

# A Guide for Daily Meditation and Prayer

[Prayer] is the practice of shifting preoccupation away from yourself toward attentiveness and responsiveness to God. It is a deliberate walking away from a me-centered way of life to a Christ-centered way of life.

—Eugene H. Peterson

Developing your personal pattern of meditation and prayer is like a jazz musician who, having learned the basic chords, rhythms, and musical patterns, improvises to express his or her own style, passion, and experience. Two essential elements in the process are these: scripture and prayer.

## **Scripture: Feeding on the Word**

In the Christian tradition, all spiritual discipline begins in allowing the written word to become a living word in our lives. *Lectio divina*, or divine reading, is an ancient way of reading meditatively, always asking, “Lord, what is your word for me today?” Here are the key elements of this approach:

- Read the scripture slowly. Watch for a key phrase or word that jumps out at you or holds special meaning for you.
- Reflect on a word or phrase. Allow the word or phrase that you discovered in the first step to sink into your heart.
- Respond to what you have read. Form a prayer that expresses your response to the idea, then “pray it back to God.” Many people find journaling to be helpful.
- Rest in God’s word. Let the text soak into your being, and savor this encounter with God and truth.

## **Prayer: Dancing with the Trinity**

Gregory of Nazianzus, the fourth-century theologian and archbishop of Constantinople, used the Greek word *perichoresis* meaning “rotation” or “dance” to describe the interaction of the three persons of the Trinity. In *A Disciple’s Heart Daily Workbook*, my coauthor and I called the Trinity “a glorious dance in which the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are . . . in joy-filled, love-soaked, life-giving, never-ending movement together.”<sup>1</sup> Learning to pray is like learning to dance. After learning the basic patterns of prayer, we grow into our own style. Experiencing prayer as a dance with the triune God invites us into three movements.

Praying with God the Creator (Father) begins as we center ourselves in the presence of God, who is so high above us that we can never fully comprehend God and at the same time so deep within us that we can never escape God. The psalms are particularly helpful in opening our lives to God’s presence.

Praying with God the Son focuses our prayers in the likeness of Jesus, the incarnate God in human flesh. Our praying requires consistency with the words, will, and way of Jesus. We pray as Jesus prayed so that we may live as Jesus lived.

Praying with God the Spirit draws us out of ourselves and into God's ongoing work of love, justice, healing, and hope for our lives and for our world. We identify with the needs of others and listen for the ways we can become the agents of God's reconciliation.

Charles Wesley captured the dance of the triune God when he wrote these words:

*Maker, in whom we live, in whom we are and move,  
the glory, power, and praise receive for thy creating love. . . .  
Incarnate Deity, let all the ransomed race render in thanks their lives to thee for thy redeeming  
grace. . . .  
Spirit of Holiness, let all thy saints adore thy sacred energy, and bless thine heart-renewing power.  
(umh, no. 88)*

Welcome to the dance!

**Easter Earthquake: How Resurrection Shakes Our World**  
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