

Practices

In the church, we need unity and diversity. A lot about our patterns of prayer as we follow RHYTHM will be the same, to help unite us as a church, but all of us are different, and connect with God in individual ways. To recognise this, we have put together this list of practices—different ways to pray—for you to use, to customise your own RHYTHM and build on the basic foundations of the Bible in One Year, the Lord’s Prayer, and the examen. You can use these practices on your own, in your Huddles, or in your Connect Groups.

Activity

Getting active can help create a space to connect with God. Some of us concentrate best when we’re doing other things at the same time, too. Try going for a walk, a run, a swim, or a cycle and praying as you go. Just remember to look where you’re going!

Bible Study

Read a part of the Bible, and pray and think about what that passage means. It’s great to study the Bible with other people—try discussing it with your family, friends, Huddle, or Connect Group. There are lots of great Bible Commentaries and theology books out there to help us grow in understanding. Speak to one of our church leaders for tips of which ones might be best to read. You can also try visiting bibleproject.com for great introductions to different parts of the Bible, or listen to the ‘GodPod’ podcast.

Conferences

As well as Focus, there are many different Christian conferences held throughout the year. There are some local events, including some run by the Diocese of St Edmundsbury and Ipswich, camping events similar to Focus, and shorter conferences on specific themes and topics, such as the annual Leadership Conference, run by the HTB Network. These events can help us to meet other Christians from other churches, broaden our horizons, and inspire us to enter the next step of God’s plan for us.

Confession

Confession is acknowledging that we live in ways that aren’t in line with God’s plans, and in ways which harm ourselves and others. The Bible encourages us to confess our sins and failures to God, who promises to forgive us, as well as to each other. If you’ve hurt somebody in particular, try confessing to them and asking for forgiveness and reconciliation where this is appropriate. Huddles are a great place to confess our sins and struggles to one another in confidence, and pray for one another to grow more Christ-like.

Contemplation

Contemplation is being present when and where you are, and noticing God's presence and action there. Still yourself, shut out the hustle and bustle and distractions of the world, and open your thoughts up to God. You could set aside a specific place (a comfy chair, perhaps) to sit for 10 minutes each day, and become aware of God, or talk a walk and appreciate the goodness of God's creation as you contemplate.

Conversation

Relationships grow through spending time together in conversation. It's just the same with Jesus! He calls us His friends, so chat to Him about your day, your feelings, your joys, your struggles. Be honest, and remember that conversations are two-way, so leave time to listen to what Jesus might be saying to you through the Bible, the Holy Spirit in you, or other Christians.

Creativity

We can use our creative gifts to pray and worship. Try drawing, painting, dancing, singing, playing an instrument, writing a poem, or anything else creative either to express your prayers and praise to God, and encourage others, too.

Daily Offices

The Church of England has a set of traditional prayers called 'Daily Offices'—morning prayer, evening prayer, and night prayer. These offices each have some liturgy (pre-written prayers) to say each day, as well as a Collect (special prayer for the day). There are also a set of Bible readings for each day, but you could use the Bible in One Year readings instead. The repetition and rhythm of these prayers can help us to focus on God and hear his voice, alongside loads of other Anglicans around the world. You can find the Daily Offices at [churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/join-us-service-daily-prayer](https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/join-us-service-daily-prayer), in the 'Common Worship: Daily Prayer' book, or on the 'Daily Prayer' app.

Examen

The examen is a prayer of reflection on your day, praising God for the good, repenting of the bad, and committing to follow Him tomorrow. You can remember how to pray an examen in five 'R's. Request—invite the Holy Spirit to come and speak to you. Replay—look back over your day and notice the time God felt close, and the times He felt far, the good and the bad. Rejoice—thank and praise God for all that went well. Repent—say sorry to God for the times you failed or did things you shouldn't. Reboot—ask God to help you live more like Jesus tomorrow when you wake up.

Fasting

Fasting is going without something—normally food—to help us focus on God. Start small, perhaps by missing one meal, for example, and when you are feeling hungry, or would normally be eating, use that time to pray and worship. Be careful not to feel guilty if you end a fast early, or proud if you manage it; the Bible reminds us that fasting is something to do privately, and we definitely shouldn't ever show off to others about fasting. It's between us and God. If you are planning to fast from food or drink, please consult a doctor first, who will be able to advise you on whether this is safe for you—God wouldn't want anyone to get ill through fasting.

Journalling

Write down your prayers, and make a note of anything you sense God says to you, and when you've seen prayers answered. Try writing down the highs and lows of each day in the evening, processing them in prayer. You could also try Bible journalling. Journalling Bibles have blank space to write your thoughts and prayers in as you read, and some even have pictures to colour in. There are great journalling apps out there, as well as beautiful paper journals.

Lament

Lament is a great way to pray when times are tough. Be honest with God about how you're feeling, ask Him questions, and give Him your struggles. There are lots of Psalms of lament in the Bible, so why not try to pray one of these psalms by reading it aloud?

Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina means 'divine reading'. It's an ancient way of reading the Bible. First, slowly read a passage from the Bible, then meditate on its meaning, asking God to speak to you through it. Then read the passage once or twice more, and see what phrases stand out and resonate with you. Let these phrases or ideas sink in, and keep the passage in mind, letting it shape your day. You can practice *Lectio Divina* with others, and share what you think the passage means, or what God might be saying through it with each other.

Praise

Praise is celebrating God, worshipping Him, and lifting His name high. Try using a worship song, or other creative arts to help you express your praise!

Presence

Where God is present, things change. God is always present, wherever we go, but He also loves to make Himself specially present with us. Pray 'come Holy Spirit', open your hands, expect God to meet with you, and wait on Him. You may experience many things—peace, joy, love, freedom—or nothing at all, other than the assurance that God *is* with you.

Reading

God calls us to love Him with our hearts, bodies, souls, and *minds*. Deepening our faith and understanding is one way of worshipping God. There are lots of brilliant books out there which can help us to learn, expand our horizons, and see God in new ways. Chat to one of the church leaders for book recommendations, and they'd love to point you in the right direction!

Sabbath

Sabbath is a central Christian principle. God calls us to stop working and stop producing for a day each week, to offer that time to Him, and spend it in rest, worship and time with loved ones. This might be Sunday for many of us, but it doesn't have to be. Sabbath is a principle for life, rather than something legalistic, and reminds us that our work can't earn our salvation, and that all the good we do is made possible by God's grace alone. Sabbath reminds us that the world doesn't rely on us, it relies on God. Pick a day, and take a sabbath.

Scripture Memorisation

Remembering verses from the Bible off by heart is a way to internalise God's voice, and means you can carry His words and His truth with you, wherever you go. Try starting to remember one verse per week, or one verse from each Bible in One Year reading, if you're feeling ambitious. You might find writing a verse on a post-it and sticking it in a prominent place in your home, like the fridge door, will help you to memorise verses.

Silence

Turn off your phone, your screens, your computer—anything that might distract you—and offer that time to God. God often speaks in a still, small voice, and removing distractions can help us to focus on Him.

Slowing

Cutting hurry out of our lives can help us to slow down and notice God at work—to appreciate Him and His creation. Leave some blank space in your schedule to resist hurry and slow down for a while.

Solitude

Solitude is spending some time on your own, away from the company and conversation of other people, to help remove distractions, and become more aware of the company of Jesus.