

// Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina is a way of reading and praying the Bible out loud, first taught by a man called Origen, back in the third century AD. It has been, and continues to be, a foundational practice for at least four major monastic traditions.

Lectio Divina means 'holy reading'. It is a discipline which mixes words (logos) and the Spirit (rhema) together, which we hope will help us to draw near to God. It consists of four different steps: reading, meditation, prayer and contemplation. If you'd like to give it a try, here's a framework:

Read: Choose a passage of Scripture (anything from one verse to 15 verses). Start by asking Holy Spirit to shine light on it as you read. Read it through 2/3 times slowly and deliberately. If possible, read it out loud.

Meditate: Think about it. Make your brain work hard. What was the person writing trying to say? What does it mean for your life today? Are there certain words or phrases that grab you? Allow the text to trigger memories and associations.

Pray: Respond to God. Speak out to God your personal response to what you've read. Attend to those deeper meanings; meditate on the feelings and associations. Tell God how it makes you feel. Tell God what comforts you and what challenges you. Ask for God's help to live out the truths you've uncovered today.

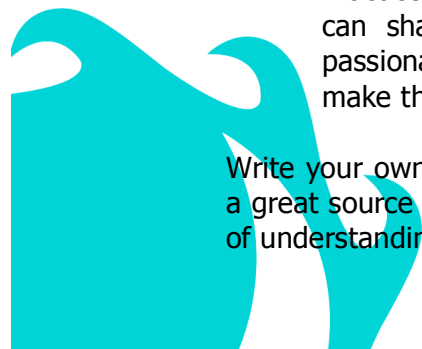
Contemplate: Stop. Be still. Stop talking, stop asking and slow your brain down. This is the time for listening to God, for letting Holy Spirit talk back to you. Spend some time silently listening to God. Go beyond all the words you've read, and allow God to root you in truth and wrap you in love

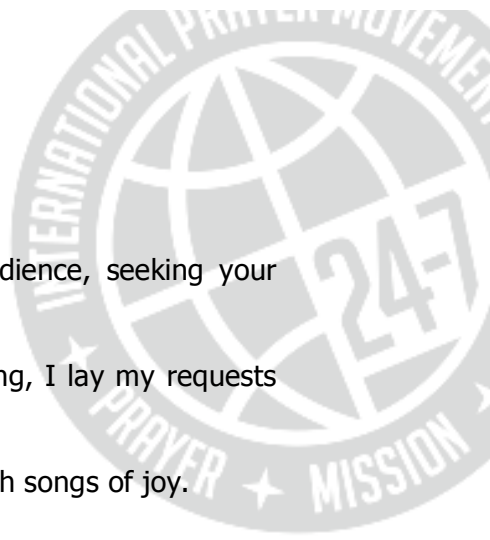
// Liturgy

Sometimes we think that liturgy, or leader-and-group response prayer, is outdated, restrictive or confined to musty old church services we don't want to acquaint ourselves with. This is unfortunate, because it's not true. Opening our minds to the possibility of connecting with God through liturgy, we might find a depth and resonance from speaking truth together. Why not give it a go:

- With a group of friends, work through some of the prayers in the Book of Common Prayer. Ask God to illuminate and refresh the words so they are relevant to your lives. Share as a group the insights and inspiration you have gained from this.
- Practice writing some responsive prayers you can work through together; you can shape these around any situations or subjects you are particularly passionate about. Concentrate on making them honest, rather than trying to make them sound good.

Write your own liturgy based on scripture. The Bible and particularly the Psalms are a great source of inspiration and praying the word of God may add a new dimension of understanding.





Here's an example of a liturgy based loosely on Psalms 5 & 6:

Leader: Jesus we come before you, humbly, quietly, in obedience, seeking your peace.

All: In the morning, O Lord, You hear my voice. In the morning, I lay my requests before you & wait in expectation.

Leader: Where morning dawns and evening fades, you call forth songs of joy.

All: God of light and glory, as the dawn brings in a new day, we remember your mercies are new each morning. We praise you for this new day you have made. Take it, use it and bring glory to Yourself. Take our lives, take our work and efforts, take our thoughts, take our every breath and use it for Your glory.

A short period of silent prayer is held to consider what today will bring and to offer our day & ourselves to God.

// The Jesus Prayer

'The prayer will not cease, whether you sit, walk, eat, drink, or do anything else. Even in deep sleep prayer will be active in you without any effort, for even when it is externally silent, it continues secretly to act within.' (Fathers Callistus and Ignatius)

The Jesus Prayer is a very short, simple prayer that grew out of the writings of the Desert fathers. And it goes like this - 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'

The Jesus Prayer is rooted in the gospels, in the stories of 'blind Bartimaeus' (Luke 18:13) and the tax collector (Mark 10:47), who both used the words of this prayer.

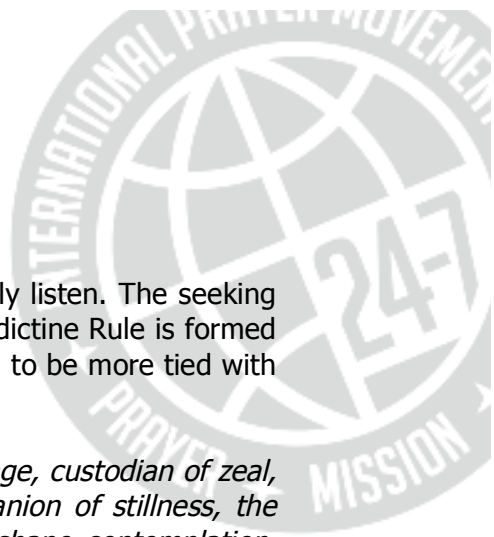
'The prayer begins as words, then as we recite it further, we move onto pray the prayer as our own, owning the thoughts and expression of the prayer. Finally, our hearts take over the prayer, where the prayer is no longer a series of words and concepts, but gives way to a touching of our Spirit with God's Spirit.' Theophan: 19th C. Russian spiritual teacher

There are different techniques to using this prayer. You can, for instance, breathe in whilst praying; 'Have mercy on me' (breathing in His mercy), and then breathe out as you pray; 'a sinner' (breathing out our sin).

A prayer rope can be used as a tangible aid to this prayer.

Recommended Reading: 'The Way of the Pilgrim', Helen Bacovin





// Silence

Our lives are filled with noise. Silence enables us to listen, really listen. The seeking out of solitary places was a regular rhythm for Jesus. The Benedictine Rule is formed and practised in a default pattern of silence. Silence can be said to be more tied with 'being' rather than 'doing'.

'Intelligent silence is the mother of prayer, freedom from bondage, custodian of zeal, a guard on our thoughts, a watch on our enemies... a companion of stillness, the opponent of dogmatism, a growth of knowledge, a hand to shape contemplation, hidden progress, the secret journey upward' John Climacus.

The Colchester Boiler Room community host a weekly 'silent prayer' time as a part of their rhythm of prayer.

Recommended Reading: 'The Silent Life', Thomas Merton

// Hospitality

Hospitality is an important part of the life of Jesus and arguably central to the gospel itself. Jesus comes and is received as a homeless stranger and then somehow becomes 'host', welcoming people into his Kingdom, describing the outcome as "salvation" even. The gospels are full of these stories, for example Zachius, the disciples on the road to Emmaus, the house of Mary and Martha. Many of Jesus' parables are about hospitality too.

Build a regular meal into your group rhythm. Why not invite guests along too. Many of the Boiler Room and 24-7 communities have developed regular rhythms of hospitality, receiving guests, and community meals. The 24-7 community in Romford, for instance, host a fortnightly community meal, which often takes place in a large community house that two of their families live in, along with frequent visitors/pilgrims/guests.

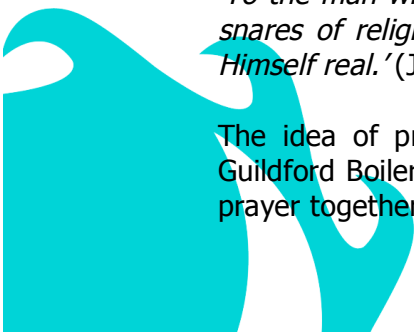
'I was hungry and you fed me, I was thirsty and you gave me a drink, I was homeless and you gave me a room, I was shivering and you gave me clothes, I was sick and you stopped to visit, I was in prison and you came to me... Whenever you did one of these things to someone overlooked or ignored, that was me—you did it to me.' (Matthew 25v35-36) MSG

Recommended Reading: 'Making Room', Christine Pohl

// The Lord's Prayer at noon

'To the man who prays habitually (not only when he feels like it - that is one of the snares of religion - but also when he does not feel like it) Christ is sure to make Himself real.' (James Stewart, a Scottish preacher)

The idea of praying the Lord's Prayer at 12-midday began (we think!) with the Guildford Boiler Room community in the UK, as they explored ways to develop daily prayer together. They all set their watches, mobile phones and alarms for noon, and



agreed to stop, wherever they found themselves, for a minute or two to say the Lord's Prayer. With this small action, wherever they were and whatever they were doing, they joined together in daily devotion.

The midday prayer is a powerful way to re-centre ourselves on Jesus as we go about our daily routines, we ask our Father in heaven to bring His Kingdom and to do His will. Why not set your alarms and join with hundreds of us, as we pray the Lord's Prayer.

The Stanford le hope Boiler Room community, among many others now, also use 'The Lord's Prayer at Noon' as part of their rhythm of prayer.

Recommended Reading: 'The Lord and His Prayer', Tom Wright

