

Rule of
life

Dear friends,

The invitation from Jesus, on the back cover of this booklet (Matthew 11:28-30), is best known in a more traditional version...

“Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

Living the Christian faith and following Jesus shouldn't be burdensome or wearying - there's plenty else in life to do that! On the contrary, Jesus invites us into a life-giving friendship. One in which our burdens are shared with him and where we find rest for our souls. He invites us to share our whole lives with him.

Like all close relationships, those we have with Jesus (our brother) and God (our Father) require our effort and energy. They need regular and open communication. They deserve our time, every day, in order that they grow and deepen.

From the earliest days of the Bible, we can see how humans have tried (and often failed) to live well in relationship with God. In the Old Testament, this was all about fearfully trying to obey the rules set out in the Law given by God through Moses.

In the New Testament all that changed. Jesus taught and modelled a whole new way of living in relationship with God the Father - one that is personal, gracious, and helps us to live **'life in all its fullness'** (John 10:10). He invited and encouraged his disciples to have the same kind of relationship with God. As his followers today, we share that invitation and live with the wonder and joy of being able to call the God of all creation **'Our Father'**.

Jesus set us an example of how we go about having such a relationship with God. When we read about Jesus in the Gospels, we see just how important **prayer, quiet, rest, and scripture** were in nurturing and sustaining his relationship with his Father. This example has been followed by Christians through the centuries who have structured their lives around regular prayer, rest, and Bible reading as a way to stay connected with God and walk each day with him.

Out of that desire to walk closely with God grew what Christians have long called a **rule of life**. The word ‘rule’ comes from the Latin *regula*, meaning a guide or a straight edge.

Although he didn’t invent the idea, we most associate the rule of life with the sixth century monk, Saint Benedict. Benedict noticed that people who wanted to follow Jesus needed more than just enthusiasm so he wrote what he called a ‘little rule for beginners’. The rule of St Benedict is a simple, pattern of daily prayer, work, rest, and shared life that helped those living a monastic life to grow in faith and devotion to God.

For Christians today, a rule of life is a plan to embrace practices of prayer, rest, and Bible reading that work for you and will be helpful in building up your faith. It is not a contract; rather it is the embracing of **‘holy habits’** that quickly become a way of life that is shared with God more fully.

Your rule of life is for you to create. It’s not set in stone, and it will almost certainly change to reflect the changes in your life. When we form a rule of life, we are saying to God, “This is what I will normally do each day to make time for you.”

Wonderfully and importantly, creating time in our day for things like rest, quiet, reading the Bible, thoughtfulness, gratitude and prayer isn't just good for our souls, it's equally good for our minds, our bodies and our general sense of wellbeing. **Deepening our relationship with God and growing in faith, we become more like Jesus, more attuned to the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and feel more content, fulfilled, hopeful, joyful, and more able to be a blessing to our family, friends and community.**

I hope that the ideas and resources in this booklet will be a blessing to you as you seek to develop a personal rule of life. As you read through, see what appeals to your own spirituality, what is actually viable for you at this point in your life, and give things a go. This is by no means a definitive resource, so be creative. When you think that you've got a 'rule' that works for you, make a note in the back of this booklet as a way of committing your plans to God.

Any help that I can be, please just ask. We share our walk together!

May God bless you every day.

Rev Dave

Offering the day to God

'In the morning, while it was still very dark, he got up and went out to a deserted place, and there he prayed.'

Mark 1:35

Christians through the centuries have followed Jesus' example of praying as the day begins.

Before we've looked at our emails (or in some other way let the demands of the world crowd in) we have the opportunity to offer the day to God. By praying first, we remind ourselves that we share this day with him. By opening our Bibles in the morning, we are getting the best possible start.

Giving God the first bit of our day isn't about performing a duty or ticking a box; it is about starting from a place of partnership with God who loves us.



The shared way: Morning Prayer is said in church at 8:30am, Monday to Thursday. There is a deep strength in praying with others and letting the rhythm of the daily office with its psalms and canticles carry you.

The scriptural way: Make a coffee, find a quiet place to sit, and enjoy Bible reading notes or Lectio Divina to listen for God's voice in the Bible before the other noises of the day begin. See page 12.

The liturgical way: Use the Short Form of Morning Prayer (over the page) or the full Church of England service in the Daily Prayer app. See page 46.

The quiet way: Simply sit in silence for 5 or 10 minutes. Offer up your hopes and your worries for the day. Pray for the people you will meet. Ask for God's blessing for you and for them and pray that his peace will go before you. No plans today? Try praying: "Lord, I offer you this day. Use me as you will."

The active way: Pray as you walk the dog or commute. Offer the day's tasks or pray for your neighbours - the ones you know and the ones you don't!

Starting well

‘Let me hear of your steadfast love in the morning, for in you I put my trust. Teach me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul.’

Psalm 143:8

For many Anglicans, Morning Prayer is the cornerstone of their daily rhythm. When we pray it, we know that the same prayers, psalms and readings are being said in churches, cathedrals, and homes throughout the world.

It grew out of the monastic tradition where the day began early with the office of ‘Lauds’ which gathered the community together in prayer as the sun rose, reminding them of Jesus’ resurrection.

This shortened version of Morning Prayer includes many similar elements, helping us to thank God for the gift of a new morning, and allowing him to speak to us through his word.



Preparation

O Lord, open our lips
and our mouth shall proclaim your praise.

Thanksgiving

Blessed are you, creator of all,
to you be praise and glory for ever.
As your dawn renews the face of the earth
bringing light and life to all creation,
may we rejoice in the day you have made;
as we wake refreshed from the depths of sleep,
open our eyes to behold your presence
and strengthen our hands to do your will,
that the world may rejoice and give you praise.
and live in your peace.

Blessed be God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Blessed be God for ever.

The night has passed, and the day lies open
before us; let us pray with one heart and mind.

Silence is kept.

As we rejoice in the gift of this new day,
so may the light of your presence, O God,
set our hearts on fire with love for you;
now and for ever. **Amen.**

Psalm

Read this or another psalm.

Let me hear of your steadfast love in the morning, for in you I put my trust:
Teach me the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul.

**Save me, O Lord, from my enemies:
I have fled to you for refuge.**

Teach me to do your will, for you are my God:
Let your good spirit lead me on a level path.

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

Psalm 143:8-10

The Bible Reading

Read a short passage of the Bible.

Prayers

A time of prayer for the day and its tasks, the world and its need, the Church and her life. See page 18 for a short set of intercessions.

The Lord's Prayer

Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us.

**Our Father,
who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.**

The Conclusion

The Lord bless us, and preserve us from all evil, and keep us in eternal life. **Amen.**

Let us bless the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

Sacred reading

**'How sweet are your words to my taste,
sweeter than honey to my mouth!'**

Psalm 119:103

The phrase *Lectio Divina* is simply Latin for *divine* or *sacred reading*. While its roots are much older, St Benedict is remembered for instructing his monks to read and pray this way for hours each day. It was the 12th century monk Guigo II who described it as a '*ladder with four rungs*' that help us climb from the noise of the world toward the peace of God.

Lectio Davina is a process of reading a passage of scripture slowly and prayerfully a few times to allow God to speak to us through a particular word or phrase. Christians often think of the Bible as nourishment for our souls. *Lectio Davina* helps us to slowly savour our food rather than gulping it down.



Before you begin: Take some time to allow yourself to become quiet and still. Invite the Holy Spirit to guide you as you read.

Lectio - Read: Read the passage slowly. If you are somewhere you can, read it out loud. Don't worry about understanding it all yet.

Meditatio - Reflect: Read the passage a second time. Is there a particular word or a short phrase that seems to jump out to you or catch your attention? Don't overthink it. Just stay with that one word or phrase. Repeat it gently to yourself.

Oratio - Respond: Read the passage a third time. Now, talk to God about that word. Why do you think it caught your eye? Does it relate to a hope you have, a challenge you are facing, or someone you care about? Be honest, this is just between you and your loving heavenly Father. If you want to, make a note.

Contemplatio - Rest: Read the passage one final time. Now, simply sit in silence with God for a minute or two. You don't need any more words. Just enjoy being in his company before you go about the rest of your day.

Pausing to pray

‘Tell me, you whom my soul loves, where you pasture your flock, where you make it lie down at noon’

Song of Solomon 1:7a

In the rush of the day, it is easy to forget that God has been with us, is with us, and will be with us. We can easily get swept up in the ‘doing’, whether we’re at work or school, with the children or grandchildren, or keeping on top of the garden. If we’re honest, it’s very easy to be too busy or distracted for God - but that’s usually when we need him most.

The Christian tradition of a midday pause is an invitation to stop, to take a moment of rest, to breathe, and to pray. Having reminded ourselves that God is always with us, we can return to our day feeling his peace and presence and ready for whatever is next.

Does it have to be at 12:00?
No. Whenever works for you.



A moment of peace: Whether you have 2 minutes or 20, the Jesus Prayer is the perfect way to recentre yourself in the middle of the day. The rhythm of the words and your breathing will help you to find that much needed peaceful moment. See page 20

Midday grace: Use lunch as a moment to ask God to bless more than just your food. Ask God to bless the people you've seen or spoken to or the places you've been or are going to. On your own today? Ask him to bless all who are hungry.

A holy reminder: Don't get a lunch break? Set an alarm for when you want to pause, and take a short moment to still yourself and thank God that he is with you today.

The liturgical way: Use a shortened version of the *Prayer During the Day* liturgy over the page or in the *Time to Pray* app (p.47). Perhaps there is a Christian prayer group at school or work that you could join. If not could you start one?

Take a prayerful walk: If you are able, step outside for a short walk, even if it's just around the block or to the garden gate. With every step, imagine you are walking with Jesus, and chat to him as you would any friend. Remember to listen too. The walk and the prayer will do you good and prepare you for the afternoon.

Make time to pray

**'From the rising of the sun to its setting
the name of the Lord is to be praised.'**

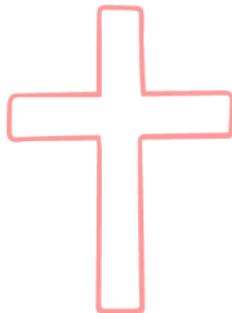
Psalm 113:3

The *Time to Pray* app has the full *Prayer During the Day* with automatically added psalms and readings and rotating the liturgy depending on the day of the week or the season of the year.

However, if you don't have a smartphone or prefer something simpler, you may find this shortened version helpful. It's set out so that you can use it with others or alone.

What passage from the Bible you read is left up to you. Try to have a plan, maybe working through one book.

One of the Gospels is a good place to start. The reading plan beginning on page 37 is an option too.



Preparation

O God, make speed to save us.

O Lord, make haste to help us.

Praise

We praise you, O God,
we acclaim you as the Lord;
all creation worships you,
the Father everlasting.

To you all angels, all the powers of heaven,
the cherubim and seraphim,
sing in endless praise:

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.

from Te Deum Laudamus

The Bible Reading

Read a short passage of the Bible.

Respond

Take a moment in silence to reflect on what you've just read.

Prayer

Take a moment to pray as you wish. You may find this framework helpful.

For the unity of the Church in witness and proclamation of the Gospel ...;
God of love, **hear our prayer.**

For the peace and stability of all peoples and for the leaders of the nations ...;
God of love, **hear our prayer.**

For places of work, education and leisure ...;
God of love, **hear our prayer.**

For a blessing on our homes; for our relations and friends and all whom we love ...;
God of love, **hear our prayer.**

For the sick and suffering and all who minister to their needs ...;
God of love, **hear our prayer.**

Let us commend ourselves, and all for whom we pray, to the mercy and protection of God.
Amen.

The Lord's Prayer may be said. See page 11

Conclusion

One of the following prayers may be said.

Eternal God, the light of the minds that know you, the joy of the hearts that love you, and the strength of the wills that serve you: grant us so to know you that we may truly love you, so to love you that we may truly serve you, whose service is perfect freedom; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

after Augustine of Hippo (430)

Lord Jesus Christ, we thank you for all the benefits that you have won for us, for all the pains and insults that you have borne for us. Most merciful redeemer, friend and brother, may we know you more clearly, love you more dearly, and follow you more nearly, day by day. **Amen.**

after Richard of Chichester (1253)

May Christ dwell in our hearts by faith.
Amen.

The prayer of the heart

‘Pray without ceasing’

1 Thessalonians 5:17

The Jesus Prayer is one of the oldest and simplest prayers in the Christian tradition. It consists of just one sentence: “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me.”

The rhythm and repetition of the words helps to still the inner noise, to humble the heart, and to remind us of the presence of God.

This prayer can be said anywhere, anytime - on the train, in a waiting room, or when walking along the seafront. Like the tide flowing in and out on the shore, the prayer creates a steady pulse of grace that reminds us we are held by God.



The Jesus Prayer is prayed in time with your breathing, uniting body and soul in prayer. As you inhale slowly, pray ***‘Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God’*** and as you exhale slowly ***‘have mercy on me.’*** Once you are comfortable with the rhythm, you can use the prayer in different ways.

As Christian meditation (Stillness): Used exactly as above in those moments when you simply need to be still, centre your mind on Jesus, and remember that you are in God’s presence.

As a penitential prayer (Humility): At its heart, the prayer is one of contrition. Many choose to add “...a sinner” to the end of the exhale part of the prayer: This isn’t about beating yourself up; it is an honest, humble acknowledgment of our need for God’s grace.

As intercessory prayer (For Others): By shortening the exhale part to simply “have mercy” you can pray for people or situations by picturing them in your mind as you pray.

You may find it helpful to use a rosary or prayer rope when praying the Jesus Prayer, passing a bead or knot between your finger and thumb with each full breath.

Time for reflection

Let my prayer be counted as incense before you, and the lifting up of my hands as an evening sacrifice.

Psalm 141:2

The end of the day looks different for everyone. For some, it is time for leisure, for parents it may be the chaotic final hurdle of feeding and bathing children, for others it may be the start of a busy shift. For those on their own, it is the beginning of a long stretch of silence. For most there comes a point when work is done and it is time to rest.

This is a time to reflect back on the day. Not for the purpose of tallying up our successes or dwelling on our mistakes; but for recognising that God has walked through every hour with us.

We can share with God our gratitude and our frustrations, handing it over to him, in the knowledge that he loves us.



The shared way: Evening Prayer is said in church at 5pm, Monday to Thursday. It lasts 20-25 minutes.

The liturgical way: A version of Compline (Night Prayer) can be found on page 28.

The 'Front Door' prayer: If you are coming home from work or school, take ten seconds with your hand on the door handle. Say: "Lord, I leave the work of the day here. Help me to be present for those I love this evening."

Review with God (The Examen): While you're getting ready for bed or before you turn out the light, think back over the day: What was the hardest bit? What brought me joy? When did I get it wrong? Where did I feel grace? Share it in prayer. See page 26.

Thinking of others: If you have spent the day alone, the evening can feel heavy. Use this time to name those you love before God, to pray for them and to be thankful for them.

Keep a gratitude diary: In every day there will be something to be grateful for. Take 5 minutes to think of 1 or 2 things and write them in a journal or diary before thanking God. See the next page.

Count your blessings

**'Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good!
His faithful love endures forever.'**

Psalm 107:1

G.K. Chesterton, the 20th-century writer and lay theologian said, "The worst moment for an atheist is when he is really thankful and has no one to thank." For Christians, gratitude is an act of worship. By noting our blessings, we look past the gift to the giver, acknowledging that every good gift comes from God.

Keeping a gratitude diary is beneficial for everyone, but it is particularly powerful for those feeling low or struggling with depression. In difficult times, our minds can filter out the light, leaving us only with the heavy and the dark. Finding just one or two small things to be thankful for each day can remind us that there is light in the darkness and that God is always good.



Top tips...

Avoid being too general: Instead of "I'm grateful for my family," say who, give a reason or a particular moment.

Embrace the everyday: A warm house, a seat on the train, the sunset, a hug - these things are all worth including.

Don't ignore small acts of kindness: The little things others do make a big difference. The person who made you a drink or the smile from a neighbour are worth being grateful for.

Include the 'reliefs': Sometimes gratitude is simply "the headache finally went away" or "the difficult project is finally finished."

Make it a habit: Link writing your diary to something else you do every evening. Write in it while you have your evening cup of tea or keep it by your bed to fill in last thing at night.

Look back in thanks: Going back and reading previous entries will always be a positive thing to do. As you hold your diary in your hands thank God for all the reasons he's given you to be grateful.

The daily review

‘Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.’

Psalm 139:23-24

The word Examen simply means ‘to look at.’ It is a 500 year old practice most associated with St. Ignatius of Loyola, who believed that God is active in every part of our lives. It is sometimes referred to as a ‘rummaging through the day’ and is a way to give the day back to the Lord.

The Examen isn’t about judging ourselves or tallying up successes and failures. Rather, it is about celebrating the moments of joy, learning from the moments of struggle, and noticing the glimmers of God’s presence that we might have missed in the rush.



Whilst you don't need a desk and a notebook to engage with this process, 10 minutes and space to think is important. Always begin by inviting the Holy Spirit to help you.

Recall: What happened today? Don't be too forensic, simply let whatever comes to mind come to mind.

Rejoice: Ask God to help you remember the moments or things for which you are most thankful. Spend a few moments in gratitude for the gifts and blessings of the day.

Repent: What was difficult about today? What caused me emotional pain? When did I sin? Name the difficult things and the mistakes and ask God for his forgiveness or help. Then leave them there.

Resolve: If necessary, plan to do things differently tomorrow. What that was good about today can you build on tomorrow?

Spend a moment resting in the quiet. Know that God hears your prayers and forgives your sins. Remember that loves you and is with you now.

Night Prayer

'In peace I will lie down and sleep, for you alone, O Lord, will keep me safe.'

Psalm 4:8

The word Compline simply means 'completion.' It is the final office of the day, designed to be prayed just before sleep. While the Morning Prayer was about preparation and the Midday Prayer was about refreshment, Compline is about surrender. It is the moment where we stop trying to control the world and trust ourselves entirely to God's care.

Compline is a quiet, rhythmic service that prepares the heart for rest. It reminds us that while we sleep, God remains awake, watching over the world and over us. It is the 'Amen' at the end of the day.



Preparation

The Lord almighty grant us a quiet night and a perfect end.

Amen.

Our help is in the name of the Lord
who made heaven and earth.

A period of silence for reflection on the past day may follow.

Most merciful God, we confess to you, before the whole company of heaven and one another, that we have sinned in thought, word and deed and in what we have failed to do. Forgive us our sins, heal us by your Spirit and raise us to new life in Christ. Amen.

O God, make speed to save us.

O Lord, make haste to help us.

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.
Alleluia.**

The following or another suitable hymn may be sung

**Before the ending of the day,
Creator of the world, we pray
That you, with steadfast love, would keep
Your watch around us while we sleep.**

**From evil dreams defend our sight,
From fears and terrors of the night;
Tread underfoot our deadly foe
That we no sinful thought may know.**

**O Father, that we ask be done
Through Jesus Christ, your only Son;
And Holy Spirit, by whose breath
Our souls are raised to life from death.**

Psalm 4, or one or more of psalms 91 or 134 may be said.

Psalm 4

Answer me when I call, O God of my
righteousness:
you set me at liberty when I was in trouble;
have mercy on me and hear my prayer.

**How long will you nobles dishonour my glory:
how long will you love vain things and seek
after falsehood?**

But know that the Lord has shown me his
marvellous kindness:
when I call upon the Lord, he will hear me.

**Stand in awe, and sin not:
commune with your own heart upon your bed,
and be still.**

Offer the sacrifices of righteousness:
and put your trust in the Lord.

**There are many that say, 'Who will show us
any good?:
Lord, lift up the light of your countenance
upon us.**

You have put gladness in my heart:
more than when their corn and wine and oil
increase.

**In peace I will lie down and sleep:
for it is you Lord, only, who make me dwell in
safety.**

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit:
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

Scripture Reading

One of the following short lessons or another suitable passage is read

You, O Lord, are in the midst of us and we are called by your name; leave us not, O Lord our God.

Jeremiah 14:9

Be sober, be vigilant, because your adversary the devil is prowling round like a roaring lion, seeking for someone to devour. Resist him, strong in the faith.

1 Peter 5:8,9

The servants of the Lamb shall see the face of God, whose name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night: they will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for God will be their light, and they will reign for ever and ever.

Revelation 22:4,5

Responsory

Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.

Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.

For you have redeemed me, Lord God of truth.

I commend my spirit.

Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit.

Into your hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.

Gospel Canticle

The Nunc dimittis is said or sung

**Save us, O Lord, while waking,
and guard us while sleeping,
that awake we may watch with Christ
and asleep may rest in peace.**

Now, Lord, you let your servant go in peace:
your word has been fulfilled.

**My own eyes have seen the salvation:
which you have prepared in the sight of every
people;**

A light to reveal you to the nations:
and the glory of your people Israel.

Luke 2.29-32

**Glory to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning is now
and shall be for ever. Amen.**

**Save us, O Lord, while waking,
and guard us while sleeping,
that awake we may watch with Christ
and asleep may rest in peace.**

Prayers

*Intercessions and thanksgivings may be offered
here.*

The Collect

Silence may be kept.

One or more of the following prayers are said.

Visit this place, O Lord, we pray, and drive far from it the snares of the enemy; may your holy angels dwell with us and guard us in peace, and may your blessing be always upon us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Be present, O merciful God, and protect us through the silent hours of this night, so that we who are wearied by the changes and chances of this fleeting world, may rest upon your eternal changelessness; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Keep watch, dear Lord, with those who wake, or watch, or weep this night, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend the sick, give rest to the weary, sustain the dying, calm the suffering, and pity the distressed; all for your love's sake, O Christ our Redeemer. **Amen.**

Stay with us, O God, this night, so that by your strength we may rise with the new day to rejoice in the resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ our Saviour. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come; thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, the power,
and the glory for ever and ever.
Amen.**

Conclusion

In peace we will lie down and sleep;
for you alone, Lord, make us dwell in safety.

Abide with us, Lord Jesus,
for the night is at hand and the day is now past.

As the night watch looks for the morning,
so do we look for you, O Christ.

The Lord bless us and watch over us;
**the Lord make his face shine upon us
and be gracious to us; the Lord look kindly on
us and give us peace. Amen.**

Talking with God

'Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened for you.'

Matthew 7:7

There is nothing quite like the honest prayers that come straight from your heart. God loves to hear your own words, your specific worries, and your unique joys. You don't need a special vocabulary to talk to Him; being yourself is always enough.

However, there are days when the words just won't come. Sometimes we are tired, overwhelmed, or simply don't know what to say. In those moments, we can lean on the beautiful prayers of the Christians who walked this path before us. These well-known prayers are a gift from our Christian heritage and remind us that we are never praying alone.

See also page 19.



The Serenity Prayer

God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

Attributed to Reinhold Niebuhr

St Patrick's Breastplate (an excerpt)

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.

Attributed to St. Patrick

Before reading the Bible

O Lord, Heavenly Father, in whom is the fullness of light and of wisdom, enlighten our minds by the Holy Spirit, and give us grace to receive thy Word with reverence and humility, without which no one can understand thy truth.
For Christ's sake, Amen.

John Calvin

A Prayer of Confession

Almighty God, long-suffering and of great goodness: I confess to you, I confess with my whole heart my neglect and forgetfulness of your commandments, my wrong doing, thinking, and speaking; the hurts I have done to others, and the good I have left undone. O God, forgive me, for I have sinned against you; and raise me to newness of life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

From Common Worship

A Prayer of St . Francis of Assisi

Lord, make me an instrument of your peace.
Where there is hatred, let me bring love;
Where there is injury, pardon
where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness light;
Where there is sadness, joy.
O divine Master, grant that I may seek
not so much to be consoled, as to console,
To be understood, as to understand;
to be loved, as to love.
For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
It is in dying that we are born to eternal life.

A Prayer adopted by Mother Teresa

Dear Jesus, help me to spread Your fragrance wherever I go. Flood my soul with Your spirit and life. Penetrate and possess my whole being so utterly, that my life may only be a radiance of Yours. Shine through me, and be so in me that every soul I come in contact with may feel Your presence in my soul. Let them look up and see no longer me, but only Jesus! Stay with me and then I shall begin to shine as You shine, so to shine as to be a light to others. The light, O Jesus, will be all from You; none of it will be mine. It will be You shining on others through me. Let me thus praise You the way You love best, by shining on those around me. Let me preach You without preaching, not by words but by my example, by the catching force of the sympathetic influence of what I do, the evident fullness of the love my heart bears to You. Amen.

Cardinal John Henry Newman

Victory is Ours

Goodness is stronger than evil; Love is stronger than hate; Light is stronger than darkness; Life is stronger than death; Victory is ours through Him who loves us. Amen.

Desmond Tutu

Our daily bread

‘Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.’

Psalm 119:105

The Bible is the best selling book every week of every year, always. That’s because it’s not just a collection of ancient stories; it is a living encounter with the God who knows you by name and loves you beyond imagination. To open its pages is to step into a grand, epic narrative of rescue, restoration, and radical love.

There are countless ways to journey through the Bible, from apps and daily devotionals to deep academic study. If you’re new to it, maybe start by meeting Jesus in one of the Gospels.

What follows is a list of 100 readings to give you the ‘big story’. Pray before you read and take a moment to reflect after. It will speak into your heart and change your life for good.



1. Creation - Genesis 1:1-2:25 □
2. The Fall - Genesis 3:1-24 □
3. The Flood - Genesis 6:5-7:24 □
4. God's Promise to Noah - Genesis 8:1-9:17 □
5. Tower of Babel - Genesis 11:1-9 □
6. The Call of Abram - Genesis 12:1-20 □
7. God's Promise to Abram - Genesis 15:1-21 □
8. Isaac's 'Sacrifice' - Genesis 21:1-22:19 □
9. Jacob and Esau - Genesis 27:1-28:22 □
10. Brothers Reconcile - Genesis 32:1-33:20 □
11. Joseph Sold - Genesis 37:1-36 □
12. Prison and Promotion - Genesis 39:1-41:57 □
13. Brothers Go to Egypt - Genesis 42:1-38 □
14. The Brothers Return - Genesis 43:1-44:34 □
15. Reunited in Egypt - Genesis 45:1-46:7 □
16. The Birth of Moses - Exodus 1:1-2:25 □
17. The Burning Bush - Exodus 3:1-4:17 □
18. The Ten Plagues - Exodus 6:28 - 11:10 □
19. Passover and Exodus - Exodus 12:1-42 □
20. Crossing the Red Sea - Exodus 13:17-14:31 □

21. Ten Commandments - Exodus 19:1-20:21 □
22. The Golden Calf - Exodus 32:1-34:35 □
23. Joshua Succeeds Moses - Joshua 1:1-18 □
24. Crossing the Jordan - Joshua 3:1-4:24 □
25. The Fall of Jericho - Joshua 5:13-6:27 □
26. Israel's Disobedience - Judges 2:6-3:6 □
27. Deborah Leads Israel - Judges 4:1-5:31 □
28. Gideon's Victory - Judges 6:1-7:25 □
29. Samson's Victory - Judges 13:1-16:31 □
30. The Story of Ruth - Ruth 1:1-4:22 □
31. Samuel Listens to God - 1 Samuel 1:1-3:21 □
32. King Saul - 1 Samuel 8:1-10:27 □
33. David and Goliath - 1 Samuel 16:1-18:16 □
34. David and Saul - 1 Samuel 23:7-24:22 □
35. King David - 2 Samuel 5:1-7:29 □
36. David and Bathsheba - 2 Samuel 11:1-12:25 □
37. King Solomon - 1 Kings 2:1-3:28 □
38. Solomon's Temple - 1 Kings 8:1-9:9 □
39. Elijah's Contest - 1 Kings 16:29-19:18 □
40. The Fall of Jerusalem - 2 Kings 25:1-30 □

41. The Lord Is My Shepherd - Psalm 23:1-6 □
42. Have Mercy on Me - Psalm 51:1-19 □
43. Praise the Lord - Psalm 103:1-22 □
44. Godly Wisdom - Proverbs 1:1-4:27 □
45. Proverbs of Solomon - Proverbs 16:1-18:24 □
46. The Suffering Servant - Isaiah 51:1-53:12 □
47. Jeremiah's Call - Jeremiah 1:1-3:5 □
48. Daniel in the Lion's Den - Daniel 6:1-28 □
49. The Story of Jonah - Jonah 1:1-4:11 □
50. The Day of Judgment - Malachi 1:1-4:6 □
51. The Word Became Flesh - John 1:1-18 □
52. Gabriel's Message - Luke 1:1-80 □
53. The Birth of Jesus - Luke 2:1-40 □
54. John the Baptist - Luke 3:1-20 □
55. Jesus' Baptism - Matthew 3:13-4:17 □
56. Sermon on the Mount - Matthew 5:1-64 □
57. Sermon on the Mount - Matthew 6:5-7:29 □
58. The Kingdom of Heaven - Matthew 13:1-58 □
59. The Good Samaritan - Luke 10:25-37 □
60. Lost and Found - Luke 15:1-32 □

61. Feeding the Five Thousand - Luke 9:1-36 □
62. Walking on Water - Matthew 14:22-36 □
63. Healing a Blind Man - John 9:1-41 □
64. Healing a Possessed Man - Mark 5:1-20 □
65. Raising Lazarus - John 11:1-57 □
66. The Last Supper - Luke 22:1-46 □
67. Arrest and Trial - John 18:1-40 □
68. The Crucifixion - John 19:1-42 □
69. The Resurrection - John 20:1-21:25 □
70. The Ascension - Acts 1:11 □
71. The Day of Pentecost - Acts 2:1-47 □
72. Growth and Persecution - Acts 3:1-4:37 □
73. The First Martyr - Acts 6:8-8:8 □
74. Sharing the Word - Acts 8:26-40 □
75. Good News for All - Acts 10:1-11:18 □
76. The Road to Damascus - Acts 9:1-31 □
77. First Missionary Journey - Acts 13:1-14:28 □
78. The Council at Jerusalem - Acts 15:1-41 □
79. More Journeys - Acts 16:1-20:38 □
80. The Trip to Rome - Acts 25:1-28:31 □

81. More than Conquerors - Romans 8:1-39 □
82. Fruit of the Spirit - Galatians 5:16-6:10 □
83. The Armor of God - Ephesians 6:10-20 □
84. Rejoice in the Lord - Philippians 4:2-9 □
85. Supremacy of Christ - Colossians 1:1-23 □
86. Elders and Deacons - 1 Timothy 3:1-16 □
87. The Love of Money - 1 Timothy 6:3-21 □
88. Good Soldiers of Christ - 2 Timothy 1:26 □
89. God-breathed - 2 Timothy 3:10-4:8 □
90. The 2nd Coming - 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11 □
91. Most Excellent Way - 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 □
92. New Creations - 2 Corinthians 4:1-6:2 □
93. A Living Hope - 1 Peter 1:1-2:12 □
94. Faith and Works - James 1:1-2:26 □
95. Love One Another - 1 John 3:11-4:21 □
96. A Voice and A Vision - Revelation 1:1-20 □
97. To the Churches - Revelation 2:1-3:22 □
98. Throne of Heaven - Revelation 4:1-7:17 □
99. Hallelujah - Revelation 19:1-20:15 □
100. New Jerusalem - Revelation 21:1-22:21 □

Readings taken from the Essential 100 Bible reading scheme available on the **Bible** app (p.48)

Find what works for you

‘Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me.’

John 15:4

As you cultivate your own rule of life, finding the rhythm and the tools that best work for you, you may like to explore some of the following resources. Some are online, some are apps for your phone, some are good old-fashioned books!

The logo for the 'Daily Prayer' app, featuring the words 'Daily Prayer' in white text on a blue square background.

The **Daily Prayer** app from the Church of England is the one I use for Morning and Evening Prayer every day.

It offers Morning, Evening, and Night Prayer in contemporary and traditional versions. Really helpfully it automatically adds in the correct readings and prayers for the day. (*Available in the Apple App Store & on Google Play also as a podcast and online - www.churchofengland.org*)



The **Time to Pray** app from the CofE is like Daily Prayer, but offers *Prayer During the Day* and *Night Prayer*. (*Apple and Google*)



The **Everyday Faith** app from the CofE offers a themed reading, reflection, and prayer for each day. Read or listen. (*Apple and Google*)



The **Lectio 365** app includes morning, midday, and Night times of prayer and reflection. Read/listen (*Apple and Google*)



The Bible with Nicky and Pippa Gumbel used to be called Bible in One Year and it still takes you through the whole Bible in 365

days. Each day includes readings from the Old and New Testaments as well as a commentary and prayer from the couple behind the Alpha Course. There is a youth version and an express version as well as an accompanying Bible.

Read/listen (*Apple and Google*)



The **Bible** app offers free access to the Bible in more versions and languages than you'll ever need! You can read or listen and there lots of reading plans focusing on different themes or specific topics. (*Apple and Google*)



The **Bible Project** is available online, on YouTube and as an app. Its use of animated videos and beautiful pictures is a real strength.

The videos explaining each book of the Bible are worth looking at alone, and there are lots of helpful themed videos as well as podcasts to listen to and classes to take. (Apple and Google and online - bibleproject.com)



Reflections for Daily Prayer

(Church House Publishing)

provides a reflection for each day of the year based on the readings assigned for Morning Prayer. It is available as a book or an app and you pay about the same for each.

The reflections are provided by a wide variety of well known Anglicans.



If you prefer printed **Bible Notes**, the **Bible Reading Fellowship** has been publishing theirs for over 100 years. There is a variety to choose from and they are delivered to you through your door 3 times a year.



The other big name in Bible notes is **Scripture Union**. Their website is well worth a look for interesting resources for all ages. One that caught my eye was the **40 Days prayer journal** for either Matthew or John's Gospels. You get 40 days of Bible study and reflection, with thoughtful comment, challenging questions and space for you to think, write, draw and pray. (*content.scriptureunion.org.uk*)

There are so many creative and interesting resources out there for Christians. This really is just a flavour. If you do nothing else, **make sure that you have a Bible that you can enjoy reading and that you find useable**. I recommend the NRSVA translation if you want the same version generally used in Church, or the NLT (New Living Translation) for clarity. One that gives an introduction to each book is helpful.

Finally...

Creating your rule of life won't feel helpful if you are trying to shoehorn more and more into an already over-busy day. If that's true for you, it's important to think about what you can take out. What are the less beneficial habits that you can lay down in order to have that extra time for prayer and Bible reading?

Perhaps you could choose not to look at your emails after 6pm or to limit the time you spend on social media each day. Maybe you could have 30 minutes less TV or set the alarm for 10 minutes earlier. If we're honest, most of us give too much time each day to things that don't really do us any good. What would it actually be positive for you to give up or say 'no' to?

When you are ready, use the page opposite to note down your rule of life. Remember, you can always change it and there may be some things that you can do one day but not another. The important thing is that you are doing something each day to draw closer to God and to find the deep peace, hope, love and joy that comes from living life with him.

My Rule of Life

Each morning...

During the Day...

In the evening...

Loving God, I offer you these intentions today.
May these habits nourish my soul and keep my
eyes fixed on you, as we walk each day
together. Amen.

“Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me - watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.”

Matthew 11:28-30
Message translation



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