

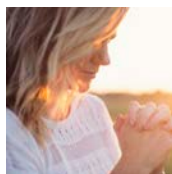
JOURNEYS

Spiritual Formation Quarterly

FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF FORT WORTH
SPRING 2017



*Prayer...is listening to the voice that calls us "my Beloved."
-- Henri Nouwen*



JOURNEYS

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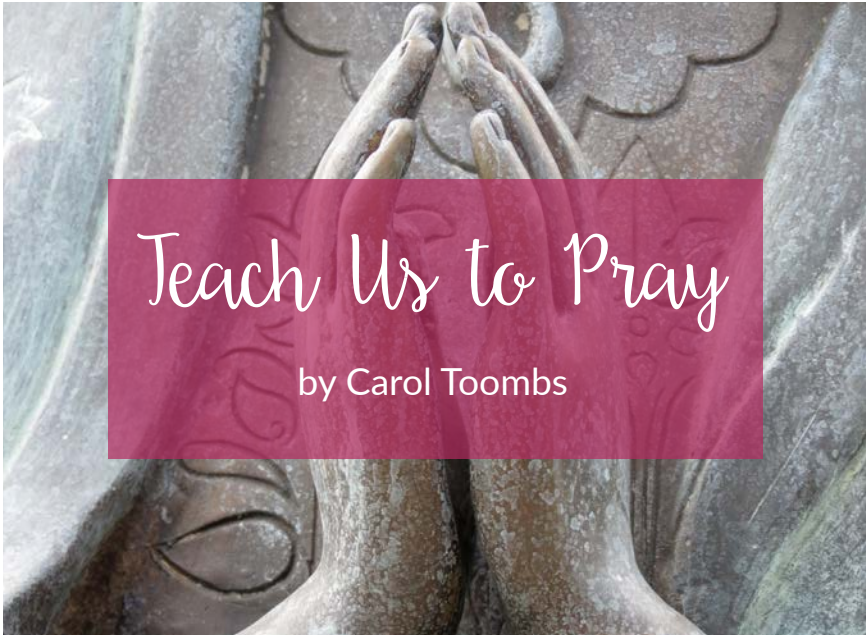


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Teach Us to Pray

by Carol Toombs

“Teach us how to pray,” the disciples begged Jesus. And that question has resounded down through the centuries. Somehow, something that was intended to be the most natural of things has been made complicated, leaving would-be practitioners often feeling insecure in their praying. “I don’t know how to pray,” some say. “Am I doing it right?” others question. A 16th century Carmelite, Teresa of Avila, attempted to lead her sisters into a more natural state of prayer when she advised, “The important thing is not to think much, but to love much; and so, to do that which best stirs you to love” - wisdom we can still apply today, both to our intentional times of prayer and to a life that is lived prayerfully.

How do we express our love to God? That is the question and there are as many answers as there are numbers of us. Some will find spontaneous prayers of gratitude spring to their lips when they encounter beauty, grace, or truth in the everyday. Some will intentionally carve out time and space for being with God, nurturing that relationship through studying scripture, doing spiritual reading, or practicing silence and receptive listening. Some will enter into difficult, honest, heart-felt conversations with God, wrestling with self-will and learning to trust the intimacy God offers. And some will build Habitat houses, mentor

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PRACTICES

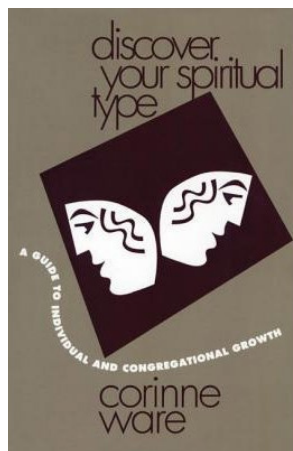
Here are some ways to pray.

A BOOK TO READ

Discover Your Spiritual Type

Corrine Ware
Rowman & Littlefield, 2014

Ware provides a framework for people to name and understand their spiritual experience—in much the same way that the Myers-Briggs typology provides a framework for understanding personality types. Readers explore four spiritual types—head, heart, mystic, and Kingdom—to help determine their type. By identifying your Spiritual Type, you can understand better how you learn, worship, and celebrate God, and what that means for the way you pray.



WAYS TO PRAY...

One could say that there are almost as many ways to pray as there are people praying. The following are provided to help you in your journey of discovering your own unique, prayerful relationship with God:

BREATH PRAYER

Breath Prayer is based on repetition of a word or short phrase that is said in the space of one breath inhalation-exhalation cycle. To practice *Breath Prayer*: (next page)

PRACTICES

1. Close your eyes and, “Be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10). Be calm and open to the presence of God.
2. With your eyes closed, imagine that God is calling you by name, and asking, “what do you want?”
3. Give God a simple, honest, direct answer that comes from your heart. Write down the answer(s). Your answer(s) may be one word, such as joy or love or sadness, several words or a phrase.
4. Select the name that you are most comfortable using for God. Combine it with your written answer to the question God asked you. This is your prayer.
5. Breathe in the first phrase/word (generally God’s name) and breathe out the second phrase/word (request or need). Examples include:
 - Jesus, let me feel your love.
 - O Lord, Show me your way.
 - Jesus, have mercy.
 - Father, let me feel your presence.

LECTIO DIVINA

Lectio Divina is devotional reading of Scripture, followed by meditative consideration of the personal impact of that Scripture and verbal response to the reading. To practice *Lectio Divina*:

1. Find a comfortable place to read and pray.
2. Invite the Lord to be present, and then read a Scripture passage.
3. *Read* the passage several times. *Meditate* on the passage. Ask the Lord to guide your thoughts as you consider what he might be saying through this Scripture to you in particular. Listen for words or phrases that speak to you, that “shimmer.”
4. Stay with a phrase that speaks to you for a while. Savor it and wait. Your subconscious mind may grasp something that will take your conscious mind a few moments to “hear” and receive.

PRACTICES

5. When your engagement with the text has settled, turn to the Lord in prayer.

PRAYER JOURNAL

You can keep a prayer journal to write down not just requests, but also questions, struggles and praises, too. Be creative. Put your prayers into poems. Write a letter to God. Then go back and read your journal entries at different times in the future. You'll likely see how God has answered your prayers. Reviewing your past praises will also remind you of God's goodness and love for you.

PRAY THE NEWS

Read a news article, and then pray for the people involved. Pray for politicians and other national and community leaders who make the news; pray for situations; pray for discernment. Prayer as you feel led as you read.

PRAY YOUR DAY (ACTION PRAYER)

With Action Prayer, you offer your actions to God as your prayer. As you pass through your day, give to God the tasks that you do and the reactions that you feel. Give God your annoyance, your happiness or whatever emotion you feel because that is what you have to give. Do not waste energy pretending or attempting on your own to feel the way you "should." Instead, ask Christ to receive your disgruntled feelings and to reshape them. Some actions allow our minds to multitask and it may be possible to think prayer words as well, but do not lose the language of action just because words are available. If you play the piano tentatively, then offer God the tentative music that you are able to make. Are you on the phone with clients all day? Then let the nature of your cooperation in work be your worship. If you are asked to photocopy, then pray with that.

PARTNER UP

Find someone to pray with regularly. Plan to meet at a restaurant or other location once or twice a week, get together before

PRACTICES

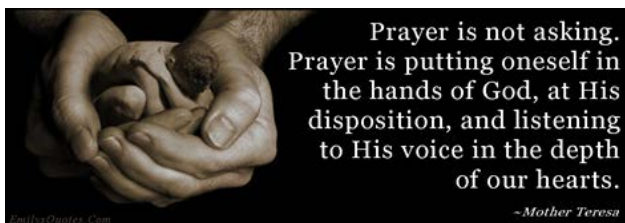
school, etc. Praying with a friend is great for personal accountability. It's also a great way to take a friendship to a deeper level.

BODY PRAYER

Body Prayer's purpose is to limit yourself to a single activity as a means of stilling yourself to listen to God's voice. It is sometimes accompanied by verbal communication, but is often simply experienced as spending time doing something together with God. To practice *Body Prayer*:

1. Choose an activity that you will dedicate to body prayer. An example might be walking a labyrinth; however, any activity will do.
2. Turn off your phone, pager, social networking site, email, etc. Quiet yourself and invite the Lord into your prayer time.
3. Whatever activity you choose, the goal is to free your mind from immediate concerns by using a single, repetitive motion to focus your attention.
4. Begin the activity, and then make note of any specific patterns or directions your thoughts take.
5. Offer your wanderings, your wonderings, your notes, your ideas, your feelings to God. Thank God for guidance, safe-keeping, and peace. If nothing happened, offer that nothingness to God as well, thankful for the chance to be still in God's presence.

It may take some time for you to release yourself from expectations of production or success. Allow yourself to have activities with God that assert no more agenda than spending time together.



PRACTICES

IMAGINATION PRAYER

Imagination Prayer involves reading a passage from Scripture, meditating on it, then imagining the scene and placing yourself in it. To experience *Imagination Prayer*:

1. Read a Scripture passage several times.
2. Invite the Lord to be present with you, quieting yourself before Him.
3. Let your imagination work on the Gospel scene. Imagine the location. See the people involved. What do you bump into, touch with your hands? What do you smell? What do you taste? What is being said by Jesus and others? What emotions might be in the hearts of various people? What actions are taken by Jesus and others?
4. Put yourself at the scene. Take the place of one of the characters and see the scene through the eyes of that person. What is he or she feeling, thinking and/or doing?
5. Release your imagination from your inner critic. Let go of your prayer list. You and God can talk about details of your day later. The point is simply to be with Jesus.
6. Now stay with a particular picture involving yourself and Jesus. Talk to him and listen to what he says to you. Spend time in his presence.

PRAYER ON THE MOVE

You can pray while driving to work or school or while chauffeuring your kids by using familiar landmarks to remind you to thank God, ask God, seek God, and listen to God.

It is God's passionate
pursuit of us that calls
us to prayer.

Henri Nouwen

RETREATS

Growing Toward God Through Prayer

Saturday, April 29, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m.

FPC Atrium and Gym

Led by Martha Newman and Carol Toombs. Scripture teaches us that we are to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, strength, and mind. Using Dr. Corrine Ware's "Quadrants of Spirituality," we will discover where we are naturally open to loving, where we need to grow in order to fulfill this commandment, and how to use various prayer forms to stretch unused spiritual muscles. After lunch, there will be an opportunity to experience the various prayer stations at your own pace and discretion.

Yoga as Meditative Prayer

Friday, July 21 - Sunday, July 23

Cenacle Sister's Houston, 420 N. Kirkwood Rd. Houston, TX 77079

Yoga as prayer allows participants to ease into a meditative stillness. Focusing on the breath and the body through gentle stretches, participants will open their hearts to the presence of the Love living within. Movement, art, journaling, reflection, and rest will heighten participants' awareness as they listen for that still, small voice of the One who loves them. Learn more at <https://csh.retreatportal.com/calendar/viewEvent.aspx?programcode=1WER00698>.

"Finding God in the Questions" Prayer Retreat

Friday, October 20 - Sunday, October 22

Presbyterian Mo-Ranch Assembly, 2229 FM 1340, Hunt, TX 78024

There is much to learn by living the questions of our lives. Retreat participants will reflect on how they can find God in the questions of our hearts. The retreat will be led by Judy Yates Siker, a professor and Presbyterian elder, whose latest publication is "Who Is Jesus? What a Difference a Lens Makes," the 2016-2017 Horizons Bible Study for the PC(USA). Learn more at <http://moranch.org/attend-a-conference/adult-conferences/prayer-retreat/>.

WHERE TO GO



Montserrat Jesuit Retreat House: Saturdays of Renewal

600 N. Shady Shores Drive, Lake Dallas, TX 75065

On the first Saturday of the month, Montserrat offers a morning of reflection and renewal. The Jesuits and lay colleagues of Montserrat offer the day which includes prayer conferences, time for personal silent prayer, time for sharing, and classes with the celebration of the Eucharist. Each Saturday of Renewal begins at 9 a.m. and concludes no later than 12 p.m.

THE SEASON OF LENT

**For a complete list of ways to observe Lent at FPC
please visit FPCFW.ORG/LENT**

at-risk children, distribute food and clothing, do justice, and visit the old, the sick, and the frail. All this, Teresa would say is prayer when it is done in love - love for God and for all that God calls us to love. "All things are prayer if they are intended to be," she declared, "for prayer is nothing else than being on terms of friendship with God."

That said, throughout the ages there have been classical spiritual disciplines and methods of prayer that have aided many to live into loving intimacy with God. *Lectio Divina* (or devotional reading), for example, opens one to receive a personal word from God in scripture, while *Breath Prayer* enables us to more nearly live out Paul's instruction, "to pray without ceasing." There are many such practices that the cloud of witnesses has passed down to us and, as long as they remain, in Marjorie Thompson's words, "windows transparent to God," (rather than ends unto themselves), they have been a great gift to the Church. To learn more about these practices, I invite you to join Martha Newman and me on April 29 in the Atrium. There we will learn various ways to grow our spiritual muscles and have the opportunity to experience numerous prayer stations.



(See page 9 in the Retreats section for details.

A GIFT FOR YOU...

In each issue of *Journeys*, the back cover will include a visual of a scripture or an encouraging quote as our gift to you. Cut it out and post somewhere you'll see it often.

-- *The Spiritual Formation Subcommittee*



DO NOT BE ANXIOUS ABOUT ANYTHING,
BUT IN EVERY SITUATION,
BY PRAYER AND PETITION,
WITH THANKSGIVING,
PRESENT YOUR REQUESTS TO GOD.
AND THE PEACE OF GOD,
WHICH TRANSCENDS ALL UNDERSTANDING,
WILL GUARD YOUR HEARTS &
YOUR MINDS IN CHRIST JESUS.

PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

