



PRAY YOUR WAY

Based on talks by Dr. Bradley Hanson from the 2006 Synod Theological Conference

How do you pray? Many people think of prayer only as talking to God, but there are many ways to pray. There are four legs to prayer: 1. Talking to God, 2. Listening to God (meditating), 3. Contemplation, and 4. Intercession (praying for others). If you find it difficult to concentrate on praying, maybe a different kind of prayer or just a change in routine would help. There are many different kinds of prayer, but here are a few examples to get you started.

Lectio divina

This type of prayer incorporates several of the legs of prayer. First, select a Bible passage to pray about. Then read the passage through, meditate (what do you hear God saying through the passage?), speak to God about it, and then contemplate what you have read.

Ignatian Contemplation

This is a more imaginative

approach to prayer that works best with a story-type Bible passage. Select a Bible passage and you will read through it four times concentrating on a different thing each time. The first time just read through it. The second notice the details of the story. The third imagine yourself as a character in the story. This can be any character - a main character, a lesser character, or just someone in the crowd. The fourth time let your mind fill in the blanks that are not told in the story. What is happening around you? How do you feel about what is happening?

Luther's Practice

Luther's method of praying involved focusing on portions of the catechism, especially the commandments, every day. His approach then had four steps: 1. Instruction, 2. Thanksgiving, 3. Confession, and 4. Prayer. He would go through the commandment (or other passage) and go through each of those four steps in response to the same passage.

The Examen

Another form of prayer involves looking back at one's own life to see where God has been present. This can cover a period of a day, a week, a month, a year, or a lifetime (or anywhere in between). One way to do this as a group prayer would be to select a period of time and have everyone share a high point, a low point, and how God was present during those times.

The Jesus Prayer

This is a very different kind of prayer. It just uses the words "Lord Jesus Christ have mercy on me." While praying these words, try synchronizing it with breath and then focusing on the inner stillness. Saying it out loud also helps keep focus. The thing to note about this prayer is to not focus so much on the words, but what the words point to. Just as you wouldn't look at a window but through it, look through the words to Christ rather than at each word.

FEATURED RESOURCES

- ELCA Prayer - www.elca.org/prayer
- Southeastern Minnesota Synod Prayer Calendar - www.semnsynod.org/prayerbible.html

MONTHLY BIBLE VERSE

This Bible verse was selected by Harold Usgaard, bishop of the Southeastern Minnesota Synod, for everyone in the synod to study.

"Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples."

LUKE 11:1A

ABOUT OUR SYNOD

The Southeastern Minnesota Synod is a faith community of 130,000 baptized people in 184 congregations as well as related institutions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Its geographic area includes 15 counties in the southeastern corner of Minnesota.

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