sacred reading, the Jesus prayer, centering prayer, meditation, the Ignatian

Examen, icons, spiritual direction, the daily office, the labyrinth, stations of the cross, pilgrimage, fasting, sign of the cross and other bodily prayers, Sabbath, and service.

Soul Feast: An Invitation to the Christian Spiritual Life. Marjorie Thompson. Westminster/John Knox Press, 2005 (new edition).

Marjorie Thompson provides guidance and help to those who wish to explore the riches of Christian spirituality. She offers a framework for understanding the spiritual disciplines, as well as instruction for developing and nurturing those practices. Thompson's discussions on topics such as prayer, spiritual reading, worship, fasting, self-examination, hospitality, and develop a rule of life are clear, practical, and inspirational. The book has been redesigned to appeal to contemporary spiritual-seekers and repackaged for easier use in study and reflection.

Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices that Transform Us. Adele Ahlberg Calhoun. Downers Grove, IL: IVP Books, 2005.

Fasting. Solitude. Contemplative prayer. Lectio divina. Have you heard about these practices and wanted to try them? Have you wandered from one practice to another not sure quite what to do? Are you overwhelmed by all the to-dos of your spiritual life? We have good desires—for a more intimate prayer life, perhaps, or deeper insight from God's Word—but we don't know how to get there. So we give up our pursuit, tired from wandering aimlessly, and end up feeling guilty and more distant from God instead of closer. In the *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook* Adele Calhoun gives us directions for our journey toward intimacy with Christ. While the word discipline may make us want to run and hide, the author shows how desires and discipline work together to lead us to the transformation we're longing for—the transformation only Christ can bring. Instead of just giving information about spiritual disciplines, this *Handbook* is full of practical, accessible guidance that helps you actually do them.

When in Doubt, Sing: Prayer in Daily Life. Jane Redmont. Notre Dame, IN: Sorin Books, 2008.

In this book, Jane Redmont will change the way you think about prayer. Without rules, with rigid doctrine, this book will enhance your prayer life—whether you pray daily, have stopped praying, have just begun praying, or have never prayed at all. Drawing on her own prayer life as well as the prayer experiences of friends and strangers, Jane Redmont offers a practical compilation of prayer types sure to enliven any reader's spiritual practice. This book is both a rich, practical compendium of prayer types (such as centering prayer, praying with icons, and lectio divina) and a warmly personal guide to enlivening your spiritual life. Twenty-seven chapters provide a diversity of prayer forms and styles. She emphasizes that what is effective and meaningful for one person might not be so for another. She implores you to forget what you've learned if it no longer works for you, but to remember the traditions and practices that nourish and sustain you.

For Children and Families

Amen! Prayers for Families with Children. Kathleen Finley. Liguori, MO: Liguori Press, 2005.

This book provides a variety of short family prayers that can be easily woven into family life and prayed at mealtime. The book includes: Daily Prayers, Seasonal Prayers, and Special Occasion Prayers.

A Parent's Guide to Prayer. Kathy Hendricks. New London, CT: Twenty-Third Publications, 2004.

The focus of this books is threefold: 1) to help parents deepen their own understanding, knowledge, and experience of prayer; 2) to provide a guide for teaching children how to pray as they go through the various stages of life; and 3) to offer ideas, resources, and suggestions for praying together as a family.

At Home with God: Family Devotions for the School Year. Anne Broyles, Marilyn Brown Oden, Elizabeth Lynd Escamilla, Paul Lynd Escamilla. Nashville: Upper Room Books, 2002.

Many of today's families struggle in nurturing their children in the Christian faith beyond attending church services. Finding time at home to talk together about faith can be challenging when so much else demands attention. *At Home with God* gives families with school-age children (ages 6 to 11) solid spiritual help. Designed to bring a family together in worship at home for 10 to 15 minutes each day, the devotions require little to no advance preparation and speak to families large and small. You'll find pages for the days from September through May: daily devotions based on specific scriptures, prayers and litanies to say and learn together, stories and activities to share, songs to sing with familiar melodies, colorful illustrations and symbols to direct young readers, and articles to help adult family members prepare.

Bless This House: Prayers for Families and Children. Gregory Wolfe, Suzanne M. Wolfe. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004.

An excellent foundation for all families desiring to begin, renew, or deepen their spiritual journey together, *Bless This House* features dozens of prayers appropriate for both everyday and special events, including mealtimes, bedtime, holidays, and religious celebrations, as well as prayers for siblings, pets, and the ill or dying. With wisdom and practical advice, parents Gregory and Suzanne Wolfe provide helpful suggestions for introducing the concept of prayer to young minds and dealing with potential obstacles like boredom or short attention spans. Teaching our children to pray opens the door for their spiritual development, but just as importantly, it becomes a path to spiritual renewal for parents as well. Chapters include: *The Earthy Spirituality of Family Life*, *How and Why We Pray*, *The Soul in Paraphrase: Stages in Your Child's Prayer Life (and Yours)*, *Praying Together as a Family: A How-To Guide*, and *The Prayers* (dozens of prayers to pray alone or with your family).

Children and Prayer: A Shared Pilgrimage. Betty Shannon Cloyd. Nashville: Upper Room Books, 1997.

Have you tiptoed into your child's bedroom to catch a glimpse of him or her in peaceful sleep? Children are truly a gift from God. Yes, even when they're awake and unruly! It's an awesome responsibility to nurture the spiritual life of kids among all the other demands. For parents, teachers and caregivers who wonder just how to do that when their own spirituality may at times feel tenuous, *Children and Prayer* will be a welcome guide. "If we as people of faith value our children, we will recognize that one of our most significant responsibilities is to help them stay in touch with their spiritual selves," writes author and Christian educator, Betty Cloyd. "For children to be able to do this, they need to be allowed time and space to grow in their understanding of God." More than a theoretical exploration of children's spirituality, this is a very practical book for parents who want specific help in developing a life of prayer and spiritual awareness in their homes. Cloyd explains the concepts of teaching faith to children and includes prayers written by them, prayers you can pray with children, interviews and resources for further study.

Friend Jesus: Prayers for Children. Gaynell Bordes Cronin. Cincinnati: St. Anthony Messenger Press, 1999.

Each child, if given a chance, wants to sit quietly and find within his or her own heart a place to welcome God. Prayer is simply being in touch with God. *Friend Jesus* you will find prayers that acknowledge a child's ordinary experiences and moments. There are prayers for your child to say alone, with and for others, and for those they carry in their hearts throughout the day. "Prayers for the Week" invites children to pray together as a family. "Prayers for Me" moves a child into personal prayer, naming places, times and activities where he or she turns to God, in good times and bad. "Prayers for Others" encourages children to recognize their oneness with others. "Prayers for Special Times" celebrates the feasts and seasons of our calendar and remembers who God is and what God has done for us.

Making Time for God: Daily Devotions for Children and Families to Share. Susan R. Garrett and Amy Plantinga Pauw. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2002.

This daybook engages the family in exploring the Bible, while helping children develop a strong pattern of daily devotions and prayer. The authors combine biblical teaching with engaging stories that children can identify with, as well as thoughts for personal application. The book draws from most books of the Bible, and includes both the best-loved Bible verses and the harder-to-understand passages. The 366 entries emphasize the seasons of the church year and correlate to the secular calendar as well.

Praying in Color: Kids Edition. Sybil MacBeth. Brewster, MA: Paraclete Press, 2009.

Now kids can pray in color, too! This first-of-its-kind resource will forever change the way kids pray—and how adults try to teach them to do it. This is a prayer that makes sense to kids. One minute a day will do. Any time of day will work. Drawing with markers or crayons is half the prayer; the other half is carrying the visual memories throughout the day.

Real Kids, Real Faith: Practices for Nurturing Children's Spiritual Lives. Karen Marie Yust. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004.

In a culture that has lost touch with love, compassion, and meaning, how can parents be intentional about building a spiritual foundation for their children's development? In looking to their own upbringing for guidance, parents often feel even more at a loss. They don't want to make the same mistakes their parents did, so they either become too strict or they take a completely hands-off approach. This book offers a refreshing array of resources and provisions to guide and sustain parents and children on their mutual journey. It provides insights and a variety of helpful tips for nurturing children's spiritual and religious formation. Karen Marie Yust challenges the prevailing notion that children are unable to grasp religious concepts and encourages parents and educators to recognize children as capable of genuine faith. Chapters include: Creating a Spiritual World for Children to Inhabit, Telling Stories that Draw Children into a Life of Faith, Helping Children Name God's Presence in their Lives, **Praying with Children**, Supporting Children as They Grow in Spiritual Awareness, and Acting Out Our Spirituality with Children.

Together We Pray: A Prayer Book for Families. J. Bradley Wigger. St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2005.

Pausing to pray together may seem impossible for many families, but doing so can calm the chaos and change everyone's perspective on the day, even if the prayer pause is brief. *Together We Pray* helps families to take that pause, and to do it in the most profound and lasting way—together as a family. The book is organized into three sections: Table Prayers for Mealtime, Devotional Prayers of Joy and Care, and Memory Bedtime Prayers. Each prayer is fashioned around a Psalm verse.

VeggieTales Family Devotional. Cindy Kenney and Doug Peterson. Franklin, TN: Integrity Publishers, 2005. [www.bigidea.com]

The *VeggieTales Family Devotional* contains 52 devotionals organized into seven parts: The Faith Connection, The Communication Connection, The Love Connection, The Trust Connection, The Time Connection, The Joy Connection, and Holiday Lessons. Each devotion includes a Veggie story, a Bible story, discussion questions, guided prayers, family activity, and a "think-link-act" connection to help everyone find a practical way to apply God's messages to their lives.