

Bethel Prayer Rhythm

What is a prayer rhythm and why should I use one? I thought we can pray anywhere and whenever we want to?

Yes we can, but the reality is often we don't!

Prayer rhythms have been used by the church for millennia and before in ancient Israel, but are an aspect of faith which we have largely lost in our church tradition. This rhythm of prayer is not designed to be repetitive, but to create a framework around which we can experience a richer, more powerful prayer life and a deeper relationship with Jesus.

The whole rhythm is intended to be practiced daily, three times a day in the morning, at midday and in the evening at times that work with your commitments and your God given personality.

We are creatures of habit. Up to 50% of what we do every day is driven by habit, meaning half of your life is on autopilot! You do though get to choose the practices that become your habits.

Most importantly extend grace to yourself! This is not about creating impossible goals but to naturally develop into people whose lives are oriented around prayer rather than people who simply pray.



Morning

Silence & Scripture

Ideally wake early or think about your morning routine and ask the question; “What can I change in my morning to make space for prayer?” Ask God to show you if you’re not sure, prayer should drive our schedule not the other way around so you might need to start going to bed earlier!

Get hold of (or dust off) a paper Bible before you check your phone notifications. Make yourself a cuppa and find a comfortable place to sit – make this space part of your habit. Some people find it helpful to sit outside or go for a walk while doing this next step, have a go and see what works for you.

Start with silence, not saying or praying anything just sitting intentionally in God’s presence. Why silence? To calm the noise and distraction that drives our busy lives as soon as we wake up. If you are new to this set yourself a 3-minute timer (you can gradually increase this as it becomes part of your routine) and sit in quiet. Don’t worry at least initially your mind will likely wander and be drawn to everything else. To help with focus have a simple word or phrase to bring your attention back to God, something like “*Come Lord Jesus*” or just “*Jesus*” can work well. Even if you have to say your phrase 100 times in 3 minutes don’t despair that is still 100 times you have intentionally drawn your attention to Jesus.

Next open your Bible, the Psalm chapter 1 is as good a place as any to start. The Psalms were the prayerbook of Israel, of Jesus, of the early church and of many church traditions today.

Read the Psalm out loud twice (quietly if you share a house with others who aren’t awake yet), what stands out to you? Where in the passage is God drawing your heart? Highlight verses or phrases, there is no hard rule here except to listen to the voice of the Spirit.

Now use this Scripture as a basis for prayer, returning to the areas that God has revealed to you. This whole practice can take as little as 15 minutes or as long as an hour! Start small and build it up as you engage more deeply with Jesus.



Midday

Praying Intercession

As with your mornings, there is no hard and fast rule about the exact time you should be praying but try to build it into your existing daily schedule.

Intercession is a big word for praying for or on behalf of someone else. This can be an individual, a group of people, a church community or even a nation. Intercessory prayer is evident throughout Scripture in both the Old and New Testament, even though you'll never find this word in the Bible.

In Exodus 32, we see Moses pleading to God on behalf of an entire nation, even offering himself to receive God's judgement in their place. Here is the heart of intercessory prayer – sacrificial love. This love drives us into prayer on behalf of the hurting, the broken, the sick and the lost.

Committing daily to pray for others, for their healing, for their safety, for God's provision in their lives or that they might know and experience Jesus, is really powerful. Prayer matters and prayer changes events and people, but this requires faith and trust for those who pray. Do you really believe that God can provide, heal, restore and reconcile?

When we step out in faith to pray in this way, our own faith is strengthened and our love for others grows. Praying for others instead of ourselves shifts our focus away from project self and towards God's heart for the hurting. Prayer though often takes commitment, persistence and patience.

One of the most powerful intercessory prayers we can pray is for the lost to come to Jesus, specifically those people in our lives who don't yet have a relationship with Him. D.L. Moody, a powerful evangelist, pastor and teacher in 19th century America, carried with him a list of 100 acquaintances who were lost. He committed to pray daily over each name that they would come to faith and during his lifetime 96 of them came to know Christ with the remaining 4 at his funeral.

How would your prayer life change if you committed to praying for just 10 people a day to come or return back to Jesus?



Evening

Praying The Examen

In Scripture the day starts in the evening, starting with rest and then working from rest. Instead of a time to escape, what if our evenings were a space for hospitality, community and worship from which we can truly begin to work. The evening then is for remembering, this the second most common Biblical command. Remember what God has done, remember what He is doing in front of you, remember what God has promised to do in the future, remember that God saves.

Every evening invite God into your chaos, sometimes He will rescue you dramatically other times He will walk you through the chaos like the Good Shepherd He is.

When can I do this? When you finish work, on your commute home, before you go to bed or somewhere in between but start with remembering. To pray the Examen simply follow the four steps below.

Review – simply review all of your day from the moment you woke up until now, practice gratitude for the things you have taken for granted – centre yourself in praise.

Resonate – Identify when you noticed God's presence, in creation, in an interaction with someone, when God used you for another or even something you read in Scripture.

Repent – When did I miss or ignore God's presence, the sinful pattern I gave in to or the need of another I ignored. Pray a blessing over someone who is your enemy – someone who might annoy you and towards whom your heart is out of sync with God's heart for them.

Request – One way that you want to walk in light of His presence tomorrow.

The Examen makes Jesus' words 'I only do what I see the Father doing...' real. Helping us to see what the Father is doing, creating an opportunity to join in and take action. The Examen helps us to become free from the lies I have believed that keep me apart from God, so I can live in partnership with Him for His Kingdom.

