



40 Ways

To Spend

5 Minutes With God

Nothing is more practical than finding God, than falling in Love in a quite absolute, final way. What you are in love with, what seizes your imagination, will affect everything. It will decide what will get you out of bed in the morning, what you do with your evenings, how you spend your weekends, what you read, whom you know, what breaks your heart, and what amazes you with joy and gratitude. Fall in Love, stay in love, and it will decide everything.

- attrib Fr Pedro Arrupe

40 Ways To Spend 5 Minutes With God



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If you have any questions about this prayer guide or anything else dealing with spiritual formation, please feel free to inquire josh@invitationpodcast.org

Welcome!

You've done it! If you are taking some time to read through this, then you have begun praying already. It's true. Even the smallest desire to learn to pray is a gift only God can stir inside of you. Consider why you are reading this guide. Perhaps you have always thought you were bad at prayer and you need some help. Perhaps you are skeptical. Five minutes? Really? What can five minutes do? Perhaps you are a newer Christian, and you feel like you just don't understand what prayer is. Perhaps you are a more seasoned Christian who is bored with your faith, and you want to imagine what more you can discover in your relationship God?

Your First Five Minutes of Prayer

The first step is to use five minutes to prayerfully read through this guide. Familiarize yourself with it and discern what you might use tomorrow for your next five minutes of prayer. Consider how much of your life is already governed by small daily practices: putting on clothes, making a quick breakfast, gathering all your things before you head out the door, making a cup of coffee, checking your email, brushing your teeth and washing your face before bed.... We give ourselves to all these basic practices that shape our days. Consider what could happen by simply adding five minutes with God to your daily routines. A five-minute daily walk would benefit your health. Five minutes of news would help you stay on top of politics. Five minutes a day with a friend would deepen your friendship. Likewise, five minutes of prayer will familiarize you with the creator of the universe, the Lover of your soul.

40? Really?

This list of prayer methods is not intended to intimidate you but to give you hope. There are so many ways! Prayer should never be boring! There is much to explore!

Yet perhaps you picked up this set of prayers on a whim and now you are looking over the pages feeling overwhelmed or even confused. Please be patient with yourself and with what might lie ahead for you. Many of us who have been going to church for quite awhile are still intimidated and restless when it comes to prayer; we have not yet learned how easy prayer is.

Perhaps the most difficult thing about prayer is accepting how easy it is. The difficulty is not with prayer itself. Prayer is our greatest help. It can fill us with the deepest delights, as the Psalmist says, *In your presence is fullness of joy. In your right hand are pleasures eternal.* The difficulty is surrendering ourselves. We don't like wasting our precious time and attention especially on a God we cannot see with our eyes. By saying that prayer is easy, we mean that once we begin—once we create a time and a space for God—he will, by his Spirit meet us and draw us deeper into his love. Once we continue in prayer and make it part of our daily rhythms, we learn that this is what we were originally created for. After you have spent some time in prayer, you will look back and know how much easier it is to live life with God rather than without Him.

If Prayer Is So Easy, Then How Do We Begin?

Prayer is simply responding to Jesus' invitation to enjoy his love. Prayer is not a matter of dutifully folding our hands, closing our eyes, and asking God to help us with a list of needs. Our need for God is much deeper than any single prayer concern. Prayer is about opening ourselves to the presence of God so that his love will saturate all that we do—all our concerns, health, family, friends, work and play...our past, present, and future.

Prayer begins by opening yourself to his presence. Imagine yourself in a busy place filled with people, an office or a coffee shop. You are occupied with a task—an email, your calendar, or lost in thought, and so you are closed and inattentive to the people that surround you. But then a close friend appears across the room and walks toward you. Your heart moves. You recognize your affection and gratitude for that friend, and you open yourself to her company. You welcome her as a companion to sit down and talk with.

Prayer can be this simple: a practice of recognizing Spirit of God is in your midst. He is not across the room. He is right next to you. He is already in your heart in fact. When we pray, we practice the joy of recognizing and opening ourselves to God's companionship.

Yes, But How Do We Accept This Invitation and Enjoy God's Presence?

Here is where we must risk. We simply do it. We set aside a place and time and take the risk of opening ourselves to God. We risk in faith that God is near and that he will reveal himself to us. It can be tricky to accept that he will reveal himself to each of us in different ways. One of us needs more silence, another needs more Scripture and another, to write out prayers in a journal. The only aspect we all share in common is that *all of us begin to sense his presence and hear his voice best when we open ourselves to him regularly day by day*. Our regular, habitual, daily need for God is where everyone starts.

It will seem like a risk at first, so it is best to start small by setting aside a small amount of time each day. It is best to not try more than five or ten minutes to protect yourself from the heavy expectation that tomorrow needs to be as earnest as yesterday. Expectation is a great hindrance to prayer. Expectation is the false idea that only big, long, and serious prayers will change us. This kind of expectation turns out to be more about us, about our spiritual power than about the loving presence of God.

Prayer is not a way to earn God's favor. It is a way to surrender to His love. Said differently, prayer is not about how we can get God's attention to pay attention to us. He is already intimately acquainted with every detail of our lives. Prayer is a way for God gets our attention.

How To Use This Guide

Prayer requires us to engage the whole of ourselves, to bring every aspect of our being to God as a living sacrifice. Some of us by nature and nurture tend to function more from the heart and others from the mind, some from the soul and some from strength. Begin by picking an approach to prayer that fits your personal spirituality. Look over the list of prayer suggestions below and choose an option that makes the most sense, something that seems easy and comfortable. Later in your journey you can choose an approach that seems less familiar and stretch yourself when you are ready.

It is not that these approaches to prayer below are exclusive to the head, heart, soul, or strength. There will be lots of overlap in each because it is impossible to pray without involving all four to some extent. Think instead of where your prayer begins. For example, you may begin focusing on what is stirring in your heart. But as you focus on your heart, your mind and soul are engaged and eventually your strength too. The 'soul' practices are perhaps the only methods that should eventually move you toward your inner self without any particular attention given to your emotions or thoughts. Yet it is still necessary to use your mind and heart to arrive at that kind of soul stillness, *to be still and know that I am God*.

A Final Word Of Encouragement

Proceed by focusing on what makes sense. Don't worry about what is already confusing or frustrating. 'Control' is one of the dangerous obstacles of our modern way of thinking. Those who are primarily people of the mind want to have control by understanding and agreeing with every idea in this guide before proceeding. Those who are of the heart will not proceed until they feel emotionally safe with prayer—until they authentically *feel* like praying. Those people who are interested in strength will struggle with this prayer until they know it will help them accomplish something tangible and of significance. These are all forms of control that can be overcome with the help of the Spirit, through patience and time. Jesus taught that the faith of a tiny mustard seed can move mountains, so we begin prayer with the smallest portions of trust.

Here is where people who live out of their souls may have an advantage. The soul is the misunderstood arena of our inner selves because it is the hidden, mysterious, and deep part of our beings. As you proceed, trust that "deep calls unto deep." The depths of God are reaching you in ways that are beyond your thoughts and emotions. There are things He wants to teach you that you cannot understand right now, things that can only be learned by personal experience of his love in prayer.

The ideal for us is Jesus himself who alone is perfectly holy and whole, fully integrated in heart, mind, soul and strength.

May attain the mature knowledge of the Son of God and attain the whole measure of the fullness of Christ!

To Love God With All Your HEART

1. Read a short passage of Scripture and pay attention to what word or short phrase especially stirs your heart. Write that word or phrase in a journal. Then write and reflect on how these words help you love God. His mercies are new every morning. Enjoy this word or phrase as the new gift of his mercy for you today.
2. Read a short passage of Scripture and pay attention to what word or short phrase stirs your heart. Then sit quietly and say that word or phrase lovingly back to God. Say these words slowly and treasure them in your heart.
3. Read a short passage of Scripture. Then re-write the passage in the form of a prayer. For example, you can use John 3:16 this way: *Help me understand how you love the whole world so much that you sent Jesus to die for all of us. Help me to more deeply believe in your saving power in my life and in those around me. Help me to feel this truth in my heart.* Now pray the prayer you have composed. You can even write it down on a small piece of paper to carry with you and turn to it throughout the day.
4. Spend a few minutes listing in a journal several things that you have loved throughout the past day. What has your heart been returning to again and again? A person? A task? A place? Write down anything and everything that comes to mind whether it seems small or great. Give thanks to God for these gifts of love.
5. In the evening or right before bed sit quietly. Slowly and lovingly scan your memory of each hour of your day's activities paying attention to the things that especially stir your heart. Finish by offering thanks to God for these gifts.
6. Spend your five minutes of prayer sitting quietly considering this: *what is it that I really desire and hunger for right in this very moment?* Pay attention to the strongest movements of your heart. Then ask God to guide you through these desires. Consider might God be teaching you through these desires?
7. As you consider what it is that you really want in your heart, you may discover that your desires can lead you away from God's love. Spend five minutes confessing to God that you need God's help to purify your heart. If you feel led, you might even find a friend who you can confess these sins to. Trust that God is faithful to forgive you. He will separate your sin from you as far as the east is from the west.
8. As you consider what it is that you really want in your heart, you may be afraid of your big desires. Perhaps you assume that you'll never get what you really want. Spend five minutes considering whether God placed that desire in your heart. Is this a gift from God? Is it a way that He might be speaking to you? Or is this big desire somehow getting in the way of your relationship with God?
9. Spend your five minutes of prayer sitting quietly considering this: *what do I fear?* In a journal make a list of everything that concerns you. Do this quickly without trying to be exhaustive. Notice which concerns seem especially swollen and difficult. Then ask God to bring peace into this pain.
10. If you already carry great wounds and fears in your heart, spend a few minutes imagining what it would be like if your worst fears came true. Then spend the rest of your

prayer imagining how God could bring life, peace, and love even into this worst-case scenario. Note: if you have wounds of trauma or struggle with depression and anxiety, sitting quietly in prayer may be especially troubling. That is okay. Don't feel guilty or give into despair. Prayer can open us up to reveal how we need help. If you feel overwhelmed, consider seeking the help of a pastor, counselor, or a spiritual director.

To Love God With All Your *MIND*

11. Read as much of a book of the Bible as you can within five minutes. Even though you are trying to cover large amounts, as you are able, read relatively slowly without rushing. Pay attention to what makes sense and don't worry about the parts that don't make sense. Look for recurring words or phrases. Identify themes and major events. Read daily and you can quickly complete the whole book.
12. Consider the method above, but read these longer passages of Scripture out loud to yourself. Reading aloud can help some to keep the words alive and vibrant.
13. Daily read a longer passage of Scripture out loud to others. Corporate and communal reading of Scripture is more of the norm throughout the history of Israel and the Christian church because most people in the ancient past could not read. Truly, a set time of sacred reading with a friend or spouse can completely change the way we access the Scripture.
14. Read a short passage of Scripture paying attention to what word or short phrase inspires you to meditate on ideas about God. Write the word or phrase in a journal and then reflect in writing why this Scripture helps you make more sense of God, of yourself, of others, or the world.
15. Or, instead of writing about the phrase, seek out someone you find particularly thoughtful and ask them to discuss the word or phrase with you. This could be a phone call on the way to work, a planned coffee break at work with a co-worker, a topic for dinner conversation, or even a quick email to a friend or pastor.
16. Read a short passage of Scripture and identify a troubling or puzzling question. In a journal write out two or three possible ways you might answer this question.
17. Read a passage of Scripture in two different translations of the Bible. Then note the similarities and differences. Doing this with *The Message* is highly recommended.
18. Spend your five minutes each day prayerfully reading and memorizing a passage.
19. As you read Scripture, identify key words or phrases that seem important to the biblical author. Note how many times that key word or phrase is used in a longer passage. Then on another day a quick word study using a concordance or Bible dictionary. Notice how the word is used in different parts of the Bible. The site, www.blueletterBible.org is an easy-to-use resource for this.
20. Spend your five minutes reading an inspirational spiritual author, a theologian, or a catechism.

To Love God With All Your SOUL

21. Read through a short passage of Scripture (three to five verses) three times. Sit quietly at rest between each reading. Focus on how the passage can help you trust that God is near you without trying to figure it out with your mind.
22. Read a short passage of Scripture paying attention to what word or short phrase stirs inside of you. Sit quietly saying the word or phrase repeatedly allowing it to move from your mind down into the center of your being.
23. Read a short passage of Scripture and then imaginatively place yourself inside of the passage. This is an especially effective practice if it is a story either from the Old Testament or a Gospel. Picture yourself in the story. Allow your imagination to play through the scene a few times. Simply be present in the story without trying to figure out it's meaning.
24. Get out into nature for a short walk. Begin by inviting Jesus to join you along the way. As you notice things of beauty, give thanks to God our Creator for his gifts. Even a walk around the block or stepping outside at night to take in the night's sky can help slow your breathing so you can turn away from anxious thoughts and more easily open yourself to God's presence.
25. Memorize a passage of Scripture or a classic prayer and recite it slowly two or three times. Sit quietly and rest quietly between each recitation. This kind of slow repetition of short prayers has been practiced by Christians for centuries. For example, the Eastern Orthodox 'Jesus Prayer' is used this way (*Lord Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner*) and can be repeated several times to calm and focus your soul and help you remain open to God's presence.
26. Prepare a special place in your home that helps you be quiet to rest in God. Use a good chair that will keep your back upright or sit attentively on the floor. Practice silence for your five minutes. Do not feel guilty when distracting thoughts come. Simply offer those thoughts back to God placing them in his care. Then focus on the subtle work of stilling your soul. For some people it is helpful to write down those distracting thoughts in order to move on from them.
27. Place religious pictures, a cross, or any kind of meaningful art in your prayer space that will especially help you shift your attention away from stress and busyness and into God's presence. When distracting thoughts arise, open your eyes and gaze at your favorite image. With practice a particular image can be something you use to remind you to retreat back into stillness.
28. Wear a piece of religious jewelry, a cross, a candle, or a special ring. Throughout the day when you find yourself especially anxious, take the cross or ring off and hold it in your hands. As a special gift of jewelry from a loved one reminds you of that relationship, so can this piece of jewelry be a reminder of your relationship with God. It can help you rediscover stillness in the midst of busyness and distractions. With a candle, sit calmly watching the movements of the flame. Allow the candle to focus your attention on stillness.

29. Create more space for God throughout your day by eliminating an unnecessary daily habit. Remove some or all internet access, news, music, email, or texts from your morning routine, your drive to work, during a lunch break, from dinner through bed or even throughout a whole day. Allow God to fill this new empty space. Use your five minutes to reflect on how this kind of fasting is affecting your openness to God.
30. Fast from busyness by saying 'no' the next time you are asked to go above and beyond your regular day's responsibilities. When you fast like this, you are also fasting from your need for significance—indeed, your need for approval. Now that you are not adding anything extra to your day, use five minutes to consider other ways that you can cut busyness out of your life. Identify how to create margins in your life so that you don't need to rush through each day. Consider what benefit going to sleep a half hour or a full hour earlier might have to your life, to your relationships, your, work, and prayer.

To Love God With All Your STRENGTH

31. Let's identify a call to action, a way to put hands and feet to your prayers. Read a short passage of Scripture carefully and then prayerfully identify one specific way that you can respond to the passage with your words and actions. How can you risk in faith this day? Is there someone you can secretly bless? A note of encouragement? An act of service?
32. Find a Gospel account of Jesus' or the apostles' ministry. Read through the passage and allow it to enlarge your sense of God's mission to build his kingdom on this earth through you. Pray, "Thy kingdom come through my life God!"
33. The Benedictine monks teach "Laborare est Orare," *work is prayer*. Whether you are a stay at home parent, on a construction site, or work in an office cubicle, use your five minutes to imagine how God is and can be involved in all of your labor today. Invite God to accompany you through all of your tasks.
34. Give thanks for the gift of your body and of your health. Meditate on how you are caring and using your body, the temple of the Holy Spirit. Consider the uniqueness of your "fearfully and wonderfully made" body and thank God for it. Also consider ways that you can better care for your body with better nutrition, diet, exercise and sleep.
35. Make a list in a journal of all the ways that you are strong. Identify all of your gifts and talents—physical, emotional, and intellectual strengths. List even the things that you are marginally good at. Deepen your sense of how God can and will work uniquely through you to build his kingdom. Trust that despite your weaknesses and age, he has prepared you to be his hands and feet on the earth, to establish his kingdom "on earth as it is in heaven." Rest in this assurance in prayer.
36. As you consider your gifts, use your five minutes of prayer to remember God's faithful work through you in the past. List several ways that you know God has already shown himself through you. Look over his faithfulness through you in the past, and let the Spirit grow your faith for how he will use you in the future.
37. Consider your gifts further by reflecting prayerfully in a journal about how God is currently working through you. If you take time to write out God's current work, you might

come back to read this account later with new eyes and be surprised. Many of the Psalms are all lists of remembrance of God's faithfulness. Write out your own Psalm of remembrance.

38. Consider how you would like to serve God in the future. Meditate on who you are becoming as a person. Who will you be in six months or a year? How do you hope God will transform you? Be specific and write out a description of how you might grow in your ability to lovingly give of your time, energy, talent, and money?
39. If you want to further express your ability to love God with all of your strength, consider how you might go to great effort to create more time for prayer. Perhaps you can lengthen one single time of prayer to ten or fifteen minutes. Or you might want to choose five minutes in the morning and another five minutes in the evening. Some find it helpful to turn their work into prayer by praying throughout the day briefly during a coffee or lunch break.
40. Begin experimenting with a 24-hour fast by not eating any food after dinner one night, skipping breakfast and lunch the following day and then break your fast with a small meal that next evening. Use the time you would otherwise be devoting to eating to prayer and Scripture. If you normally eat these meals with friends or co-workers, use only 5-minutes of your regular table time to pray in solitude and then re-join them drinking water or tea. As you experience hunger pangs, join your sense of suffering to your prayer reminding yourself that your very body aches for more of God.
41. Another significant way to demonstrate your strong love for God is by risking with types of worship and prayer that do not come naturally to you. Stretch your faith by practicing a new prayer method from somewhere else in this guide even if it seems strange and uncomfortable at first.