

101 WAYS TO GET GOING AND KEEP GOING WITH PRAYER

Inspiration to Pep Up Your Prayer Life!



Getting Started

Ever been so busy you don't have time to think let alone pray?

At Discovering Prayer, we believe that prayer is vital. Prayer enriches our lives, provides a framework for a balanced life and equips us to be a force for good in our communities.

Jesus knew what it was like to be in a spin, with no time to spare. He said:

' "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and **rest a while.**" For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat.' (Mark 6:31)

We hope this will be the start, or renewal of your journey to rest with Jesus. If you would like to be part of a movement of those who are learning together, then join us for free at discoveringprayer.com/course.



Michelle Eyre, Chief Prayer Officer, Discovering Prayer

Start
Small



Rest a While

At Discovering Prayer our inspiration is to follow the example of Jesus, who when his friends were tired from the pressures of the day, invited them to go to a quiet place and rest a while. This guide of *101 Ways to Get Going and Keep Going with Prayer* takes the first letter each of the words Rest a While as its theme. It's written by Michelle Eyre, who spent two and a half years living in a convent, trying out being a nun. This ebook draws on what she learnt during that time from the wisdom of nuns and monks.

Rhythm

Think of prayer as part of a healthy lifestyle, one in which there is a rhythm that allows for work, rest, looking after yourself and sleep.

1. Ask God for help.
2. Only listen to advice from others that is actually helpful to you. That includes this list! It may be that someone else is managing to get up at 5am to pray or meditate, but that doesn't mean that it's a good time for the rest of us.

3. The aim is to establish a pattern of prayer, work, rest and relaxation that helps to develop our relationship with God. So deciding to pray, like taking up any activity, might involve being intentional and making a plan for gradually shaping a life of prayer, work, rest, looking after ourselves and sleep.
4. Plan for success. Consider each of the sections below and plan some experiments with different types of prayer to find what works best for you.
5. Prayer can be thought of as a circle which starts with God the Father reaching out to us. Our efforts are not the main point. Rather it's learning to more fully engage with God who is already there for us.
(Hosea 11:2)

Evaluation: What do you do now?

Take a look at what you already do, and get into the right frame of mind for introducing more prayer into your life.



6. Be conscious of what you already do. If you think that you don't pray at all, spend a few days really noticing what you actually do. You may find that you offer short prayers for others, or reflect in silence as you journey from one place to the next. Perhaps you pray more than you think you do?

7. Learn from psychologist Prof Steve Peters, who helped to train Olympic athletes. His book *The Chimp Paradox* has suggestions that I've applied for our context of learning to get going and keep going with prayer:

- Change the way you think about prayer. Think of it as being part of a natural rhythm of life, not a tricky skill that needs to be mastered.



- Decide that you are no longer doing battle with yourself by trying to pray, but instead learning what helps you to pray, a way that's right for you.
- Be realistic and accept before you start that some things will work, and some things won't. Refrain from beating yourself up when things don't work out how you hope.
- See if you can laugh at yourself when you fail. None of us is perfect after all and God delights in us just as we are.

Setting out: Removing Barriers to Prayer

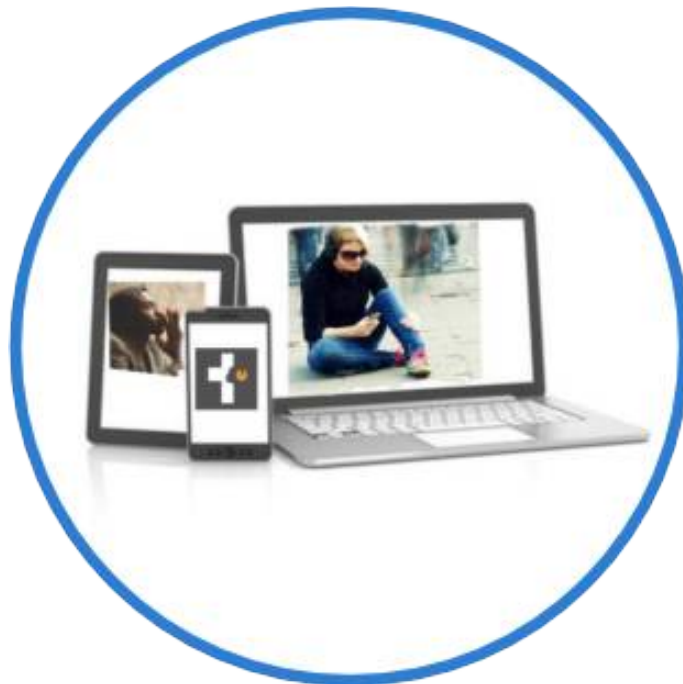
Try and put in place some strategies to support yourself into a daily prayer routine and remove any roadblocks before you get started.

8. Identify what stops you from praying or meditating. Some people feel guilty that they don't pray and it seems this is a big block to gently exploring prayer.
9. If you do feel guilty, or that you used to have a rhythm of prayer, but now you can't seem to stick to it, it may be that the old ways no longer work for your current situation. The real issue is not that we can no longer pray, but that at a different stage in life we may need a different type of prayer or a different routine.



10. Having identified blocks to prayer, think about solutions. For example, if you have children, perhaps make sure they have something to do and let them know when you're starting and stopping prayer, so they can join in if they like, or do something else if not.
11. If you've tried praying or meditating in the morning and consistently failed to get up, how about trying the evening?

12. Consider getting some help – from a spiritual director, prayer coach or friend that you trust. Organisations like the SPIDIR network can be helpful – spidir.org.uk.
13. There are often other people praying on the Discovering Prayer website, so if you join the meditations there, you can be part of the community of people who pray through the site – discoveringprayer.com/course.



Travel well: time, place and duration

Have a think about the best time for you to pray, for how long, and the best location for you.

Time

Having got into a good mind-set, the next step is to think about when and where to pray.



14. Ask yourself, when is the easiest time to pray? It is likely that God is guiding you to a way of prayer that's best for you, and that might be a form of prayer that feels easiest. For example, some people like to pray with Bible notes, others meditate on the Bible, some like to listen to audio meditations, and others are drawn to silent adoration.

Place

Think about where you pray, because the act of setting up a prayer place may help you to commit to having a time aside with God.

15. Create a space to pray or meditate. It does seem to help many people if they pray in the same space each day, or in a sacred space, such as a church. Alternatively, you might integrate prayer whilst on a commute, whilst walking the dog, or on the way to the shops. Any regular outing is great for establishing a routine.
16. Consider aids to prayer such as a candle, or something that's part of nature, or photos.



17. Aim to make the space you pray in welcoming for you. Could you put your chair in a spot with a view of the sky, or by a picture or poster that you find inspiring?
18. You might like to try having a hot drink before you pray. This is to be kind to yourself and set yourself up for a routine that you might look forward to.

Duration

Be kind to yourself and start with a duration that's manageable.

19. Learn from Josh Clark, a 'reasonably fit' 20-year-old, who developed the Couch to 5K programme, which has helped over 4.2 million self-confessed couch potatoes run 5k. His idea was to encourage very small goals (alternating runs of one minute with walking for two minutes) and very gradually build up the duration of the run. We're more likely to stick to goals if we keep them simple and pain-free, so why not apply these principles to prayer?



20. If you can find two minutes twice a day to brush your teeth, perhaps you could find a similar amount to pray? If you think that it's not much, try it and see. Just stop for a couple of minutes and linger over the Lord's Prayer.
21. Whatever time you set yourself, it can help to set a timer, to avoid looking at your watch every thirty seconds wondering if your time is up!
22. One of the nuns once suggested making sure that whatever time you set yourself to pray, complete it all. If you've decided to pray for 5 minutes and you get to 4 and a half, then continue with the remaining 30

seconds. I have found this good advice, because it helps to build discipline.

23. If you don't have a moment to yourself, is there a regular activity that you do, which is perhaps repetitive and doesn't require thinking, in which you could offer that time to God? A commute, school run, or washing up?

Achieve a small goal

Set some small achievable prayer times that suit you and review the impact after a week.



24. Consider setting an achievable daily or weekly rhythm for prayer. When we have children, we establish routines for bedtime and waking. They know what to expect and this helps them to be calm and enjoy life. The same can be true for us. If we establish an achievable routine, we can be helped to pray more regularly.
25. You can of course pray any time you like, but it can help to have one established time of prayer each day that becomes the engine for all that you do.

26. Go for an achievable goal first – just one 5-minute session could be transformative. You could, for example try using Discovering Prayer Compline or Midday Prayer.
27. Be intentional and make a small commitment to pray at a certain time and in a certain place. If you can, make it regular.
28. Beware of what one Anglican nun described as the ‘hardening of the oughteries’. You’re setting a gentle goal, with no hint of beating yourself up if it doesn’t go to plan.
29. If trying to get up in the morning, ‘Don’t think, just do!’. Head for the kettle and make a cuppa to help you wake up and don’t think about it. Professor Steve Peters, in his book *The Chimp Paradox*, suggests that it’s best not to have a discussion with yourself in the morning if you’ve decided to get up early. What he describes as our ‘chimp’ is the irrational part of the brain, and it tends to be the strongest part of us. Peters suggests that on some occasions you can bribe your inner ‘chimp’ (with a cuppa), count to 3 and get up without thinking. This really works for the author. Give it a try and let us know how you get on.



30. Do what you've decided for a week, to the best of your ability, and set a review date to either continue or change what you're doing. Did you find it easier than you thought? Did you start well and fade after a few days? If so, perhaps the goal was too high, or the type of prayer you used no longer works for you. Make another goal and try the next week. Perhaps try out a new form of prayer.

Walk on Ancient Paths

For thousands of years people have prayed and meditated in ancient ways, kept alive by the Christian monastic tradition. Many of us are re-discovering the value of these ancient paths for our times.

31. You could try Lectio Divina, which means Divine Reading. It's a four stage process: reading the Bible slowly, meditating on the words of the Bible and allowing them to sink in, praying, and finally adoring God. Discovering Prayer has a series of meditations based on Lectio Divina, called 'Absorbing God's Word'. You're welcome to try these out for free: discoveringprayer.com/course.



32. Ignatian Prayer is reading a passage of the Bible until it is fairly familiar, allowing yourself to fully imagine yourself at the scene, and then praying about the situation of your imagination. There are some Ignatian-style meditations for you to try on the Discovering Prayer, called 'Praying with Imagination' – discoveringprayer.com/course.
33. Silence and listening to God allows us to be more aware of God's touch on our lives, and is a prayer of surrender and adoration. If you'd like to try a more silent form of meditation, you might like the 'Listening to God' series on Discovering Prayer – discoveringprayer.com/course.
34. Pray with a labyrinth. It is a kind of pilgrimage, walking slowly into the centre of the labyrinth and then out again, often travelling literally and metaphorically with others. There is a good chapter on the use of a labyrinth by Daniel Wolpert, in his book *Creating a Life with God*.
35. Write a Celtic prayer. Christine Sine provides guidance on how to write Celtic prayers in her book *GodSpace*.
36. Pray in front of an icon and if you like, find out about its symbolism.
37. Go on a traditional pilgrimage.
38. Make up your own pilgrimage, perhaps to visit a local convent or monastery, or to a place that has meaning for you.



39. Say the Daily Office. You can explore the Daily Office by visiting a religious community of nuns and monks.
40. Set a smart phone alarm for 12 noon and say the Lord's Prayer. Pete Greig, founder of 24/7 Prayer advocates setting a smart phone or alarm clock to 12 noon, stopping and praying for a short while. This is based on an ancient monastic tradition of praying the Angelus.
41. Learn about the ancient practice of the Angelus. This is the tradition of stopping at the sound of church bells, usually at 12 noon, but in some instances in the evening. The whole community, not just nuns and monks, stopped for a brief while to remember God incarnate. This is a profound practice, to stop what you are doing, even for a short while, and remember God is with us.



Have fun

Prayer can be profound, and is not trivial. However this doesn't mean that it can't also be enjoyable. Exploring a range of methods of praying can help to keep us engaged. You might like to experiment with a range of ways of praying. Here are some examples:

42. Pray out loud.
43. Pray out loud with friends. If you get stuck about what to say, try praying with scripture as a starting point.
44. Give thanks for everything you can think of for 5 minutes.
45. Try repeating the words of the Jesus Prayer: 'Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, have mercy on me, a sinner'. This is a way of praying from the Orthodox tradition popularised in the 19 Century by *The Way of the Pilgrim*.
46. Pray in tongues, if you have this gift. If not, then pray as you can.
47. Pray in the car, a great space for praying out loud, as long as the windows are up!



48. Say the Psalms, out loud if possible. They are beautiful and reflect all human experience, and if prayed regularly can shape our lives. There is more about this from Tom Wright in his helpful book *Finding God in the Psalms*.
49. Write out a favourite prayer and take it with you in your pocket to refer to in the day.
50. Write your own prayer.
51. Keep a prayer journal.
52. Read an inspiring book on prayer. Some examples are provided in the book section below.



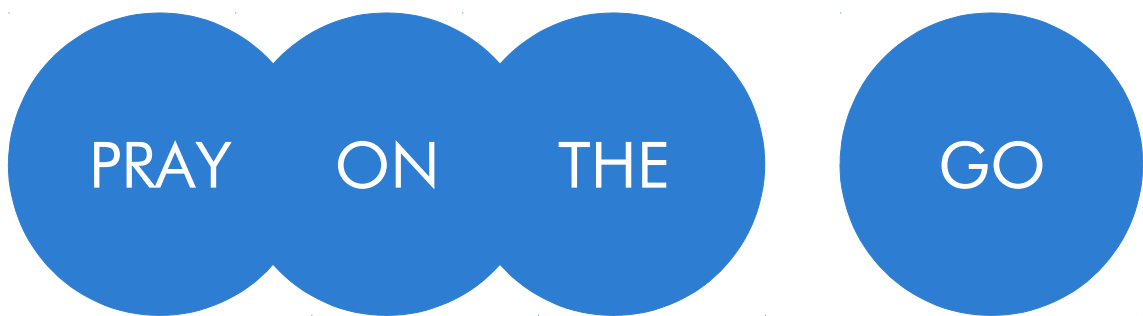
53. Go on a prayer walk. Simply offering the time on a walk to God and being very much aware of your surroundings can be a great way to pray.
54. Dance with all your might like King David in the Old Testament (2 Samuel 6).
55. Try really listening to a piece of music that makes your spirit soar, and give thanks. Give it your full attention.
56. Turn the radio/TV off for a while and really be aware of what you are doing. Perhaps ask 'Where is God for me now?'

57. Send a prayer request on behalf of a friend to a religious community or church.
58. Pray for a cause. Set a time in the day to remember a part of the world or a cause. Perhaps read a little about it, or look at a picture, but mainly pray.
59. Set up an intercession board.
60. If you use a list of people to pray for, keep it manageable (ie small).
61. Pray in a lunch break at work.



62. Read the paper, on paper or online, and ask God to guide you to stop and pray for something you've read or an image that's particularly struck you.
63. Hold a friend in need before God. The Quakers have a lovely phrase – 'holding people in the light' – to describe prayer of intercession that is not a list, but more an offering of prayer. Helen Steven makes reference to holding people in the light in her book *No Extraordinary Power: Prayer, Stillness and Activism*.
64. Say Morning or Evening Prayer. This is now simplified in a really helpful app from the Church of England – [Join us in Daily Prayer](#).

65. Set up a prayer group for your church, if there isn't one already.
66. Pray silently for everyone you meet.
67. Pray whilst gardening.
68. Pray whilst jogging or exercising.
69. Jesus probably learned set prayers, as was the Jewish custom, and these prayers would have permeated all of life. Michelle Guinness, a Christian with Jewish heritage, has written in her autobiography about how her mother integrated prayer into life, with prayers for getting dressed and even using the bathroom.



Imitate Christ

Jesus taught us how to pray both in his formal teaching and by example. Here are just some of the ways that Jesus prayed.

70. When asked about how to pray Jesus gave us the Lord's Prayer. You may wish to try saying it really slowly, or pray a line a day.

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name.
Your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever. Amen.

71. It's likely that the early Christians said the Lord's Prayer three times a day since this is outlined in the *Didache*, an early Christian treatise.
72. Jesus prayed at times of distress and crisis, and asked his friends to be with him at that time. For example, at Gethsemane before he was arrested (Mark 14:37).
73. Jesus followed the traditions of his day, not just by obligation, but as a natural way of prayer and worship in the temple. Jesus was, of course, Jewish, and attended the synagogue and prayed according to Jewish tradition (Luke 4:16).
74. Jesus prayed alone (Luke 5:16), and in the morning whilst it was still dark (Mark 1:35).
75. The Lord prayed for healing. There are many accounts of Jesus healing people, for example a man with a skin disease (Matthew 8:1-4).

76. Jesus prayed for peace for those who did not yet believe: 'I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you.' (John 17:20)
77. Jesus prayed on a high mountain top with a few of his disciples (Matthew 17:1-13).
78. He gave thanks spontaneously for good things like food (John 6:11) and for his disciples (Luke 10:21).



Let go

In the early part of his ministry, Jesus was compelled to go into the desert for '40 days'. He did not start by setting a vision for his ministry, but rather letting go of all that was familiar. It was a time that was testing, but this resulted in clarity of vision and strength of purpose. It can be helpful for us to surrender our lives to God, and here are some ways of doing so.

79. Start each day with a prayer to God, as an act of turning to Him and surrendering.
80. Try the Examen, which is an evening prayer time to review the day and notice more fully where God is there for us in our lives. The Examen

comes from Ignatian spirituality. There is an easy-to-use guide produced by Rev Charles Parker, and included in our reference section.

81. Go on a retreat, perhaps to a convent or monastery. You can usually arrange to see a member of the community, who can help you structure your day and pray with you whilst you are there.
82. Build some times of silence into your day to surrender to God.
83. End each day with a prayer of giving thanks and asking protection for the future.



Evolving and Keeping Going!

Living things grow, and what's true in nature is true for our prayer lives. We often start out with one type of prayer and may well keep coming back to that, but it's also helpful to try out new forms of prayer to inspire us.

84. Jesus said he would send the Advocate to teach us. So we are never alone, though sometimes we think we are. It can be beneficial to regularly ask for help from God.

85. Guard against individualism. Notice that Jesus sometimes urged people to go together to pray: 'Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while.' (Mark 6:31)
86. We are sometimes to be alone, away from the crowds and the busyness of the day, and yet also as part of a wider community of people who pray at church, and some in a religious community of nuns and monks.
87. You might like to join a church or a meditation group, such as a Julian Group, because it seems that people are made to be together in communities.



88. You can be with others without them being present. It might sound strange, but if people agree to pray at the same time as one another, this somehow does seem to help us to pray.
89. You might like to try praying with others that are dispersed through the Discovering Prayer website, and be in touch with insights for helping others or for sharing your experience of deepening your relationship with God.
90. You can also explore [becoming an oblate](#), tertiary, or associate of a religious community of nuns and monks. These are people – like myself – who perhaps only see each other once a year, but pray for each other. In some mysterious way we all encourage and support each other, though we are dispersed.

91. Consider being part of a prayer meeting, or simply having a coffee and prayer with a friend or two.



92. Help others to pray, perhaps set up a 'Prayer Space' or 'Be Space' in school or work. There's a great organisation in the UK that supports this work – bespace.be.
93. Join or set up a boiler room, a house of prayer that often means a group of people are praying around the clock – 24-7prayer.com/boilerrooms.
94. Consider a Rule of Life. This is not a set of obligations, which must be adhered to! Rather it is a scaffolding of intentional commitments that help us to establish a rhythm of prayer. The idea of establishing such a rule was created by early Christian monks, for example *The Rule of St Benedict*. If you're interested in finding out more about setting a rule of life, there are two books in the reading list that might help: *Wisdom from the Monastery: The Rule of St Benedict for Everyday Life* and *GodSpace*.
95. Establish a different prayer for each day of the week. For example on Monday pray for creation, on Tuesday pray for peace. Using the days of the week to remember creation, areas of the world and family can help us be more rounded in our intention.



96. Revisit the traditional seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent and Easter. Could these become more meaningful times of year in which to celebrate?
97. Spend a year in God's Time. If you are very much drawn to prayer and want to spend an extended period of time in prayer you could become an 'alongsider' living with monks and nuns. There are many religious communities that offer these opportunities. St Mary's Convent at Wantage and Mucknell Abbey both have alongsider programmes for men and women. There are many other Anglican Communities too. You can find out more about them at arlife.co.uk. Another new initiative is for young people at Lambeth Palace, to Spend a Year in God's Time living the religious life – stanselm.org.uk.
98. When God seems near, give thanks.
99. When God seems distant, don't be surprised. It seems that this is all part of learning to rely more fully on God, though it might not seem like it at the time.
100. Recognise that prayer has seasons that will fit with our life. For example, what may have worked for you as a student probably won't work as a busy parent, so there is a need to change and grow in our prayer lives.

101. Be grateful for whatever you are able to fit in. Don't belittle your attempts, because for sure God is delighted in you.

About the Author



Michelle Eyre is the Chief Prayer Officer of Discovering Prayer. She's had an unusual career – a dancer, a nun, an occupational therapist, and a manager. Michelle is an oblate of the Anglican Community of St Mary the Virgin, Wantage and has spent over 20 years learning to incorporate some of what she learned when she tried out being a nun into her daily life. Her aim is share the treasure that she learned in community in a way that is accessible to everyone who would like to explore prayer. You can read more about [Michelle's Story](#) on the Discovering Prayer blog.

Further Reading

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At Discovering Prayer, we're at the start of our journey to help people build and a life of prayer and meditation; to restore balance in our lives and refresh our relationship with God. We believe this is part of a journey which will enable each of us to more fully serve the wider community.

We want to help people to explore a range of styles of prayer learning from ancient Christian traditions, so that each person is familiar with different types of praying and meditating and can deepen their relationship with God.

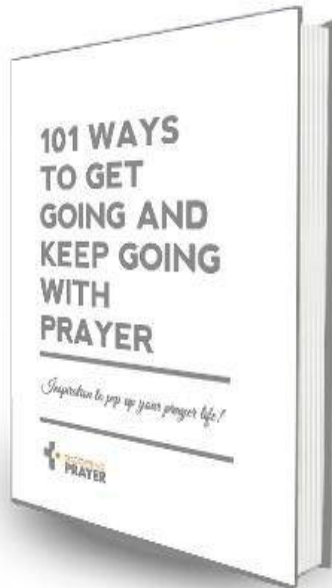
If you're inspired to take part, to grow in prayer and service and learn as part of a community of explores in prayer, we'd love you to join our growing movement.

Join us and pray at Discovering Prayer:

discoveringprayer.com/course



Discovering Prayer



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