



HEALTHY SPIRITUALITY

Prayer

13 Ideas for Keeping Prayer Fresh

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Healthyspirituality.org



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Prayer

We all get in a rut sometimes. God is the Creator of all things new and is constantly refreshing the world, season to season, day by day. We too can be creative and stretch our faith by trying new approaches to our foundational practices, such as how we pray.

I encourage you to try one of the following ideas and to pray to be open and willing to see where else God may be inviting you to grow in your prayer life. If you ask God to freshen your prayers, pay attention and keep alert - He will answer you, possibly in surprising and unexpected ways.

A New Devotional

Look at your bookshelves. Is there a devotional there you may have forgotten about? Find a seasonal daily book of readings such as for Lent or Advent. Ask your friends for ideas. Search on Amazon. Here are a few suggestions:

My Utmost for His Highest - Oswald Chambers
Show Me the Way - Daily Lenten Readings - Henri Nouwen
God is with you Every Day - Max Lucado
Jesus Calling
Praying God's Word Day by Day – Beth Moore

The Spiritual Practice of Writing

Keeping a journal is a wonderful practice. Write out your prayers. Write God a letter. Use the journal to record your prayer list and answered prayer.

Take a chapter or verses from the Bible and rewrite in your own words. The book of Psalms works extremely well for this idea. *"The Lord is my shepherd, my guide, my helper. I never need or desire anything else expect for God."* The Bible is the living word of God - explore its contents for nourishment for your journey.

Questions

Questions are powerful openings into the conversation with God. What do you want to ask him? What do you hear God asking you? What questions have you found in your Bible that resonates with you at this time? Write out this conversation with God in your journal.

Characteristics of God

Make a list of the characteristics of God: goodness, love, generosity, delight, compassion, wisdom, faithfulness, humbleness, etc. What on your list invites you to stop and ponder? What lesson is that trait trying to teach you? Where lately have you encounter God in that attribute?

“What comes into our minds when we think about God is the most important thing about us.”
A.W. Tozer

Read a Book about Prayer

Books about prayer abound in the library, mentioned on other blogs and in bookstores. Here are a few of my favorites:

Prayer: Does it make any difference? - Phillip Yancey
Prayer: Finding the heart's true home - Richard Foster
Whispers: Being with God in Breath Prayers - Jean Wise
Prayer: Experiencing the Awe and Intimacy of God – Timothy Keller
The Heart of Centering Prayer: Cynthia Bourgeault
Prayer: Our Deepest Longing – Richard Rolheiser
A Diary of Private Prayer – John Baillie
Contemplative Prayer – Thomas Merton
Letters to Malcolm: Chiefly on Prayer – C.S. Lewis
Experiencing God Through Prayer – Jeanne Guyon

Find a New Bible Verse to Discuss with God

Read through your concordance or listen to the Sunday readings with expectant anticipation that God will lead you to a new verse to pray upon. Here are a few possibilities:

Luke 18:1
1 John 5: 14-15
Hebrews 4:16
James 5: 16
Phil 4: 19
Jeremiah 33: 3
John 4: 13-14

Update or Create a Prayer List

Write out the names of people you want to regularly surround in prayer. Assign a day of the week to a category of concern or part of the world. Your week may look like this:

Monday: pray for family, home, community

Tuesday: pray for leaders, local, state, national, and international

Wednesday: pray for those on missions, those suffering, or being persecuted

Thursday: express all that you are thankful for

Friday: Pray for the sick

Saturday: Let nature lead your prayers

Sunday: Pray for rest and refreshing of yourself and others.

Try a New Type of Prayer

Learn about and try a new way of praying: breath prayers, centering prayers, welcoming prayers, prayer of relinquishment, healing prayers, praying the scriptures, prayer of examen, walking a labyrinth.

For example, Breath prayers are short prayers said in one breath. Simple, repetitive and surprisingly ancient. The breath prayer generally involves quietly repeating a chosen phrase



for several minutes, allowing the prayer to take on the shape of one's breathing so that the words accompany every breath.

Examples of common breath prayers are "In you, Lord, I put my trust," "Help me understand your ways, Lord," "Lord I am yours," and "My Lord and my God." The idea is to pick a meaningful phrase and repeat it until it becomes a part of your being.

If you want to read more about breath prayers, I wrote a book about this type of prayer, available on Amazon, titled ***Whispers: Being with God in Breath Prayers***.

Take a Walk

A change your location often refreshes the spirit. Go on a retreat. Walk your neighborhood. Enjoy the woods, a park, or even your own backyard. Look up. Listen. Take a deep breath. What do you experience with your senses? Notice your surroundings. Pay attention.

Refreshen your Prayer Space or Try a New Time of Day to Pray

Create a home altar and a sacred space at home for your prayer time. Light a candle. Try soft background music. Decorate an altar with a cross, painting and symbolic meaningful items. Change the colors of cloth in your space to match the church calendar colors such as blue for Advent or purple for Lent. Alter the times you pray or try praying the liturgical hours - morning, noon, afternoon and evening. Notice how the shadows and light affects your prayers.

Prayer Triggers

Prayer triggers are gentle everyday reminders throughout the day that God is with us. Here is a list of examples:

Sirens

Stop lights

Commercials

Doing dishes



Drinking glass of water

Seeing a smile

Using a towel to dry your hands

Getting on an elevator

Climbing stairs

Reading the news

Saying grace at meals

When you leave and say good bye

When you drive pass a church, say a prayer for the ministry and pastors,

Turn on or off the light switch

Walk on treadmill

Cross a bridge

Buckle seatbelt

When it rains

Lick an envelope closed

When the phone rings

When email chirps

Hear a doorbell ring

Hear certain words such as a loved one's name or bless you.

Open a book

See an airplane or hear a helicopter

Put your shoes on

Brush your teeth

See a sunset

Silence and Rest

Words are not necessary within the love of God. Just be with him. What images come to mind as you rest in his arms and let go of all the busyness and doings of life? Ponder this saying from Anthony de Mello:

Look at God
Looking at you...
and smiling!

Well-loved Prayers from Others

Praying the words from others inspire us and provide us with meaning when we can't quite express what we feel. Here are a few prayers I find useful at times;

The Lord's Prayer

God our heavenly Father, when the thought of you wakes in our hearts, let its awakening not be like a startled bird that flies about in fear. Instead, let it be like a child waking from sleep with a heavenly smile.
Søren Kierkegaard

O Lord, you know how busy I must be this day. If I forget you, do not forget me.
Sir Jacob Astley, before the Battle of Edgehill, 1642

Lord, you are closer to me than my own breathing, nearer than my hands and feet.
St Teresa of Avila

I bind unto myself today: The power of God to hold and lead, His eye to watch, his might to stay, His ear to hearken to my need.
The wisdom of my God to teach, His hand to guide, his shield to ward;
The word of God to give me speech, His heavenly host to be my guard.
Christ be with me, Christ within me, Christ behind me, Christ before me, Christ beside me,
Christ to win me, Christ to comfort and restore me. Christ beneath me, Christ above me,
Christ in quiet, Christ in danger, Christ in hearts of all that love me,
Christ in mouth of friend and stranger.
St Patrick



God to enfold me, God to surround me, God in my speaking, God in my thinking.
God in my sleeping, God in my waking, God in my watching, God in my hoping.
God in my life, God in my lips, God in my soul, God in my heart. God in my sufficing,
God in my slumber, God in my ever-living soul, God in mine eternity.

Carmina Gadelica

The Cantic of Creation

O Most High, all-powerful, good Lord God, to you belong praise, glory, honor and all blessing.
Be praised, my Lord, for all your creation and especially for our Brother Sun, who brings us the
day and the light; he is strong and shines magnificently.

O Lord, we think of you when we look at him.

Be praised, my Lord, for Sister Moon, and for the stars
which you have set shining and lovely in the heavens.

Be praised, my Lord, for our Brothers Wind and Air and every kind of weather
by which you, Lord, uphold life in all your creatures.

Be praised, my Lord, for Sister Water,
who is very useful to us, and humble and precious and pure.

Be praised, my Lord, for Brother Fire,
through whom you give us light in the darkness: he is bright and lively and strong.

Be praised, my Lord, for Sister Earth, our Mother,
who nourishes us and sustains us, bringing forth fruits and vegetables
of many kinds and flowers of many colors.

Be praised, my Lord, for those who forgive for love of you;
and for those who bear sickness and weakness in peace and patience –
you will grant them a crown.

Be praised, my Lord, for our Sister Death, whom we must all face.

I praise and bless you, Lord,
and I give thanks to you,
and I will serve you in all humility.

St Francis of Assisi

The Clown's Prayer

As I stumble through this life, help me to create more laughter than tears, dispense more
happiness than gloom, spread more cheer than despair.
Never let me become so indifferent that I will fail to see the wonder in the eyes of a child or the
twinkle in the eyes of the aged.



Never let me forget that my total effort is to cheer people, make them happy and forget - at least momentarily - all the unpleasantness in their lives.

And, in my final moment, may I hear You whisper:
'When you made My people smile, you made Me smile.'

Author unknown

Father, I abandon myself into your hands; do with me what you will.

Whatever you may do, I thank you: I am ready for all, I accept all.

Let only your will be done in me and in all your creatures. I wish no more than this,

O Lord. Into your hands I commend my soul:

I offer it to you with all the love of my heart, for I love you,

Lord, and so need to give myself, to surrender myself into your hands without reserve, and with boundless confidence, for you are my Father.

Charles de Foucauld

Look, Lord, on an empty vessel that needs to be filled.

In faith I am weak - strengthen me.

In love I am cold - warm me and make me fervent so that my love may go out to my neighbor.

I doubt and am unable to trust you completely.

Lord, strengthen my faith and trust in you.

You are all the treasure I possess. I am poor, you are rich, and you came to have mercy on the poor.

I am a sinner, you are goodness. From you I can receive goodness, but I can give you nothing.

Therefore I shall stay with you.

Martin Luther

My Lord God,

I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me.

I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think

I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so.

But I believe that the desire to please you does in fact please you.

And I hope that I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire.

And I know that if I do this you will lead me by the right road though I may know nothing about it.

Therefore will I trust you always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death.

I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and will never leave me to face my perils alone.

Thomas Merton



Dear Jesus,
Help us to spread your fragrance everywhere we go, flood our souls with your Spirit and life.
Penetrate and possess our whole being
so utterly that our lives may only be a radiance of yours.
Shine through us and be so in us that every soul we come in contact with
may feel your presence in our soul.
Let them look up and see no longer us but only Jesus.
Stay with us and then we shall begin to shine as you shine, so to shine as to be light to others.
The light, O Jesus, will be all from you. None of it will be ours.
It will be your shining on others through us.
Let us thus praise you in the way you love best by shining on those around us.
Let us preach you without preaching not by words,
but by our example by the catching force the sympathetic influence
of what we do the evident fullness of the love our hearts bear to you.
Mother Teresa

Each morning is a new beginning of our life.
Each day is a finished whole.
The present day marks the boundary of our cares and concerns.
It is long enough to find God or lose Him,
to keep faith or fall into disgrace.
God created day and night for us so we need not wander without boundaries,
but may be able to see in every morning the goal of the evening ahead.
Just as the ancient sun rises anew everyday,
so the eternal mercy of God is new every morning.
Every morning God gives us the gift of comprehending anew His faithfulness of old;
thus in the midst of our life with God, we may daily begin a new life with Him.
In the first moments of the new day are for God's liberating grace, God's sanctifying presence.
Before the heart unlocks itself for the world, God wants to open it for Himself;
before the ear takes in the countless voices of the day,
it should hear in the early hours the voice of the Creator and Redeemer.
God prepared the stillness of the first morning for Himself.
It should remain His.
Dietrich Bonhoeffer



Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty,
my memory, my understanding,
and my entire will,
All I have and call my own.
You have given all to me.
To you, Lord, I return it.
Everything is yours; do with it what you will.
Give me only your love and your grace,
that is enough for me.
St. Ignatius of Loyola

Ask God to open your heart and mind for ways to draw closer to him in prayer. He will hear you and bring wonderful blessings and ideas for refreshing your prayer life. Blessings!

Jeanie

About the Author – Jean Wise

Jean Wise is a writer, speaker, retreat leader, and spiritual director. She is a contributing author of devotions for four compilations (Daily Comfort for Caregivers, 365 Encouraging Verses of the Bible, Women of the Bible Devotional and Booklover's Devotional) published by Barbour, plus solo author of Let Every Heart Prepare Him Room, an Advent Devotion released in 2014 also by Barbour Books. Check out her latest books at healthyspirituality.org/amazon.

Self-published books include Whispers - Being with God in Breath Prayers, Spiritual Retreats - Slowing Down to be with God, The Great Communicator –Reflections for Speakers and Writers and Monthly Musings Journal.

Jean has published numerous magazine articles in magazines and public health journals. She worked as the health and special feature reporter for her local daily newspaper for ten years. Jean is also a Deacon at St. Peter's Lutheran Church facilitating adult spiritual formation. She has an active spiritual direction practice including leading group spiritual direction.

She writes two times a week on her blog, www.healthyspirituality.org. Established in 2009, the site includes more than 1300 posts. She is also a contributor to the Spiritual Directors International blog, to the Northwest Ohio ELCA synod newsletter and is a member of the Advanced Writers and Speakers Association (AWSA).

Jean is a RN with her Masters in Nursing. She retired from public health in 2006 as the county health commissioner to focus on freelance speaking and writing. She has discovered her calling to nurture others - as she practiced in nursing and now as she helps others grow closer to God in her ministry of spiritual direction, writing and speaking

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