



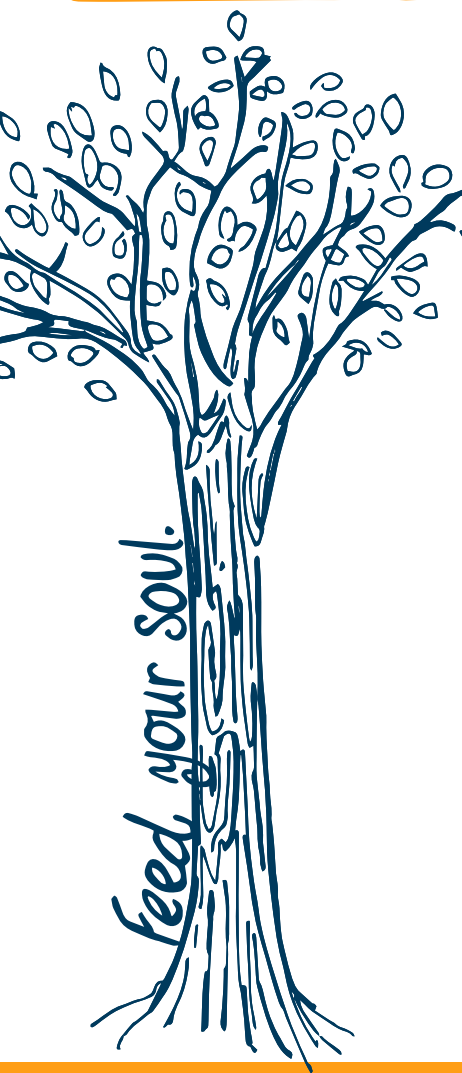
## SESSION FOUR

# *The* PRAYER *Process*

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and wisdom to know the difference. Living one day at a time, enjoying one moment at a time, accepting hardships as the pathway to peace, taking, as Jesus did, this sinful world as it is, not as I would have it, trusting that you will make all things right, if I surrender to your will, so that I may be reasonably happy in this life, and supremely happy with you forever in the next. Amen.

•————— *The Serenity Prayer* —————•

PRAYER HELPS  
US TO DISCOVER  
WHO WE ARE  
AND WHAT WE  
ARE HERE FOR.



# 4. THE PRAYER PROCESS

Some things help you to become the-best-version-of-yourself and some things don't. Prayer is one of the things that help.

Prayer may sound boring to you, but I can assure you if you feel that way you have never really experienced prayer.

As a human being you are a delicate composition of body and soul. You are not just a body. You have a soul, and throughout your life you will decide to fill your soul with something. The question is: What are you going to fill your soul with? God or the world? Joy or misery? Peace or turmoil?

Once again, you get to decide.

The world denies your spiritual self and treats you as if you are just a body. I want you to rebel against that lie.

In this session I simply want to encourage you to nurture your spiritual self, to pay attention to it in a world full of distractions, and to set aside a few minutes each day to spend in quiet prayer.

I want to convince you to *feed your soul*.

## 4.1 Why PRAY?

Why Pray? The answer is actually very simple: because you want to be happy. If there is a God, and if that God has a plan for your life, then trying to find happiness outside of that plan is impossible. Discovering God's beautiful plan for your life is essential to your happiness—and should be your *highest priority*.

I know you have lots of other priorities at the moment, but a day will come in your life when you'll realize that everything you thought was important is second to discovering God's plan for your life. The sooner that day comes, the better your life will be.

You will never be happy doing something other than God's will. So the question becomes: How do we discover God's will for our lives?

One of the ways we discover God's will is through regular prayer.

In the summer of 1845, Henry David Thoreau left Concord, Massachusetts, because he believed it had become too busy and too noisy. He built himself a little hut out by Walden Pond and began a

two-year experiment in living a simple life. During his time there in the woods, he wrote these words:

"I went to the woods because I wanted to live life deliberately . . . I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life . . . to put to rout all that was not life . . . and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived."

In some ways, I pray for the same reason Thoreau went to the woods. I pray because I want to live life deliberately. I pray because I want to live life deeply and suck all the marrow out of life! I pray because I want to work out what really matters in this life and spend my time on those things. I pray because I don't want to come to the end of my life and discover that I have not really lived.

I have tried life with and without prayer, and found that life without prayer is unbearable. Without prayer, life doesn't make sense. I don't know how people live without prayer. I don't know how you could remain sane in this crazy, noisy, busy world without prayer. Living without prayer is like choosing to be blind, lame, deaf, and dumb.

But I didn't always feel this way. It all changed for me when I was about fifteen.

IF YOU TOLD ME YOU WANTED TO  
GET REALLY GOOD AT BASKETBALL  
OR FOOTBALL OR GOLF OR TENNIS.

I WOULD TELL YOU TO STUDY  
THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN THE BEST  
IN HISTORY. WHEN IT COMES TO  
PRAYER, MY ADVICE DOES NOT  
CHANGE. STUDY THE SAINTS:  
THEY WERE CHAMPIONS  
OF PRAYER.

**"PRAYER GIVES  
US STRENGTH FOR  
GREAT IDEALS,  
FOR KEEPING  
UP OUR FAITH,  
CHARITY, PURITY,  
GENEROSITY;  
PRAYER GIVES  
US STRENGTH TO  
RISE UP FROM  
INDIFFERENCE  
AND GUILT, IF WE  
HAVE HAD THE  
MISFORTUNE  
TO GIVE IN TO  
TEMPTATION  
AND WEAKNESS.  
PRAYER GIVES US  
LIGHT BY WHICH  
TO SEE AND TO  
JUDGE FROM GOD'S  
PERSPECTIVE AND  
FROM ETERNITY.  
THAT IS WHY YOU  
MUST NOT GIVE UP  
ON PRAYING!"**

**—POPE JOHN PAUL II**



# Discussion Questions

1. WHOM DO YOU TALK TO EVERY DAY? WHY?

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2. DO YOU PRAY? HOW OFTEN? HOW DO YOU FEEL AFTER YOU PRAY?

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3. DO YOU THINK YOU WOULD BE HAPPIER IF YOU MADE TIME TO PRAY EACH DAY?

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# WHAT IS PRAYER?

## AN EXPRESSION OF THANKS OR A SOLEMN REQUEST FOR HELP FROM GOD.



“PRAYER IS THE RAISING OF ONE’S MIND AND HEART TO GOD OR THE REQUESTING OF GOOD THINGS FROM GOD.”  
—SAINT JOHN DAMASCENE

### 4.2 THE BIG QUESTION

My life changed one Sunday afternoon when I was about your age. I didn’t know it at the time. It seemed like another ordinary day, and the guy who changed my life I found pretty annoying at the time. This is what happened. . . .

At the time I was in high school. Everything at school was going very well—I had a great group of friends, a wonderful girlfriend, and a good part-time job. On the outside everything seemed fine, but on the inside a growing restlessness was building up.

One Sunday afternoon I was at a barbecue with some of my mates when I bumped into a family friend. He asked me how school was going. “Fine,” I replied. But he was a doctor and doctors are good at asking questions, and he just kept asking me questions. Each question and each answer led us a little closer to his diagnosis. Then after about fifteen minutes, he paused briefly, looked deep into my eyes, and said, “You’re not really happy, are you, Matthew?”

He knew it and I knew it, but I was ashamed to admit it at first. But our lives seem to flood with grace at unexpected moments, and I began to tell him about the emptiness and restlessness I was experiencing. After listening to me carefully he suggested I stop by my church for ten minutes each morning on the way to school.

I listened, smiled, nodded politely, and immediately dismissed him as some sort of religious fanatic. As he expanded on his idea and how it would transform my life, I wondered to myself, *how is ten minutes of prayer each day going to help me?* Before he had finished speaking I had resolved to completely ignore everything he said.

In the coming weeks I threw myself into my studies, my work, and my sporting pursuits with more vigor than ever before. I had done this to appease my restless heart at other times in my life. But achievement in these areas no longer brought the fulfillment it once had.

One morning about six weeks later the emptiness had become so great that I found myself stopping by church on the way to school. I crept quietly into the church, sat near the back, and began to plan my day. Just planning the day ahead of me lifted the clouds of hurried confusion. For the first time in my life I tasted a few drops of that wonderful tonic we call peace—and I liked it.

The next day, and every day, I returned. Each morning I would simply sit toward the back of the church and move through the events of the day in my mind. With each passing day a sense of peace, purpose, and direction began to fill me.



# Discussion Questions

1. DESCRIBE A TIME WHEN SOMEONE CHALLENGED YOU TO DO SOMETHING THAT WOULD HELP YOU BECOME THE-BEST-VERSION-OF-YOURSELF. HOW DID YOU RESPOND?

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2. HAVE YOU EVER ASKED GOD THE BIG QUESTION: "WHAT DO YOU THINK I SHOULD DO?" IF YOU HAVE, WHAT HAPPENED? IF YOU HAVE NEVER ASKED GOD THE BIG QUESTION, WHY NOT?

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3. IF YOU SPENT TEN MINUTES A DAY IN PRAYER EVERY DAY FOR THE NEXT MONTH, HOW DO YOU THINK YOU MIGHT BE DIFFERENT A MONTH FROM NOW?

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# 4.3 The PRAYER Process

Isaac Newton's first law states: An object at rest stays at rest and an object in motion stays in motion at the same speed, unless acted on by an external force.

The hard part is getting started. Have you ever noticed that when you sit down to start writing a paper, you get distracted by a million things? You remember three things you needed to do, you decide you are hungry and go to the fridge, you need to go to the bathroom, etc.

Getting started on anything can be excruciating. A space shuttle uses 96 percent of its fuel at takeoff.

It can be very difficult at first to take prayer seriously too. I don't say that to discourage you. I tell you this so that when you experience the difficulty you will realize it is normal and you will persevere.

The hardest things to do are those that have never been done before. The first time man went to the moon was incredibly difficult because everything had to be learned from scratch. Prayer isn't like that. Great men and women have been practicing prayer for thousands of years, and we can learn a lot from them.

Most people either don't pray at all or don't pray very much, because nobody has ever really taught them how to pray. In this session I am going to teach you **The Prayer Process**. I developed The Prayer Process a few years ago after studying hundreds of methods of prayer, because I wanted to give people a simple process that they could use every day to guide their conversation with God.

After all, that is what prayer ultimately is: a conversation with God.

**The Prayer Process** is designed to be very simple, yet deeply personal. It is made up of seven simple steps.

- 1. GRATITUDE:** Begin by thanking God in a personal dialogue for whatever you are most grateful for today.
- 2. AWARENESS:** Revisit the times in the past twenty-four hours when you were and were not the-best-version-of-yourself. Talk to God about these situations and what you learned from them.
- 3. SIGNIFICANT MOMENTS:** Identify something you experienced in the past twenty-four hours and explore what God might be trying to say to you through that event (or person).

GETTING  
STARTED

The hardest part of anything is getting started. Prayer is no different. If you are having trouble, use the Psalms to pray. The Psalms are a powerful collection of prayers. Use them to get started—they will teach you how to pray, and before too long your own words will begin to flow.

**4. PEACE:** Ask God to forgive you for any wrong you have committed (against yourself, another person, or Him) and to fill you with a deep and abiding peace.

**5. FREEDOM:** Speak with God about how He is inviting you to change your life so that you can experience the freedom to be the-best-version-of-yourself.

**6. OTHERS:** Lift up to God anyone you feel called to pray for today, asking God to bless and guide them.

**7. Pray the Our Father.**

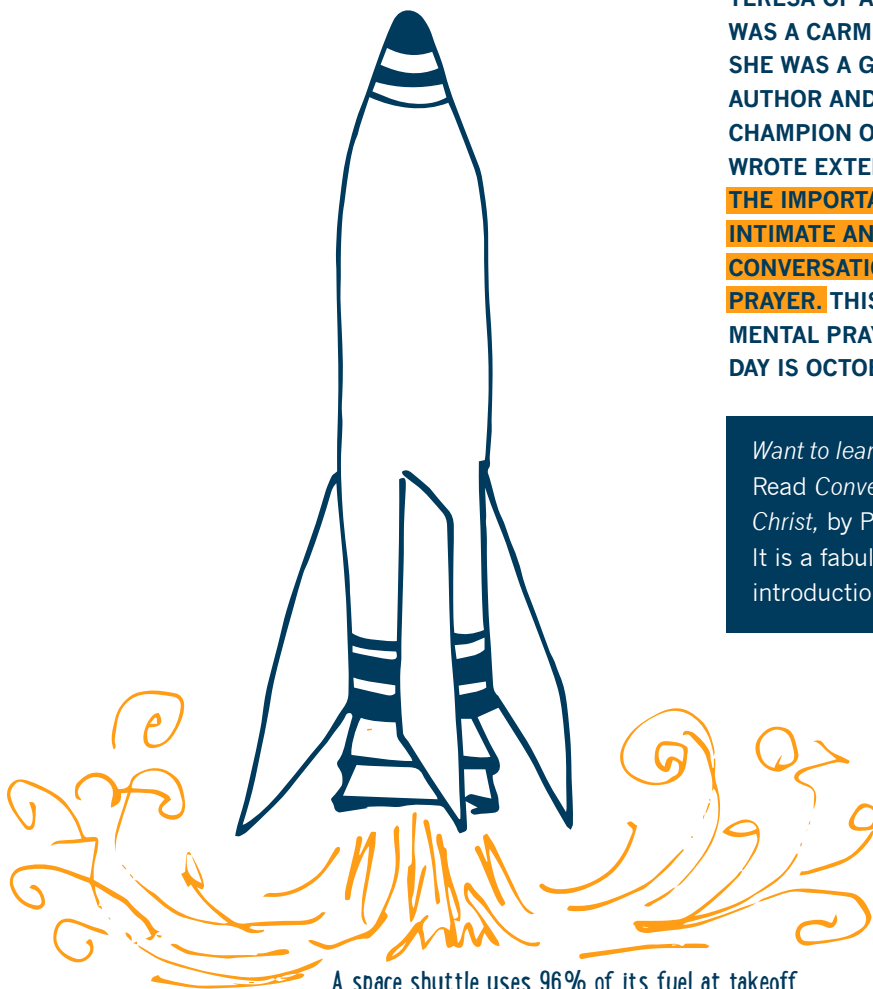
The Prayer Process is quite simple and, like most things, easy to talk about. But the best way to understand it is to practice it!



## WHO WAS ST. TERESA OF AVILA?

**TERESA OF AVILA (1515–1582) WAS A CARMELITE NUN. SHE WAS A GREAT CATHOLIC AUTHOR AND MYSTIC, AND A CHAMPION OF PRAYER. TERESA WROTE EXTENSIVELY ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF HAVING INTIMATE AND PERSONAL CONVERSATION WITH GOD IN PRAYER. THIS IS KNOWN AS MENTAL PRAYER. HER FEAST DAY IS OCTOBER 15.**

*Want to learn more?  
Read *Conversation with Christ*, by Peter Rohrbach.  
It is a fabulous  
introduction to prayer.*



A space shuttle uses 96% of its fuel at takeoff.



# DISCUSSION

## QUESTIONS

1. HAS ANYONE EVER TAUGHT YOU HOW TO PRAY? WHO? WHEN?

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2. WHICH OF THE SEVEN STEPS IN THE PRAYER PROCESS INTRIGUED YOU THE MOST? WHY?

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3. IF YOU WERE GOING TO SET ASIDE TEN MINUTES TO PRAY AT THE SAME TIME EVERY DAY, WHAT TIME OF DAY WOULD BE BEST FOR YOU?

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THE **5** TYPES  
OF PRAYER

- 1 ADORATION
- 2 PETITION
- 3 INTERCESSION
- 4 THANKSGIVING
- 5 PRAISE

To learn more,  
read CCC 2623–2643.

Learn to  
**LISTEN**

EVERY RELATIONSHIP  
IMPROVES WHEN WE  
REALLY START TO LISTEN.

Søren Kierkegaard wrote,  
“Praying does not mean  
listening to yourself speak;  
praying means calming  
down and being still and  
waiting until you hear God.”

# 4.4 The Best Way to learn

You get good at riding a bicycle, not by reading a book about bikes or listening to a lecture about riding techniques, but by actually riding a bicycle. Sure, the book and the lecture can be helpful, but ultimately you will hone your skills by spending time on the bike.

The same is true for prayer. It’s good to talk about it and to read books about it, but at some point the best thing to do is just try it and see what you learn from actually praying.

There are two reasons most people don’t pray: nobody ever taught them and they don’t know where to start. The Prayer Process solves both of these problems. It teaches us how to pray and it gives us a simple step-by-step process, so we know exactly where to start.

What I would like to do now is to walk you through the process while you actually practice it. I’ll keep talking to you, guiding you through the process, but there won’t be anything to watch here on the screen. So, let’s start by closing our eyes.

Now, get comfortable, so that you can be still and quiet for a few minutes, and take some deep breaths. Breathe in deep, and breathe out any stress or anxiety that you have in your life today.

Now, let’s begin...

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

**The first step in The Prayer Process is... GRATITUDE: Begin by thanking God in a personal dialogue for whatever you are most grateful for today.**

What are you grateful for at this time in your life? Talk to God about that. Don’t just think about it. Have a mental conversation with God about everyone and everything you are grateful for today...

**The second step in The Prayer Process is... AWARENESS: Revisit the times in the past twenty-four hours when you were and were not the-best-version-of-yourself. Talk to God about these situations and what you learned from them.**

Recall a time in the past twenty-four hours when you were the-best-version-of-yourself, even if it was just for a moment... Talk to God about that situation... tell him if it was easy or difficult... and how you felt...

Now bring to mind a time in the past twenty-four hours when you were not the-best-version-of-yourself... Talk to God about why you

did what you did... tell him how you felt at the time... and how you felt after... and talk to him about how you are going to try to handle situations like that differently in the future...

**The third step in the process is... SIGNIFICANT MOMENTS:** Identify something you experienced in the past twenty-four hours and explore what God might be trying to say to you through that event (or person).

How have you experienced God in the past twenty-four hours? Did you sense that God was trying to tell you something through a person or something that happened? Talk to God about that now... again, try to go beyond just thinking about these things and have a mental conversation with God...

**The fourth step in the process is... PEACE:** Ask God to forgive you for any wrong you have committed (against yourself, another person, or Him) and to fill you with a deep and abiding peace.

Are you carrying around guilt or shame over something? God is your Father and he loves you deeply, ask him right now to forgive you and fill you with a deep, deep peace.

**The fifth step in The Prayer Process is... FREEDOM:** Speak with God about how He is inviting you to change your life so that you can experience the freedom to be the-best-version-of-yourself.

God loves you as you are today, but he loves you too much to let you stay this way. How do you sense God is calling you to change and grow? Talk to him about that... now ask him to give you the courage and strength to make this change in your life...

**The sixth step in the process is... OTHERS:** Lift up to God anyone you feel called to pray for today, asking God to bless and guide them.

Who do you want God to bless in a special way today? Talk to God about each of these people... and vocalize the specific ways you would like God to bless them... Take your time... Slowly pray for the people in your life... one at a time...

**The final step of The Prayer Process is to pray the Our Father.** It is a prayer most of us have been praying all our lives, but if we really comprehended the words of this prayer we would not be able to finish it without weeping for joy. So, let's pray it together, out loud, slowly and deliberately...

Our Father...



## Per·se·ver·ance

[pur-suh-veer-uh ns]

Continued effort to do or achieve something despite difficulties, delays, failure, or opposition.

**Developing a dynamic prayer life requires perseverance more than anything else.**

**Just keep showing up. Some days you will feel like praying and many days you will not, but if you keep showing up you will develop a phenomenal friendship with God.**



# PRAY WITHOUT CEASING

(1 Thessalonians 5:17)

We cannot pray every minute of every day. We have things to do. **What was Paul saying?** He was encouraging us to transform every moment of every day into a prayer. **How?** By offering each hour of study or work to God as a prayer, offering inconveniences and suffering to God as a prayer, and offering everything we do each day to God, we transform the ordinary realities of everyday life into prayer.

When I was a child I was taught to start my day by offering everything that was going to happen that day to God. This prayer is called a morning offering. There are many different versions; this is the one I was taught:

O Jesus, through the most pure heart of Mary, I offer you the prayer, works, joys, and sufferings of this day, for all the intentions of your divine heart.  
Amen.

There is genius in Catholicism. It may not always be apparent on the surface, but behind each and every Catholic tradition are glimpses of the genius of Catholicism.

You can open your eyes now. Thanks for praying with me. For four years I have been working on this Confirmation program, and for four years I have been praying for you – the young men and women from all over the world who will experience it. I'm going to continue to pray for you every day. And I hope you will pray for me, and all the team at Dynamic Catholic, as we continue to work to develop resources to help you and others to have powerful encounters with God.





# DISCUSSION

## QUESTIONS

1. WHAT ARE YOU MOST GRATEFUL FOR TODAY?

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2. WHAT SURPRISED YOU THE MOST AS YOU PRACTICED THE PRAYER PROCESS?

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3. NOW THAT YOU HAVE BEEN TAUGHT HOW TO PRAY, WHAT IS MOST LIKELY TO GET IN THE WAY OF DEVELOPING PRAYER AS A DAILY HABIT IN YOUR LIFE?

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# the PRAYER process

## **STEP 1** GRATITUDE

Begin by thanking God in a personal dialogue for whatever you are most grateful for today.

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## **STEP 2** AWARENESS

Revisit the times in the past twenty-four hours when you were and were not the-best-version-of-yourself. Talk to God about these situations and what you learned from them.

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## **STEP 3** SIGNIFICANT MOMENTS

Identify something you experienced in the past twenty-four hours and explore what God might be trying to say to you through that event (or person).

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## **STEP 4** PEACE

Ask God to forgive you for any wrong you have committed (against yourself, another person, or Him) and to fill you with a deep and abiding peace.

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## **STEP 5** FREEDOM

Speak with God about how He is inviting you to change your life so that you can experience the freedom to be the-best-version-of-yourself.

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## **STEP 6** OTHERS

Lift up to God anyone you feel called to pray for today, asking God to bless and guide them.

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## **STEP 7** PRAY THE OUR FATHER



# 4.5 DECISION point

**MARK 1:35**  
**MATTHEW 14:23**  
**LUKE 5:16**  
**LUKE 9:28**

And LOTS OF OTHERS . . .

**KNOW IT:** Over and over we read about Jesus going off to quiet places to pray.

**THINK ABOUT IT:** If Jesus needed time to reflect and pray, how much more do you and I need it?

**LIVE IT:** Develop the daily habit of finding a quiet place to connect with God.

Over and over throughout the Gospels we read about Jesus going to quiet places to pray.

Mark 1:35: “In the morning, while it was still dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed.”

Matthew 14:23: “After he had dismissed the crowds, he went up a mountain by himself to pray.”

Luke 5:16: “Now more than ever the word about Jesus spread abroad; many crowds would gather to hear him and be cured of their diseases. But he would withdraw to deserted places and pray.”

Luke 9:28: “Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John, and went up on a mountain to pray.”

Why did Jesus withdraw so often to pray? He was God, right? True. But he was also man. Imagine the distractions. The fame. The people who were trying to convince him to be a political or worldly leader. The people who were trying to use him for their own benefit. He withdrew to pray so that he could stay focused on his mission, to remember what really mattered.

We all get confused about what really matters from time to time. Prayer helps us to keep things in perspective.

We live in a noisy, busy world. If you are going to work out *who you are* and *what you are here for*, you need to step back from it all for a few minutes each day to reconnect with yourself and with God.

What place does prayer have in your life today? Is prayer at the center of your life or on the periphery of your life. Give prayer a central place in your life. Place prayer at the center of your life and amazing things will begin to happen.

Find a place where you can spend a few minutes with God each day. Set aside a time at the same time each day for prayer. Make this place and time a sacred part of your day, and God will fill you with his wisdom so you can make great decisions every day.

To pray or not to pray? That’s your **decision point** today.

Here’s my challenge for you: Practice The Prayer Process every day for thirty days. After thirty days I hope you are convinced that prayer should remain a daily habit for the rest of your life.

**“MENTAL PRAYER IS NOTHING ELSE THAN AN INTIMATE FRIENDSHIP, A FREQUENT heart-to-heart CONVERSATION WITH HIM BY WHOM WE KNOW OURSELVES to be loved.”**  
*–Saint Teresa of Avila*

# JOURNAL QUESTIONS

1. OVER AND OVER IN THE SCRIPTURES WE READ ABOUT JESUS GOING OFF TO A QUIET PLACE TO PRAY. DO YOU HAVE A QUIET PLACE WHERE YOU CAN PRAY EACH DAY? WHERE?

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2. DO YOU HAVE A FAVORITE QUIET PLACE YOU LIKE TO GO WHEN YOU NEED TO MAKE BIG DECISIONS?

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3. DID YOU DO ANYTHING TODAY THAT WAS MORE IMPORTANT THAN SPENDING A FEW MINUTES WITH GOD IN PRAYER?

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# THE GEOGRAPHY OF PRAYER

Do you pray only for yourself? If so, your geography of prayer is pretty small—tiny, in fact! As Christians, we believe we are called to pray for the whole world, and as such, the geography of our prayer should take in the whole world. When I was in high school I was given a rosary. Each of the five decades was a different color and represented a different region of the world. The idea was to offer each decade for the people in those different regions, thus praying for the whole world.

**First decade (green beads): Pray for Africa**

**Second decade (red beads): Pray for the Americas**

**Third decade (white beads): Pray for Europe**

**Fourth decade (blue beads): Pray for the South Pacific**

**Fifth decade (yellow beads): Pray for Asia**

Prayer is powerful. If we love our neighbor, we will pray for our neighbor. As Catholics, the geography of our prayer even reaches beyond this world when we pray for our loved ones who have died, that they may be united with God in paradise.

The geography of prayer is just one of millions of beautiful realities that make up our faith.







# Psalm 63

<sup>1</sup>O God, thou art my God, I seek thee,  
my soul thirsts for thee; my flesh faints for thee,  
as in a dry and weary land where no water is.

<sup>2</sup>So I have looked upon thee in the sanctuary,  
beholding thy power and glory. <sup>3</sup>Because thy steadfast  
love is better than life, my lips will praise thee.

<sup>4</sup>So I will bless thee as long as I live;  
I will lift up my hands and call on thy name.

<sup>5</sup>My soul is feasted as with marrow and fat, and my  
mouth praises thee with joyful lips,

<sup>6</sup>when I think of thee upon my bed, and meditate on  
thee in the watches of the night;

<sup>7</sup>for thou hast been my help, and in the shadow of thy  
wings I sing for joy. <sup>8</sup>My soul clings to thee;  
thy right hand upholds me.

<sup>9</sup>But those who seek to destroy my life  
shall go down into the depths of the earth;

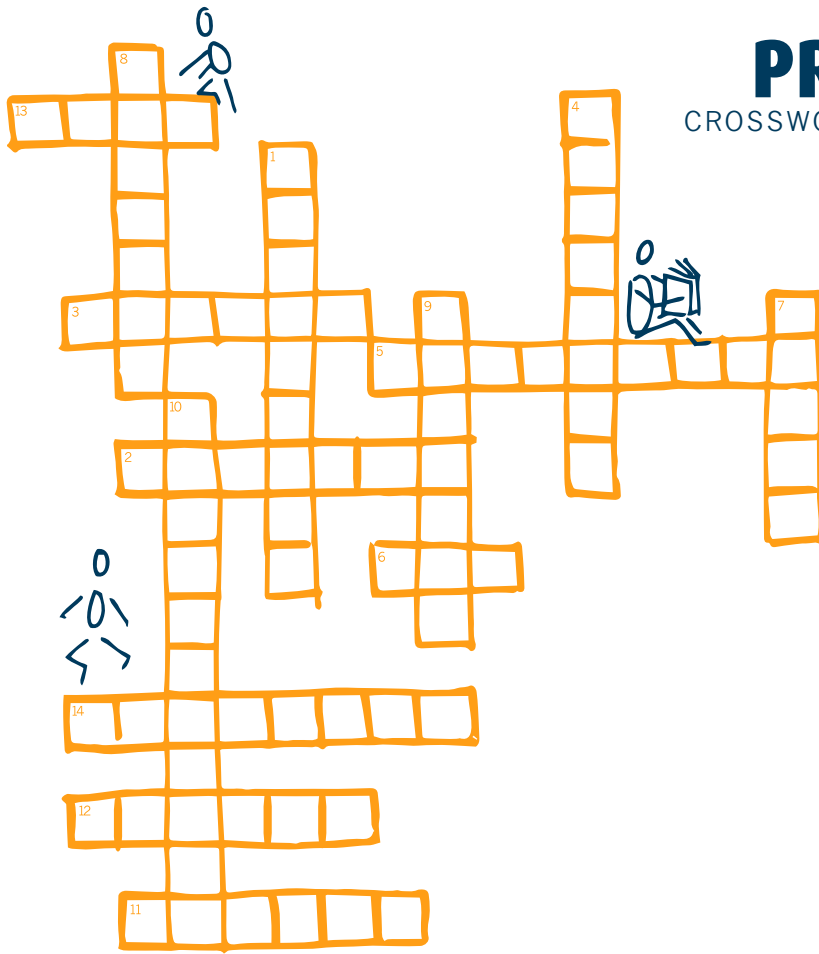
<sup>10</sup>they shall be given over to the power of the sword,  
they shall be prey for jackals.

<sup>11</sup>But the king shall rejoice in God; all who swear by him  
shall glory; for the mouths of liars will be stopped.



# PRAYER

## CROSSWORD PUZZLE



### ACROSS

2. The absence of noise
3. A state of great unhappiness that comes from turning our backs on God
5. A state of being thankful and showing appreciation
6. The immense happiness that comes from walking with God in all things
9. The strength of character to do what is good and right
11. People, besides yourself, whom you feel inspired to pray for
12. A conversation with God
13. The spiritual or immaterial part of a human being
14. Something that is more important than other things and needs to be done first

### DOWN

1. The ability to perceive what is really happening within us and around us
4. To do something again and again to get good at it
7. A state of being that is free from stress and anxiety
8. A state of great disturbance, confusion, or uncertainty
10. Important, meaningful

