

# HOLISTIC FORMATION

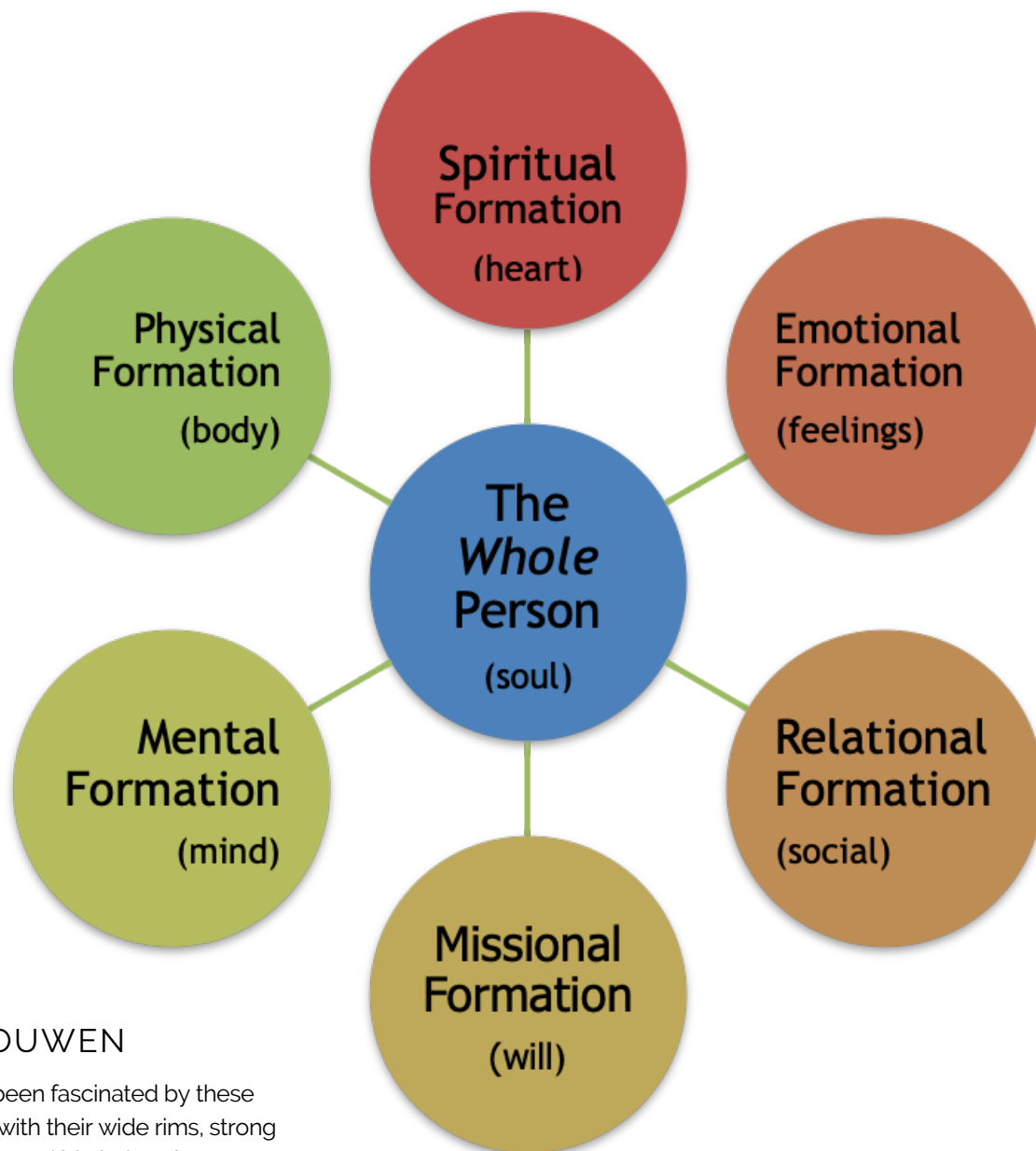


**"THE SALVATION OR DELIVERANCE OF THE BELIEVER IN CHRIST IS ESSENTIALLY HOLISTIC OR WHOLE-LIFE... A MAJOR PART OF UNDERSTANDING SPIRITUAL FORMATION IN THE CHRISTIAN TRADITIONS IS TO FOLLOW CLOSELY THE WAY THE BIBLICAL WRITINGS REPEATEDLY AND EMPHATICALLY FOCUS ON THE VARIOUS ESSENTIAL DIMENSIONS OF THE HUMAN BEING THEIR ROLE IN LIFE AS A WHOLE."**

Dallas Willard

# DIMENSIONS OF OUR FORMATION

"Holistic Formation" is a whole-person perspective of the ongoing process of transformation needed to thrive as followers of Jesus. It involves focusing on the following dimensions so that all are integrated and none are ignored or neglected.



## HENRI NOUWEN

"I have always been fascinated by these wagon wheels with their wide rims, strong wooden spokes, and big hubs. These wheels help me understand the importance of a life lived from the center. When I move along the rim, I can reach one spoke after the other, but when I stay at the hub, I am in touch with all the spokes at once."



# SPIRITUAL FORMATION

"DEAR 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 THAT I AM FOLLOWING YOUR WILL DOES NOT MEAN THAT I AM  
ACTUALLY DOING SO.  
BUT I BELIEVE THIS:  
I BELIEVE THAT THE DESIRE TO PLEASE YOU DOES IN FACT PLEASE YOU.  
I HOPE I HAVE THAT DESIRE IN EVERYTHING I DO.  
I HOPE I NEVER PERSIST IN 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 AT THE TIME.  
THEREFORE, I WILL TRUST YOU ALWAYS, FOR THOUGH I MAY BE LOST – AND IN THE SHADOW  
OF DEATH – I WILL NOT BE AFRAID, BECAUSE I KNOW YOU WILL NEVER LEAVE ME TO FACE MY  
TROUBLES ALL ALONE."

Thomas Merton



# PSALM 23

Dallas Willard - "Life Without Lack"

## ***The Lord is my shepherd.***

In other words, I'm in the care of someone else. I'm not the one in charge. I've taken my kingdom and surrendered it to the kingdom of God. I am living the with-God life. The Lord is my shepherd. And what follows from that?

## ***I shall not want.***

That's the natural result. I shall not lack anything. That's what Jesus teaches: "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness," and everything else will be added (Matt. 6:33).

## ***He makes me to lie down in green pastures.***

What kind of a sheep lies down in a green pasture? A sheep that has eaten its fill. If a sheep is in a green pasture and she's not full, she'll be eating, not lying down.

## ***He leads me beside the still waters.***

A sheep that is being led beside still water is a sheep that is not thirsty. Jesus said to the woman at the well, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:13-14).

## ***He restores my soul.***

The broken depths of my soul are healed and reintegrated in a life in union with God: the eternal kind of life.

## ***He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.***

The effect of the restoration of my soul is that I walk in paths of righteousness on his behalf as a natural expression of my renewed inner nature. As I walk these paths, my trust in the Shepherd runs so deep that I can declare:

## ***Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil.***

A life without lack is one that carries no fear of evil. Our confidence in God soars far above wants and fears. Would you like to have a life without fear, a life of soaring faith? It seems like Jesus was constantly saying to his friends, "Fear not! Fear not!" Imagine what that would be like. No fear of life, aging or death, disease or hunger, no fear of any person or creature, not even the loss of all your possessions. You can live without fear even in the midst of a world dominated by fear. I could easily have chosen "fear no evil" as this book's theme, because we are talking about a life from which fear is eliminated. While the psalmist clearly knows about life's dangers, he can still say, "I will fear no evil." Why? Please read his answer out loud:

# PSALM 23

Continued

***For You are with me.***

The central truth of this book is that the complete sufficiency of the life without lack is based upon the presence of God, and he is most clearly and fully present to us in Jesus Christ, Immanuel, God with us.

***Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.***

I know from experience that the rod and staff represent the Shepherd's strength and protective care. In this safe place where I have no fear, I am at liberty to enjoy the overwhelming generosity of my Shepherd.

***You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.***

Since I love my enemies,\* I would not feast upon a delicious meal in their presence and let them stand there hungry. The abundance of God's provision and safety in my life is so great, I would invite them to enjoy what God has prepared for me.

***You anoint my head with oil.***

Here you might think in terms of hot showers and warm fluffy towels, things that make us feel clean, comfortable, and special, and how God makes that possible. He is not only interested in my having something wonderful to eat, but also in blessing me with a life that is full and free and powerful in him—including clothing, comfortable furnishings, joyful experiences, and deep relationships. So much so that the abundance of God's provision rings out from the psalmist's pen:

***My cup is full!***

Is that what it says? No. "My cup runs over." I have more than my cup will hold. So much that I can be as generous as my Shepherd without fear of ever running out. So much so that I am convinced:

***Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.***

This is a description of the eternal life available to us now in the kingdom of the heavens; the abundant with-God life that comes from following the Shepherd, where we dwell and abide with God in the fullness of his life—a life in which all the promises of Christ's gospel are realized. Because of this, we have no reason to be anxious (Phil. 4:6–7); the world is a perfectly safe place for us to be.

# SPIRITUAL FORMATION

## Definition

The process through which individuals who have received new life “from above” take on the character of Jesus by a combination of effort and grace.

Spiritual formation = taking on the character of Christ by a combination of effort & grace.

## 2 Peter 3:18

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

- Our lives increase in:
  - **Grace** (God acting in our life) *\*Grace is opposed to earning not effort*
  - **Knowledge** (interactive relationship with God)
- It is not a matter of behaving in certain ways, but of being inwardly and thoroughly a different kind of person

## HENRI NOUWEN

"In a society that overvalues progress, development, and personal achievement, the spiritual life becomes quite easily performance-oriented: "On what level am I now, and how do I move to the next one?"—"When will I reach union with God?"—"When will I experience illumination or enlightenment?"

## A.W. TOZER

"We have substituted theological ideas for an arresting encounter; we are full of religious notions but our great weakness is that for our hearts there is no one there."



# WHO AM I? WHO IS GOD?

## **Luke 3:22**

22and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "You are my beloved Son;[a] with you I am well pleased."

## **1 John 3:1**

How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!

## **Ephesians 5:1**

Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children

## **Galatians 4:5-7**

to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons.

6 Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father." 7 So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir.

## **John 1:12-13**

12 Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God— 13 children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God.

## **Ephesians 3:16-19**

16 I pray that, according to the riches of his glory, he may grant that you may be strengthened in your inner being with power through his Spirit, 17 and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, as you are being rooted and grounded in love. 18 I pray that you may have the power to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth, 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

## HENRI NOUWEN

"The challenge is to let go of fear and claim the deeper truth of who I am. When you forget your true identity as a beloved child of God, you lose your way in life. You become scared and start doing things not freely, but because of fear. But when you make space for God in your life and begin to listen to God's loving voice, you suddenly start to realize perfect love. You can claim it, and you can gradually let go of your fear. The fear may come back tomorrow and you will have to struggle, and you can again return from fear to love. Every time you feel afraid, you can open yourself to God's presence, hear God's voice again, and be brought back to perfect love that casts out fear and brings in greater freedom."

# SOLITUDE



**"IT IS IN SOLITUDE THAT WE DISCOVER THAT  
BEING IS MORE IMPORTANT THAN HAVING AND  
THAT WE ARE WORTH MORE THAN THE RESULTS  
OF OUR EFFORTS.**

**IN SOLITUDE WE DISCOVER THAT OUR LIFE IS  
NOT A POSSESSION TO BE DEFENDED BUT A GIFT  
TO BE SHARED."**

Henri Nouwen



# CENTERING PRAYER

Jason Phillips

"Prayer is not a request for God's favors. True, it has been used to obtain the satisfaction of personal desires. It has even been adopted to reinforce the prejudices, justify violence, and create barriers between people and between countries. But genuine prayer is based on recognizing the Origin of all that exists, and opening ourselves to it...In prayer we acknowledge God as the supreme source from which flows all strength, all goodness, all existence, acknowledging that we have our being, life itself from the supreme Power. One can then communicate with this Source, worship it, and ultimately place ones very center in it."

**Piero Ferrucci**

## **Instructions:**

The first step is to find a one-syllable word like "God", "King", "Love", or "Abba". Repeat this word only as a thought comes to mind not over and over like a mantra. It doesn't matter what word it is or that the word might have a special meaning, it may take you some time to find the word but never use different words in one session of prayer. If you focus on the word it will become a distraction and the point is to get rid of all distractions. Try to spend at least 20 minutes in this prayer and follow the method below.

1. Find a quiet spot with a chair. Sit upright and be as relaxed and comfortable as you possibly can be. If you can be in the same space every time it is better. You could have pictures of your family, a cross, icon, or picture anything that might draw your attention towards God's love. Keep your eyes closed unless you start to fall asleep.
2. Take some time and settle. Recite the Lord's Prayer, Psalm 23, or another passage to begin centering your attention on God.
3. Once you have settled sit silently. Every time a thought or anything comes to mind recite your word releasing the thought.
4. At the end of your time (20 minutes) recite a bible passage as you did at the beginning to re-enter into the world.

The Four R's: (Cynthia Bourgeault Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening)

Resist no thought

Retain no Thought

React to no thought

Return to your sacred word.

## **Bibliography and Suggested Reading**

Centering Prayer and Inner Awakening by Cynthia Bourgeault

The Cloud of Unknowing by unknown English monk

# BREATH PRAYER

Jason Phillips

## **1 Thessalonians 5:17**

"Pray without ceasing"

### **How?**

Practices

Repeating a simple one sentence prayer. That can start with addressing God then followed by a phrase expressing your deepest desire of God. Connect your prayer to breathing and return to it throughout the day until it becomes a reflex of the soul.

Can be short prayers of love and desire

- "Lord Jesus, Have mercy on me." (Luke 18:38)
- "Be Still, and know I am God." (Psalm 40:10)
- "Shepherd lead me, by still waters" (Psalm 23)
- "Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening" (1 Samuel 3:10)
- "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not be in want" (Psalm 23:1)
- "Jesus, son of David, have mercy on me" (Mark 10:47)
- "Teacher, let me see again" (Bartimaeus' request; Mark 10:51)
- "Establish thou, the work of my hands." (Psalm 90:17)
- "God, have mercy on me a sinner" (Luke 18:13)
- "Abba, I belong to you" (Romans 8:15)
- "Come, Lord Jesus, come" (Revelation 22:20)
- "My Lord and My God"
- "My help is in the name of the Lord"
- "Jesus my light and my love"
- "Come, Lord Jesus, be my guest"
- "I belong to you, O Lord"
- "Jesus, let me feel your love" (or power, strength, etc.)
- "Lead me, Lord; I will follow"
- "Show me your way, Lord Jesus"
- "Jesus lead me into joy" (or peace, patience, etc.)

### **Why?**

- Biblical origins: Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me" (Luke 18:38); the ten lepers who "called to him, Jesus, Master, take pity on us" (Luke 17:13); and the cry for mercy of the publican, "God, be merciful to me, a sinner" (Luke 18:14).

## **2 Peter 1:3-4**

Everything that goes into a life of pleasing God has been miraculously given to us by getting to know, personally and intimately, the One who invited us to God. The best invitation we ever received! We were also given absolutely terrific promises to pass on to you—your tickets to participation in the life of God after you turned your back on a world corrupted by lust.

The Prayer of the heart is a prayer that does not allow us to limit our relationship with God to interesting words or pious emotions. By its very nature such prayer transforms our whole being into Christ precisely because it opens the eyes of our soul to the truth of ourselves as well as to the truth of God.

### **The Way of the Heart, Henri Nouwen**

#### **Fruit**

"When I prayed in my heart, everything around me seemed delightful and marvelous. The trees, the grass, the birds, the air, the light seemed to be telling me that they existed for man's sake, that they witnessed to the love of God for man, that all things prayed to God and sang his praise."

"Again I started off on my wanderings. But now I did not walk along as before, filled with care. The invocation of the Name of Jesus gladdened my way. Everybody was kind to me. If anyone harms me I have only to think, 'How sweet is the Prayer of Jesus!' and the injury and the anger alike pass away and I forget it all."

#### **- The Way of the Pilgrim, Unknown Russian Peasant**

- Walking every moment with Jesus whether you feel his company or not
- Abiding in Christ
- Expressing the deepest desire of your heart in prayer
- A reminder that God is present
- Developing a rhythm of turning to God throughout the day
- Praying without ceasing

#### **Bibliography and Suggested Reading**

*The Way of the Pilgrim and the Pilgrim Continues His Way* translated by Helen Bacovcin

*The Way of the Heart* by Henri J. Nouwen

*Practicing His Presence or The Practice of the Presence of God* by Brother Lawrence

# SCRIPTURE



**"THE BIBLE, ALL OF IT, IS LIVABLE; IT IS THE  
TEXT FOR LIVING OUR LIVES. IT REVEALS A GOD-  
CREATED, GOD-ORDERED, GOD-BLESSED WORLD  
IN WHICH WE FIND OURSELVES AT HOME AND  
WHOLE."**

Eugene Peterson



# INGNATION MEDITATION

Jason Phillips from Jan Johnson Workshop

## WHY MEDITATE ON SCRIPTURE?

Meditation helps us to become “careful to do everything written in the Word” (Joshua 1:8). Praying with Scripture allows God to lead us in our prayer. Using our imagination is a tool to be present to God’s word to us, allowing God to shape our time together, and riding us of our own agenda. The fruit is a deep love of God’s Scriptures and practice in listening to God.

How is *meditation* on Scripture different from *study* of Scripture?

## STUDY

- *Dissect the text*
- *Ask questions about the text*
- *Read and compare facts and new ways of applying the facts*

## MEDITATION

- *Hear the text and enter into it*
- *Let the text ask questions of you*
- *Read to let God speak to you*

## HOW DO WE DO THIS

- Be a “fly on the wall”: If you had been present, what sights, sounds, tastes, smells, and textures would you have experienced?
- Let God put you in the passage, perhaps becoming the person Jesus is speaking to. Let Jesus look you in the eyes, sitting face to face, and speak to you. What do sense as Jesus speaks to you? What facial expressions do you notice?
- Use your imagination, but still be WORD-centered
- Approach Scripture in a non-controlling manner: Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls.– James 1:21

Now the tax collectors and “sinners” were all gathering around to hear him. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

Then Jesus told them this parable: “Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, ‘Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep.’ I tell you that in the same way there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent. **(Luke 15:1-7)**

# LECTIO DIVINA

Michael Bischoff

“Our desire to know more, read more and study more can be another expression of our culture and it’s acquisitive nature. knowing God, not knowing more, is the goal.”

**Richard Rohr**

**Lectio Divina** (pronounced LEX-ee-o dih-VEE-nuh) is a Latin phrase for the sacred reading of Scripture

## History

- It is a method of reading Scripture that innumerable monks, nuns, and followers of Christ have used since the earliest days of the church.
- It was St. Benedict (ca.480-ca.550) who cemented the practice in Western monasticism, and Guigo II (ca. 1115-ca.1198) who articulated the practice even further in his book *Scala Claustralium* (The Ladder of Monastics).

## Description

- It is a method of reading the Bible in a devotional way (as opposed to literal, moral, or allegorical) – believing that, because it is God’s inspired Word, it’s a living and active text, that has something to say to each individual believer.
- Lectio divina assumes that, by entering deeply into the text of God’s holy Word, God will be made known to us, speak to us, and shape our lives.
- It is reading the Bible with no agenda, no presuppositions.
- One needs to purposefully shed the common methods most of us use in our everyday reading (such as reading for entertainment or information).

## Practice

- Find a Bible translation or paraphrase that is easily readable.
- Use a Bible without notes, underlining, or study helps – anything that will distract you from what God is saying to you today.
- Pay attention to your surroundings – you want quiet or silence, enough light to read but not so bright to be distracting, and no other distractions (like phones).
- Choose a time of day when you are wide awake and set aside enough time to hear from God.
- Choose a text of Scripture that you sense will be a good source of devotion for you. While all of Scripture can be used for this, as you are beginning it might be best to choose a Psalm, something from the gospels, or a short paragraph from one of the epistles.
- You might begin with a prayer requesting and expecting God’s presence and direction.

# Structure

## **Reading** a passage of Scripture (*lectio*)

- Read the scripture slowly, repeatedly, and aloud if possible
- Allow the text to trigger memories and associations that reside below the threshold of awareness
- Be calm, deliberate, gradual, and listening hard for what God has to say to you
- Imagine what your temperament will be in heaven sitting at God's feet
- Listen for a word or phrase that rises above the rest of text ("rings") and grabs a hold of you
- Reading aloud helps the words and phrases resonate in the ear

## **Meditation** on that passage (*meditatio*)

- This is the "interior intelligence" of the text – what seem to be the values, the underlying assumptions and presumptions of this passage?
- How is my life touched today by this passage?
- What is this passage inviting me to do?
- As you attend to those deeper meanings, begin to meditate on the feelings and emotions that are conjured up in your inner self

## **Prayer** (*oratio*)

- Although it is all prayer, here one deliberately asks God for illumination
- Respond to God, telling your desire to respond to the invitation or asking questions

## **Contemplation** (*contemplatio*)

- Silent waiting on God
- Where your prayer moves beyond words and intellect into a place where time and eternity almost touch
- This final step takes patience and practice, and is often the most difficult to achieve
- It may be merely a moment of silence, peace, and rest in the midst of 10 minutes of struggle to quiet your mind

# DAILY OFFICE

Jason Phillips

I choose to think about every word of a prayer before I vocalize it. Prayer without interior felling is not very effective either for the one who recites it or for the one who listens to it: everything depends on interior life and on attentive prayer! But how few people are occupied with the interior activity! The reasons for this is that they don't really want it; they have no yearning for spiritual life and interior enlightenment.

## **Anonymous priest from The Way of the Pilgrim**

Jews do offer freely composed prayers...But overall, it is the fixed order and content of Jewish prayer that gives it its distinctiveness and that demands the personal commitment to prayer as a discipline.

## **Lawrence Hoffman**

But if routiness is a danger, it is also the way liturgy works. When you don't have to think all the time about what the words you are going to say next, you are free to participate in the life of God.

## **Lauren F. Winner Mudhouse Sabbath**

### **Biblical History of daily prayer hours**

**Daniel 6:10** - Daniel prayed 'three times a day'

**Acts 2:15** - On the day of Pentecost Christ's disciples had assembled for prayer at 'the third hour', 9 a.m.,

**Acts 10:9** - When the Holy Spirit came upon them with dramatic force. Peter went up to the flat roof of the house to pray at 'the sixth hour', noon.

**Acts 3:1** - When he had a vision when led him to welcome the Gentile, Cornelius, into the Christian church. The apostles Peter and John went up to the temple at 'the ninth hour', 3 p.m., and healed a cripple on the way.

**Visit** <https://www.northumbriacommunity.org/offices/how-to-use-daily-office/>

### **BOOK:**

Celtic Daily Prayer: Prayers and Readings from the Northumbria Community



# PRAYER OF EXAMEN

Jason Phillips

The Examen of Consciousness is an exploration of how God is present within the events, circumstances, feeling of our daily lives. The method reflects the dynamic movement of personal love: what we always want to say to a person whom we truly love. "Thank you...Help me...I love you...I'm sorry...Be with me..."

You can pray through the outline below meditating on each point for a period of time but many also find journaling through this prayer to be a blessing.

## Structure

Loving God, I am totally dependent on you. Everything is a gift from you. **All is a gift.** I give you thanks and praise for the gifts of this day...

God, I believe you work through and in time to reveal me to myself. Please give me an **increased awareness** of how you are guiding and shaping my life, as well as a more sensitive awareness of the obstacles I put in your way...

**You have been present in my life today.** Be near, now, as I reflect on:

Your presence in the events of today...

Your presence in the **feelings** I experienced today...

Your **call** to me...

My **response** to you...

Oh God, I ask **your loving forgiveness and healing.** The particular event of this day that I most want healed is...

Filled with hope and a firm belief in your love and power, **I entrust myself to your care,** and strongly affirm...(Claim the gift you most desire, most need; believe that God desires to give you that gift.)

## Or Simply

- Start with gratitude, thanking God for one or two blessings you received today
- Ask God to fill you with His love. Entrust yourself to Him
- Going hour by hour or moment by moment.
  - Where did you experience God's Presence? Why?
  - Where did he seem to be absent? Why?
- Ask God for forgiveness
- Commit your sleep and morning to Him.

## App

<https://apps.apple.com/us/app/reimagining-the-examen/id1065042173>

