



# DAILY RHYTHMS

An introduction to the  
BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER

PARTICIPANT NAME: \_\_\_\_\_



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## WELCOME

We are grateful for your desire to grow in your life with Christ through cultivating the daily rhythms of prayer and scripture reading. We hope that this session is encouraging and edifying for you - that you leave here better equipped to grow as a follower of Jesus.

NOTE: For the purposes of practice, we will be using the Book of Common Prayer 1979 version. This is not because we are convinced this is the “best” or “right” version of the Prayer Book. There are many wonderful editions and versions of the Prayer Book published in different years and in different countries around the world - each with their own strengths. The goal is not to find the perfect liturgy, but to use liturgy as a path for communion with Christ.

-The Redeemer Team

## WHAT DO YOU HOPE TO LEARN HERE?

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## PART 1 | SHALLOW, DISEMBODIED, INDIVIDUALS

Summary: Today many of us experience a sense of disconnectedness from the past, from ourselves, and from each other. The spiritual implications of this are that we often find ourselves trying to discover a new way to connect with God, based on how we feel internally, in isolation from others. This leaves many of us discouraged and uncertain of where to turn for help.

### SHALLOW

The increased pace of cultural change has greatly impacted the way generations interact and learn from one another. As the cultural gap between generations has widened over the past century, so the transference of cultural knowledge has decreased - with each subsequent younger generation finding the ways of the older generation to be "outdated" and "out-of-step" with their lived-reality.

The spiritual implication of this is that the wisdom of previous generations has been falling through the cracks. This has made recent generations of Christians feel as if they must reinvent what it means to follow Jesus on their own. When it comes to prayer and scripture reading, the story is no different. This makes us, all of us, "shallow." We don't live with a sense of being deeply rooted in the past. Many of the habits and rhythms of our lives would not be recognizable to someone who lived 100 or 200 years ago.

All this wouldn't be a problem if we were good at inventing new forms of spirituality, but - for the most part - we are not. We are drawn to novelty, but soon tire of it. We look for big payoffs in quick and easy practices and are disappointed.

### DISEMBODIED

This is compounded by the way technology has led us to live *against* the grain of the natural world. What we mean is - the natural world has a particular rhythm to it - sunrise and sunset, work and rest, flood and drought, sowing and reaping, etc. - and we, as created beings, are made to live in that particular rhythm. We are not endlessly adaptable beings. We have bodies. Our bodies have needs and limits. Example: while we may have the technology to light our homes and offices and continue to work late into the night, we are not able to reconfigure our bodies to *thrive* in any other rhythm but that of the natural world.

And so when we live against the grain of the created world, we are - in a sense - attempting to disembody ourselves (acting against the limits and rhythms that our bodies require). We marvel at the efficiency and (seemingly) limitless productivity of computers and we wish we could keep up.

When we see a co-worker or neighbor working incredibly hard and yet not tiring, we say, "Wow, she is a *machine*!" We mean it as a compliment, but our words betray us. We wish that, we too could be more machine-like and less constrained by our created bodies.

#### INDIVIDUALS

Our shallow and disembodied lives are made more desperate by our isolation from one another. The breakdown of the family, neighborhoods, community involvement and church participation are all contributing factors to our increased individualism. Not only do we think of ourselves in isolation from identifying communities, but we simply do not spend as much time eating, playing, working, recreating, or creating with each other as previous generations have.

Thus, if a Christian man or woman is seeking to grow in their faith, they are less likely to do so together with others and more likely to seek a privatized method. This is not only more difficult (it ignores the communal needs that every person has), but it is also contrary to the nature of Christian spiritual growth itself (which is *always* in relation to others within the context of the church).

Therefore the shallow (disconnected from the past), disembodied (living against the grain of the created world), individual believer finds it nearly impossible to truly grow into maturity through prayer and the reading of scripture. So, if we are to break out of this, we're going have to adopt different ways of living, different rhythms, habits, and practices.

We must look to the past to learn from previous generations in the church.  
We must take the natural world and the limits of our created bodies seriously.  
We must do it *together*.

**What, for you, has been the most significant barrier to developing a daily rhythm of prayer and scripture reading?**

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## PART 2 | DEEPLY ROOTED, EMBODIED, COMMUNITY

Summary: An important and central part of our traditional Anglican way of living as followers of Jesus Christ is to join, as fully as we can, in the “common prayer” rhythms of the Church. The Anglican ideal has always been for us to participate as much as our personal circumstances allow in the liturgical prayers we use in common, even when we’re alone or at home, with family or in small groups. We don’t see our times of daily worship as a Protestant vs. Catholic either/or choice, but rather as an Informal and Liturgical *both/and* possibility. We value and blend together private, free prayer with joint prayer as Christ’s Body.

Overview. Let’s concentrate on the earliest roots of it in Biblical times. We’ll make three basic points, and illustrate how deep and Biblically based are the roots of those classic forms of daily common prayer at fixed times of the day.

### #1 DEEPLY ROOTED

The Biblical roots doing daily prayer in common go all the way back to Apostolic times, as the Book of Acts shows. Indeed, those deep roots go even further back into the rich, fertile soil of the ancient Jewish practice of daily prayer at two or three set times a day (sunrise, noon, and sunset).

*Acts 3:1. “Now Peter and John were going up to the Temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour” (i.e., about 3 pm, the ninth hour of daylight). [See also Acts 10:2-4, when Cornelius the godly centurion regularly prays at this same time in Joppa].*

*Daniel 6:10. “When Daniel knew that the document had been signed (i.e., the royal ban for one month on making petitions to any god or person except the King of Babylon), he went to his house, where he had windows in his upper chamber open towards Jerusalem. He got down on his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks to God, as he had done previously.”*

*Psalm 55:17. “Evening and morning and at noon I utter my complaint and moan, and he (God) hears my voice.” (Remember the Jewish day began at sunset, as in Genesis 1). (See also Peter going up on the housetop around noon to pray in Acts 10:5-6).*

### #2 EMBODIED

The primary rhythm of the daily, common prayer of the Church is the natural cycle of light and darkness, of sunrise and sunset, and ultimately, the rhythm of life and death, symbolized by being awake and being asleep.

*Psalm 141:2. "Let my prayer be counted (in your eyes, Lord) as incense, the lifting up of my hands (the standard Jewish and early Christian posture for prayer) as the evening sacrifice."*

This brief text is the key to understanding the whole traditional system of Morning and Evening Prayer in liturgical churches. See the Old Covenant laws below, mandating the perpetual twice daily offering of incense (Exod. 30) and a lamb (Num. 28) near dawn and twilight. The latter, "the evening sacrifice," had moved up to about 3 pm in Jesus' day.

*Exodus 30:7-8. "Aaron shall burn fragrant incense upon the altar (of incense in the Holy Place). Every morning when he dresses the (olive oil) lamps (i.e., the seven-branched Menorah, around dawn, after it had burned all night), he shall burn it. And when Aaron sets up the lamps at twilight, he shall burn it, a regular incense offering before the LORD throughout your generations."*

(Recall the story in Luke 1:9-11 of an angel appearing to Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, while he was making this twice daily incense offering in the Temple).

*Numbers 28:3-4. "This is the food offering you shall offer to the LORD: two male lambs a year old, without blemish, day by day, as a regular (perpetual) offering. The one lamb you shall offer in the morning (traditionally done near dawn), and the other lamb you shall offer at twilight."*

### #3 COMMUNITY

There is a vital, complementary relationship between our times of private, free prayer as individual believers and families (which the Church does not try to regulate or dictate) and our times of liturgical prayer in common as members of the universal Body of Christ. We can and should pray both ways.

*Acts 2:42. "They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and (the apostles') fellowship, to the breaking of bread (both sharing ordinary meals and the Eucharist), and the prayers." "The prayers" implies there were regular, set prayer times and themes (although probably not yet set words) that the whole community of disciples used when praying together. As all 3,000+ on Pentecost were Jews, they probably followed a Jewish pattern or rhythm, which likely included common prayer twice or thrice a day, at the same times as the morning and evening sacrifices in the Temple (recall Acts 3:1, "the hour of prayer." See also Luke 24:53).*

Bottom Line: When spending time with God daily, we don't have to choose between private, free prayer and Bible reading in an informal style and liturgical prayer in common in a more formal style. It's not an either/or dichotomy. It's a both/and possibility.

**To which style of prayer are you most naturally drawn - informal/free prayer or structured/liturgical prayer? Why is the other form more difficult for you?**

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**Hypothetically, if you were to begin praying at the beginning, middle, and end of each day, what changes might you expect to see in your life?**

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**Hypothetically, if you knew that many other people in your small group and in the church were praying at the same time as you, what changes might you expect to experience in your relationships with them?**

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## PART 3 | BASICS OF USING THE PRAYER BOOK

Daily Office: Four services of prayer, following the ancient practice of praying the hours (morning, noon, evening, night) meant to guide the Christian in prayer throughout the day.

- Daily office liturgies located from page 37-144 in BCP.
- “Rite one” indicates prayers in traditional language while “Rite 2” includes same prayers in contemporary language

Daily Office Lectionary: Chosen scripture readings from all parts of both Old and New Testaments meant to accompany Daily office.

Collects: written prayers which can be prayed by individuals and families for each week of the church year and special occasions. (Traditional language: 159-210, Contemporary Language: 211-251)

The Psalter: The entire book of Psalms included in the prayerbook to be read and used as prayers either corporately or Individually. (585-809)

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## Step-by-Step Daily Office + Lectionary

Step 1: Choose a place and time in your home that you can routinely do your daily office (ex: favorite chair in your living room for morning prayer, and dining room table for evening)

Step 2: Look up your readings in Daily Office Lectionary (beginning on page 934) and bookmark readings in your Bible.

Step 3: Open Book of Common prayer to beginning of selected office (morning, noon, evening, compline).

- *Rite one uses more “traditional” language while Rite two uses contemporary.*

Step 4: Read and pray through Daily office as individual or with others.

- Look for the helpful directions in italics or the subheadings in bold to guide you as you go!

## NOTES:

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## Two Suggestions:

1. For those new to the prayerbook, a wonderful place to start is with the shortened “*Daily Devotions for Individuals and families*” on page 137. This is a simple, pared down liturgy which is a wonderful introduction to the rhythms of daily office and an accessible resource for families with kids.
2. Take some time to familiarize yourselves with the prayerbook. Flip through the offices, the collects, and lectionary. This is a very valuable resource and will feel more and more natural as you get to know it.

## GOING FORWARD

When developing a new habit, it is vital to start small and to practice with someone else.

Start Small: If you have never used the prayer book before, attempting to pray the morning, midday and evening offices in their entirety every single day for the next year will be impossible and you will get discouraged. That would be like learning to run by signing up for a marathon. You want to begin small, pick one office and get to know it. Practice it a few times a week. When you forget, fail or lose interest. Don't beat yourself up - Simply start anew.

Practice with Someone: And don't go it alone! Find someone else who is also wants to develop the same habit and commit to meeting together to pray one of the offices on a weekly basis. Set a clear start and end date.

Example 1: For the next 4 weeks, let's meet at Lamplighter Coffee every Wednesday morning before work from 7:30-8:00am to pray the morning office.

Example 2: For the next 4 weeks, come over to my apartment while the baby is napping and we'll pray the Midday Office from 12:00-12:30pm.

Get creative! Push against the tendency to isolate and find a way to pray together!