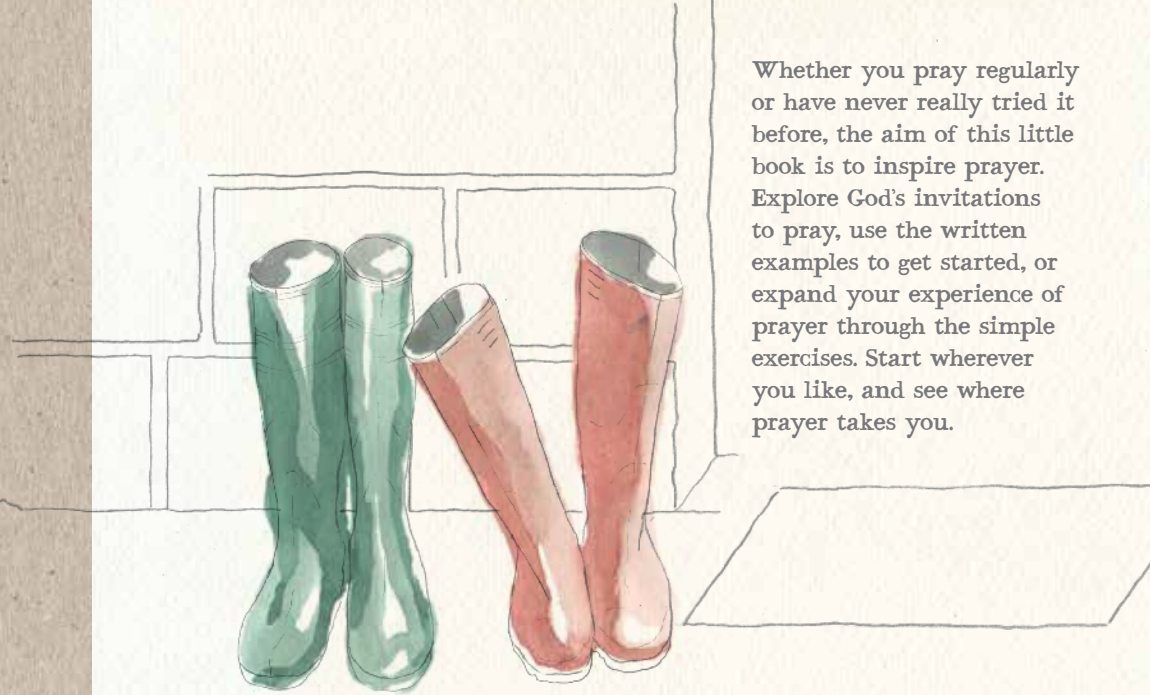


INSPIRING PRAYER

finding space in life to pray

“Grant that I may not pray
with my mouth alone; help
me that I may pray from the
depths of my heart.”

Martin Luther (1483-1546)



Whether you pray regularly
or have never really tried it
before, the aim of this little
book is to inspire prayer.
Explore God's invitations
to pray, use the written
examples to get started, or
expand your experience of
prayer through the simple
exercises. Start wherever
you like, and see where
prayer takes you.

WHAT IS PRAYER?

Prayer is simply responding to God. It's about turning our hearts towards God: bringing us to God, and God to us. It may involve talking or listening, stillness or action. There are no special words to say, and there's no required way to kneel or stand.

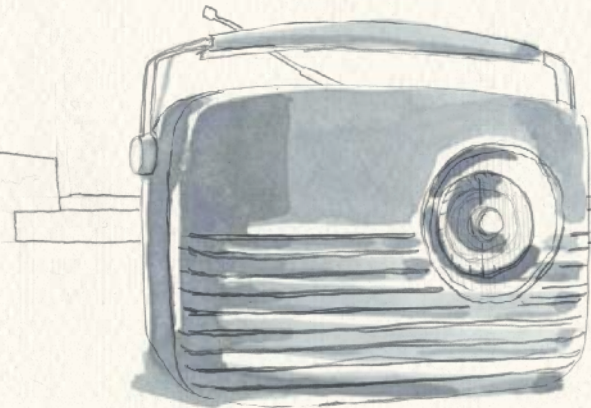
You can pray with others or alone, you can pray in church, walking down the street, in the shower. You can whisper, you can sing, you can shout. Sometimes you don't even need words at all. Anybody can pray, anytime, anywhere. God is always listening.

Take your everyday, ordinary life – your sleeping, eating, going-to-work, and walking-around life – and place it before God as an offering.

ROMANS 12:1

Never stop praying.

1 THESSALONIANS 5:17



COME AND PRAY

Seek the Lord while you can find him.
Call on him now while he is near.

ISAIAH 55:6

“Come to me with your ears wide open.
Listen, and you will find life.”

ISAIAH 55:3

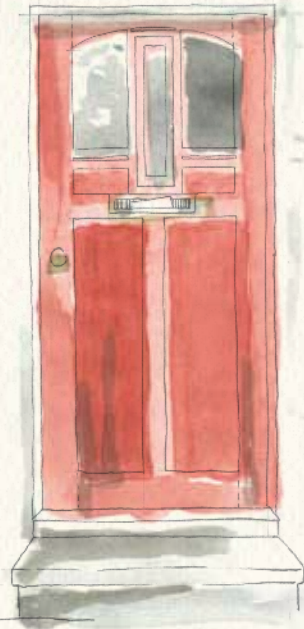
You will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you.
You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.

JEREMIAH 29:12-13

My heart has heard you say, “Come and talk with me.”
And my heart responds, “Lord, I am coming.”

PSALM 27:8





What if I don't know what to say?

In certain ways we are weak, but the Spirit is here to help us. For example, when we don't know what to pray for, the Spirit prays for us in ways that cannot be put into words. All of our thoughts are known to God. He can understand what is in the mind of the Spirit, as the Spirit prays for God's people.

ROMANS 8:26-27

Jesus said: "So I tell you to ask and you will receive, search and you will find, knock and the door will be opened for you. Everyone who asks will receive, everyone who searches will find, and the door will be opened for everyone who knocks."

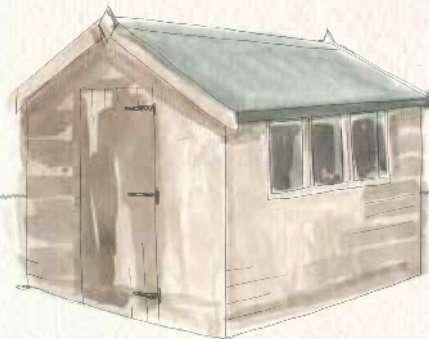
LUKE 11:9-10

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Jesus said: "When you pray, don't be like those show-offs who love to stand up and pray in the meeting places and on the street corners. They do this just to look good. I can assure you that they already have their reward.

When you pray, go into a room alone and close the door. Pray to your Father in private. He knows what is done in private, and he will reward you. When you pray, don't talk on and on as people do who don't know God. They think God likes to hear long prayers. Don't be like them. Your Father knows what you need before you ask. You should pray like this:"

MATTHEW 6:5-9



Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come,
Your will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
And forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,
For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours,
Now and forever,

Amen

(This is the traditional rendering of the Lord's Prayer.
See Matthew 6 and Luke 11 for the inspiration behind the prayer.)

a prayer for **MORE FAITH**

You may feel you don't have enough faith to pray, but if you have even the faintest inkling that someone might be listening, that's all it takes. If you have enough faith to ask for more faith, your faith isn't so small after all.

Anyone who comes to God must believe that he is real and that he rewards those who truly want to find him.

HEBREWS 11:6



Dear God,

Thank you that you do not require us
to know all the answers.

Thank you that you reward those that earnestly seek you.
God, I want more faith,
Help me to believe.

Amen



David's prayer of **CONFESSION**

In the Bible we find the story of King David, a good king who made a very serious mistake – he wanted another man's wife, so he arranged for her husband to be killed in battle. When he realised what he'd done, he was wracked with guilt. Psalm 51 records his heartfelt prayer for forgiveness. God did make a way back for him, and David's story offers us the hope that we are never beyond God's love.



“God,

be merciful to me, because you are loving.
Because you are always ready to be merciful,
wipe out all my wrongs.
Wash away all my guilt and make me clean
again.

Take away my sin, and I will be clean.
Wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

Create in me a pure heart, God,
And make my spirit right again.”

PSALM 51:1-2,7,10

a prayer for **DIRECTION**

Sometimes we can feel overwhelmed by a difficult decision, or bewildered by the many directions our lives could take. How do we find the way ahead?

If any of you needs wisdom, you should ask God for it. He is generous and enjoys giving to all people, so he will give you wisdom.

JAMES 1:5

God,

I do not know which way to go.

I feel powerless to choose between the options before me.

God, give me the wisdom to see the way ahead,

And the boldness to walk in it.

Amen



a prayer for **REST**

Jesus said: "Come to me, all of you who are tired and have heavy loads, and I will give you rest. Accept my teachings and learn from me, because I am gentle and humble in spirit, and you will find rest for your lives."

MATTHEW 11:28-29



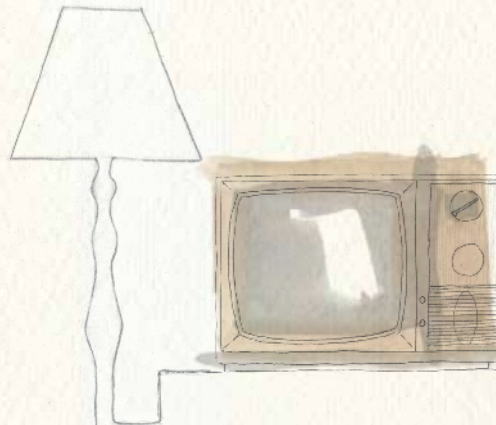
Dear God,
I am so tired.
Give me rest,
renew my energy,
help me to face the day,
and give me peace.
Amen

a prayer AGAINST VIOLENCE

When we look at the conflict in the world, we can feel so helpless. The prophet Isaiah once wrote despairingly of the violent society around him:

They are swift to shed innocent blood ...
acts of violence mark their ways.
The way of peace they do not know;
there is no justice in their paths.

We look for light, but all is darkness;
for brightness, but we walk in deep shadows.
ISAIAH 59:7,8,9



God,

Send your peace.

Peace to this world,
Peace to this country,
Peace for my friends and my community,
Peace for my family and my loved ones.

God, give me your peace,
And then help me to give it away.

Amen

a prayer for **INNER PEACE**

Jesus said:

I am leaving you with a gift – peace of mind and heart.
And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give.
So don't be troubled or afraid.

JOHN 14:27

Dear God,

My mind is restless and my heart is troubled.
I am worried, stressed, and fearful.
Send me the peace you promised,
And take away my fear.

Amen

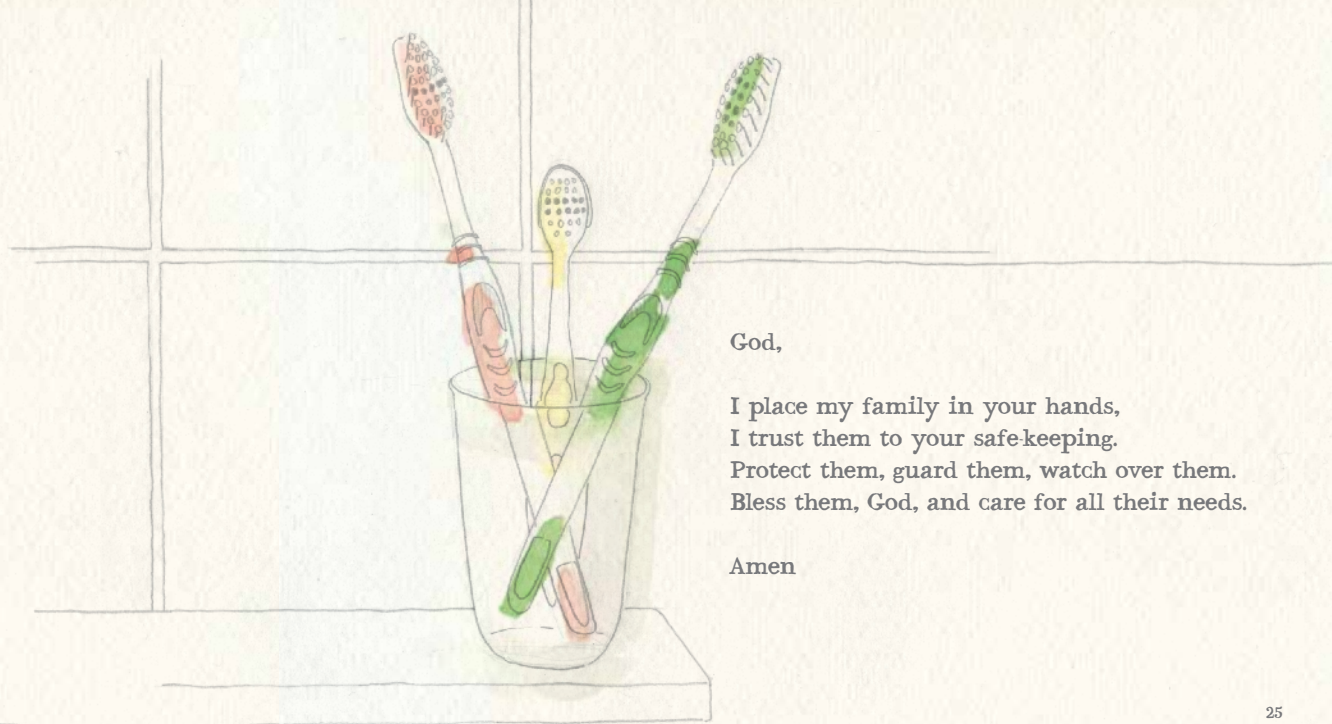


a prayer for **FAMILY**

This is a beautiful blessing from the Bible to
pray for your family, or for someone you know.

May the Lord give you success,
And may he give you and your children success.
May you be blessed by the Lord,
who made heaven and earth.

PSALM 115:14-15



God,

I place my family in your hands,
I trust them to your safe-keeping.
Protect them, guard them, watch over them.
Bless them, God, and care for all their needs.

Amen

THE JESUS PRAYER

Jesus told this story to show that it is our attitude of heart, not our eloquence, that God is looking for.

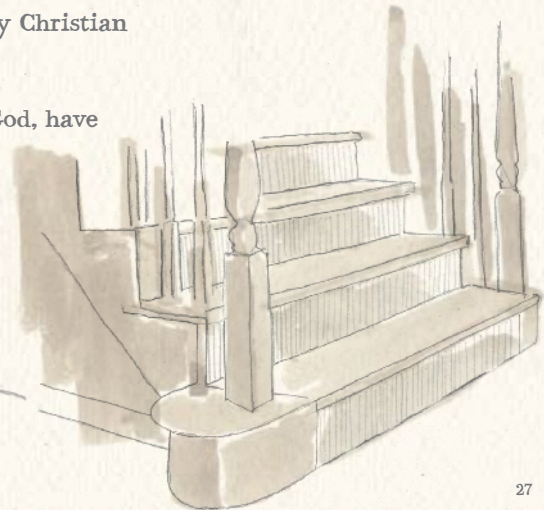
“Two men went to the Temple to pray. One was a Pharisee, and the other was a despised tax collector. The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed this prayer: ‘I thank you, God, that I am not a sinner like everyone else. For I don’t cheat, I don’t sin, and I don’t commit adultery. I’m certainly not like that tax collector!’

The tax collector stood at a distance and dared not even lift his eyes to heaven as he prayed ... ‘O God, be merciful to me, for I am a sinner.’ I tell you, this sinner, not the Pharisee, returned home justified before God. For those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

LUKE 18:10-11,13-14

It is this story that inspired the famous ‘Jesus Prayer’, used in many Christian traditions:

‘Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’

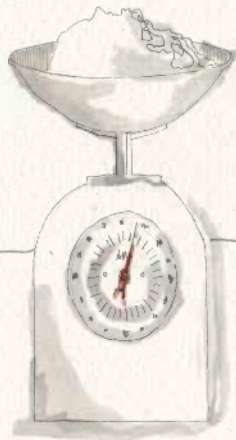


a prayer for **JUSTICE**

God is passionate about justice. You can bring all your concerns to him and know that he will understand.

The Lord replies, "I have seen violence done to the helpless, and I have heard the groans of the poor. Now I will rise up to rescue them, as they have longed for me to do."

PSALM 12:5



God,
We see injustice, inequality, and intolerance all around us.
God, make things right; help us to make things right.

Give us the courage to fight for justice, to protect the weak.
To speak up for the ignored, to care for the poor, and to
feed the hungry.

Let your kingdom come, and let your will be done
on earth as it is in heaven.

a prayer for **HEALING**

Sickness or injury can come to all of us, and we can feel powerless in the face of them. God invites us to pray to him for healing and the strength to carry on.

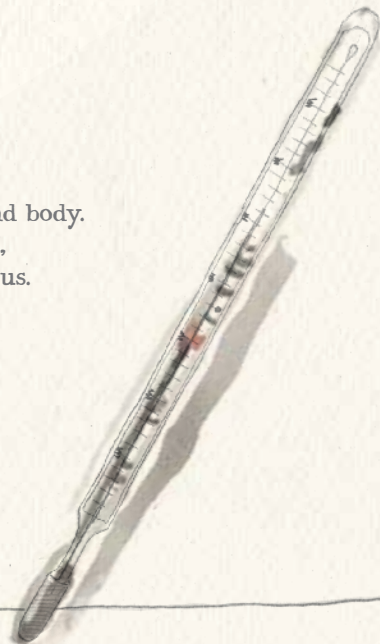
When his people pray for help, he listens and rescues them from their troubles. The Lord is there to rescue all who are discouraged and have given up hope.

PSALM 34:17-18

“I am the Lord who heals you.”

EXODUS 15:26

Lord bring healing,
Wholeness of heart, mind and body.
Restore strength, renew hope,
In your mercy, Lord, deliver us.



a prayer for the **PERSECUTED**

God, save me,
I am tired from calling for help; my throat is sore.
My eyes are tired from waiting for God to help me.

There are more people who hate me for no reason than hairs on my head,
Powerful enemies want to destroy me for no reason.

When I cry and go without food, they make fun of me,
When I wear clothes of sadness, they joke about me.
They make fun of me in public places.

I am sad and hurting.
God, save me and protect me.

PSALM 69:1,3-4,10-12,29



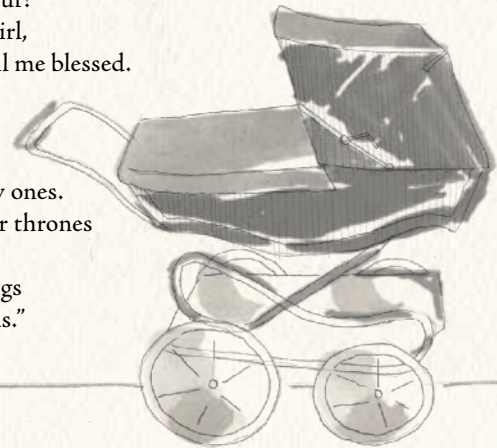
Mary's prayer of **THANKS**

Mary's song at the beginning of Luke's Gospel is one of the great prayers of the Bible. It marks an outburst of praise from a teenage girl who knows that she is pregnant with Jesus, God's chosen one. Her prayer is now known as the Magnificat, and it celebrates a God who is on the side of the underdog, the poor and the humble.

"Oh, how my soul praises the Lord.
How my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour!
For he took notice of his lowly servant girl,
and from now on all generations will call me blessed.
For the Mighty One is holy,
and he has done great things for me.

He has scattered the proud and haughty ones.
He has brought down princes from their thrones
and exalted the humble.
He has filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away with empty hands."

LUKE 1:47-55



Prayers for when God feels **CLOSE**

The presence of God is a wonderful mystery.
Here are some ways that others have talked
about the awareness of God nearby.

I ask only one thing, Lord:
Let me live in your house
every day of my life
to see how wonderful you are
and to pray in your temple.

PSALM 27:4



The Psalmist summed up the contentment he felt in
God's presence in the short and sweet Psalm 131:

Lord, my heart is not proud; I don't look down on others.
I don't do great things and I can't do miracles.
But I am calm and quiet, like a baby with its mother.
I am at peace, like a baby with its mother.

Put your hope in the Lord now and forever.

PSALM 131

Prayers for when God feels **FAR AWAY**

Sometimes we can feel far from God, or that God is far from us.
We can still pray at those times, tell God how you feel.
There's no need to hold back.

As the deer longs for streams of water, so I long for you, O God.
My heart is breaking as I remember how it used to be:
I walked among the crowds of worshippers ...
singing for joy and giving thanks.



"O God my rock," I cry,
"Why have you forgotten me?"

Why am I discouraged?
Why is my heart so sad?

I will put my hope in God!
I will praise him again – my Saviour and my God!
PSALM 42:1,4,9,11

JONAH'S PRAYER

The Bible tells the story of Jonah, a prophet who tried to run away from God and found himself in terrible danger. God rescued him, and his prayer is a great hymn of faith in the face of death that is an inspiration to anyone in a dark place.



When I was in trouble, Lord, I prayed to you, and you listened to me.
From deep in the world of the dead, I begged for your help,
and you answered my prayer.

The water was churning all around;

I was completely covered by your mighty waves ...

I was almost drowned by the swirling waters that surrounded me.

But, you, Lord God, rescued me from that pit.

When my life was slipping away,

I remembered you – and in your holy temple you heard my prayer.

JONAH 2:1-3,5,6-7



a prayer for **PROVISION**

Jesus said: "Don't worry and ask yourselves, "Will we have anything to eat? Will we have anything to drink? Will we have any clothes to wear?" Only people who don't know God are always worrying about such things. Your Father in heaven knows that you need all of these."

MATTHEW 6:31-32

Dear Father,

Thank you that you already know what I need.

Thank you that you love to give good gifts to your children.

Please provide for me and for those I love.

And let us not lack for anything.

Amen



a prayer for the **ENVIRONMENT**

O Lord, what a variety of things you have made!
In wisdom you have made them all.
The earth is full of your creatures.

May the glory of the Lord last forever!
The Lord rejoices in all he has made!

PSALM 104:24,31

... your land is in mourning, and everyone is wasting away.
Even the wild animals, the birds of the sky, and the fish of the
sea are disappearing.

HOSEA 4:3



Creator God,

The world you have made is wonderful.
We are sorry for our exploitation of the earth.
We are fearful of the consequences of what we have done,
Lord have mercy on our planet.

Give us the courage to speak,
The strength to make sacrifices,
And the will to change.

In your love for what you have made,
Heal and restore the land.

Amen

pray for a STRANGER

Everything we know about God's Word is summed up in a single sentence: Love others as you love yourself.

GALATIANS 5:13-14

Here's a way to pray more and bless others at the same time. Next time you're in a public place, walking somewhere, on the bus or in a queue, why not silently pray for the strangers around you. Pray good things for them, ask God to bless them. As you learn to seek the good of others, you'll begin to discover a whole new way of looking at the world.



CIRCLE PRAYER

Circle prayers are a common form in the Celtic tradition. Just substitute the underlined words to pray for whoever and whatever you like. To use your whole body in prayer, you can draw a circle on the ground and stand inside it as you pray.

Circle me Lord.
Keep hope within,
Keep fear without.
Keep peace near,
Keep conflict far.



HORIZON PRAYER

Faith grows through bold prayer, so don't be afraid to ask God for bigger and bigger things. Start with yourself and those close to you, and then move the focus of your prayers outwards to the furthest horizon of your hopes. There's nothing that we can't pray about – nothing too small, and nothing too big either.

Nothing is impossible with God.

LUKE 1:37

SOLITUDE

Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.

LUKE 5:16

Jesus made solitude a regular habit – getting away from other people and their demands on his attention. When was the last time you left everything behind and had peace and quiet, just you and God?

Take an early morning walk, visit a church on your lunch break, go and sit under a tree in the park. Do something alone, and invite God to come with you.



prayer at MEALTIMES

Some Christians have a tradition of thanking God at meal times, or 'saying grace'. In a world where many people go hungry, it's a way of making sure we don't take things for granted, but it's also a way of just appreciating good things, and taking the time to enjoy them.

You can do this through a simple phrase, or by a moment of silence, or whatever works best for you and those who eat with you.

Every good action and every perfect gift is from God.

JAMES 1:17

BREATHING PRAYER

Slow down and bring prayer into your day – take a moment to sit still, and take some slow, deep breaths. As you breathe in, think of good things that have been part of your day, things that you enjoyed, beauty, acts of kindness. Breathe in the good things, and thank God for them.

As you breathe out, think of the bad things, and breathe out the frustrations, worry, and hurt of the day, giving them over to God.

Leave all your worries with God, because he cares for you.

1 PETER 5:7



PRAYER WALK

Sometimes a quiet room is what we need to help us pray. At other times, we need something more active – go for a walk, and share the sights and sounds with God, turning what you see into prayer.

Many people find prayer walking useful when praying for specific places. You could walk around your workplace for example, your home, or your neighbourhood. It's a way of inviting God into those places, inviting him to change them.

You can prayer walk on your own, or bring a friend or two.



In stillness, in chaos, in the extraordinary and the mundane, God is there, and a lifetime is not enough to explore all the different ways to respond to him.

You can pray with others or alone. Anybody can pray, anytime, anywhere. God is always listening. Find space in the busyness of life and see where prayer takes you.

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