



Some structured prayers as a place to begin:

My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself, and the fact that I think I am following You will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe that the desire to please You does in fact please You. And I hope I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that, if I do this, You will lead me by the right road, though I may know nothing about it. Therefore I will trust You always though I may seem to be lost and in the shadow of death. I will not fear, for You are ever with me, and You will never leave me to face my perils alone. Amen.

– *Thomas Merton*

Take, Lord, and receive all my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my entire will, all I have and call my own. You have given all to me. To you, Lord, I return it. Everything is yours; do with it what you will.

– *Ignatian prayer of gratitude + surrender*

Dear God,

I so much want to be in control.
I want to be the master of my own destiny.
Still I know that you are saying:
“Let me take you by the hand and lead you.
Accept my love
and trust that where I will bring you,
the deepest desires of your heart will be fulfilled.”
Lord, open my hands to receive your gift of love.

Amen.

— *a prayer of surrender from Henri Nouwen*

God, I cry to you in the early morning, help me to pray and to gather my thoughts; I cannot do it alone. It is dark inside me, but you do not leave me. I am timid, but with you is my help. I am anxious, but with you is peace.

—*Dietrich Bonhoeffer morning prayer*



Some simple prayer practices to try:

The Body Prayer from Julian of Norwich — four postures with four intentions:

AWAIT (hands at waist, cupped up to receive): Await God's presence, however it may come to you.

ALLOW (reach up, hands open): Allow a sense of God's presence to come ...or not...and be what it is.

ACCEPT (hands at heart, cupped towards body): Accept as a gift whatever comes or does not come. Accept that you don't know everything, that you are not in charge.

ATTEND (hands outstretched, ready to be responsive): Attend to what you are called to, willing to be present and be God's love in the world, however God calls you to.

Praying with the senses:

Go outside for a walk. Leave your phone at home or turn it off. When you're ready, take a few moments to focus your attention and breathe. Notice what you notice — a sound, a smell, a sensation, something that catches your eye.

As you experience that moment, notice what it brings up. A feeling, a memory, a phrase. It might be lovely and peaceful, or it might be troubling, or something else. Don't worry about what it 'should' be. Just notice what it is.

Bring it to Jesus — this is the beginning of your conversation.

This is what I heard/saw/smelled/touched/noticed. This is what it made me feel and think about. What's your perspective on that, Jesus?

Then, just still yourself. Listen with your whole body. There is no 'right' way for this to go. It's a process and a conversation, not a script. If your attention or mind wanders, that's okay. Don't get hooked on the story of *I'm so bad at this, I should be doing XYZ, God must be so disappointed in me*, etc. Just gently bring yourself back to the quiet. This can be uncomfortable at the start, because we aren't accustomed to silence without constant distraction.

Keep coming back to the truth that Jesus loves you utterly, wants to know you, be with you, and connect with you *as you are*. That's just who he is! Remember, as with any close relationship, companionable silence is perfectly acceptable. When you're with your best friend, you don't have to always be talking. Sometimes you just sit in silence and watch a sunset together, and that's more than enough.

Start to notice: What does it feel like to be with Jesus? To be seen by Jesus? To be quiet? To be listening? What comes up for you? Allow anything to be part of the conversation. If you're uncomfortable, just say it: *This is so awkward, Jesus. What's your perspective on that?* Then return to stillness and listen.

Praying with Scripture and your imagination:

Find a story in the Bible — a gospel story is often a great place to start. Read it through twice. Notice if any words, phrases, or images stand out to you as you're reading. Notice what "snags" your attention.

Place yourself inside the scene — take time to sink in and really imagine everything that might be going on around you. Sights, sounds, smells, tastes, sensations, feelings. Where are you in the story? Are you a main character, a participant, an onlooker?

Is there someone you'd like to talk to in this story? Find that person and start a conversation. Is there a question you have for Jesus? Find him and ask away.

What does Jesus want to say to you through this story? Remember, you're not constructing a theology or trying to get the story 'right.' You're entering into a conversation and allowing Christ's Spirit to speak to you and minister to you through this moment.

Notice if you feel or hear things that contribute to a sense of *disconnection* from God: shame, fear of exile, comparison, relentless self-criticism, discouragement. These are usually old stories from old wounds. Notice them, but don't mistake them for Jesus. The Divine communicates with us in ways that make room for deeper connection: comfort, belonging, encouragement, guidance, clarity. Jesus' correction is honest, but never alienating. The heart of God is always after restoration, liberation, and connection.



Do you have questions about starting a deeper prayer practice? Would you like to talk more about prayer and explore some practices for yourself? I'd love to connect with you.

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