

## Centering Prayer

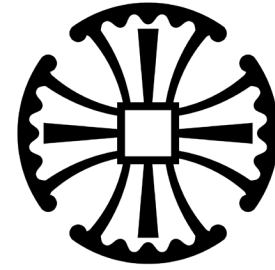
Centering Prayer is a form of Christian prayer with roots deep within the Christian faith. Though it may seem similar to transcendental meditation or Buddhist meditation, the goal is time spent with our creator and so is animated by a very different desire and uses different techniques from meditation. Dom Basil Pennington gives the most concise definition of Centering Prayer as: Be with God within. Use a word to stay. Continue this way for 20 minutes.  
[www.kingofpeace.org/resources/centeringprayerbrochure.pdf](http://www.kingofpeace.org/resources/centeringprayerbrochure.pdf)

## Anglican Prayer Beads

Anglican Prayer Beads are a relatively new form of prayer, blending the Orthodox Jesus Prayer Rope and the Roman Catholic Rosary. The thirty-three bead design was created by the Rev. Lynn Bauman in the mid-1980s, through the prayerful exploration and discovery of a contemplative prayer group. The touching of the fingers on each successive bead is an aid in keeping our mind from wandering, and the rhythm of the prayers leads us more readily into stillness. While you may buy a set of beads, they are easy to make with materials from a craft store. Full information is available online here:  
[www.kingofpeace.org/prayerbeads.htm](http://www.kingofpeace.org/prayerbeads.htm)

## Form a Weekly Breakfast or Lunch Meeting

One of the most powerful ways to transform your life is to meet weekly with a group to bear one another's burdens and share one another's joys. The Methodist Church started in this way when John Wesley began to meet with a Holy Club. In the 1970s, Cursillo fostered "Reunion Groups" for the same purpose. The basic idea is to meet at a set time each week. Share how you have done on following Jesus through keeping your rule of life. Let each other know of prayer requests and tell of the moment you felt closest to Christ in the previous week. The practice of meeting week by week to be real with a group of people is life changing as it provides you with people who know and love you and hold you accountable for being your best self and love you when you are not. Whether you meet for breakfast or lunch, tea or coffee, the point is to find people with whom you can really share what is going on in your life, good and bad.



# Creating a Rule of Life

If you don't set your own priorities, others will set your priorities for you. No where is this truer than with your spiritual life. If you don't set your own agenda, life will overtake you and leave no time for God. One way to set your priorities is to create, and in time modify, a rule of life to set out priorities. While a rule can include guidance on family and work life, this guide will restrict itself to a spiritual rule.

## The Basics

The basic idea is to note the important elements of your own spiritual life along with some plan for how you will carry it out. For example, any spiritual rule of life should include worship. "I will attend church on Sundays and Wednesdays when I am well." For the rule of life to work, you will need to write it down, keep the list handy and look it over from time to time. Keep what you write simple and specific. Do not use permissive language such as "I will try" as all of us try to do things. Write instead, "I will" or "I promise."

**Prayer**—Certainly God hears us whenever we speak to him, but, you may want to consider how to best fit times of prayer into your schedule. This could be while commuting to work, or in the quiet time before others in the house awake. Select a time that works for you.

**Confession**—Make time for a daily confession of sin. This is not to beat yourself up, but to have a real time with God to consider the ways in which you have fallen short of the mark set by Jesus. Turn from the behaviors you know to be wrong, confess your sins, and ask

**Scripture**—Start by reading the Gospels. When you are ready to dig deeper into the scripture, your rule of life will want to include a plan for reading through the entire Bible. A good pattern is to use the One Year Bible. You can find the readings at [oneyearbibleonline.com](http://oneyearbibleonline.com)

**Other Reading**—In addition to the Bible, you should consider finding other good books to read. These will not need to be limited to Christian books, of course. But you should look for ways to alternate spiritual reading with other books. Ask your priest or Christian friends for book recommendations.

**Ministry**—Each Christian, by virtue of your baptism, is a minister of the Gospel. For most of us, this means being the sort of accountant, teacher, secretary, etc. that God calls you to be. It also means being the sort of husband, wife, father, mother, son, daughter, friend that God calls you to be. In addition, it will include ministries in or out of the church such as working with scouting or building houses with Habitat for Humanity. Consider what areas of your life are ministries. Consider what ministry God might be calling you into.

**Offering**—Consider how much you give to your church and other charitable organizations. What does your giving say about your relationship with God? Prayerfully consider what you give. It should never be because of the needs of your church. Instead we give in response to God's love, because God asks us to do so.

**Sharing Faith**—I add sharing your faith to the list for a rule of life as we should all consider how we go about this important part of our own faith journeys. Pray that God will lay on your heart a few friends and family members who you can pray for. Then if God opens up opportunities to speak to those people about your faith do so. If not, continue to hold them in prayer. In time, God will provide a natural way for faith to come into the conversation. Just be open to those opportunities.

**Retreat**—Finally, I add retreats to a rule of life, though this would only be an annual event in most cases. The parish weekend from St. John's has offered you one retreat. Look for other possibilities for being more intentional about your spiritual development.

## **A Simple Format**

Craft a series of, I will daily, I will weekly, I will monthly, and I will annually statements. Begin by writing down what you do now. If you attend church once or twice a month, write down: I will attend church at least once a month. If you give \$50 each week that you attend, write I will monthly give \$50 each week that I attend church. It is best to begin by assessing truthfully where you are now. Then consider the one, or at the most two small changes you wish to make. You can always revisit the rule in six months. For now make small changes. You will be better off to start too small. You don't want to overwhelm yourself only to end up making no changes at all.

## **Practices to consider**

### **Read the Bible - Baby Steps**

If you are not used to reading the Bible, try reading your way through the Gospel of Luke. Read just one chapter each day for 24 days and you can build a new habit. Build in a reward. Read the chapter for the day and then treat yourself in some small way, such as with a piece of chocolate. After 24 days, move on to another Gospel. Once you are through all four, you will have spent months following Jesus.

### **Pray the Daily Offices**

Central to our identity as Episcopalians are Morning and Evening Prayer, which are known as the Daily Offices. This will combine prayer and scripture reading. Find them online here: [prayer.forwardmovement.org/daily\\_prayer.php](http://prayer.forwardmovement.org/daily_prayer.php)

### **The Examen**

St. Ignatius Loyola taught this daily, prayerful exercise in discernment which helps you see God in all things. This is a version of the five-step Daily Examen: 1. I thank God: begin by giving thanks. 2. I ask for light: ask the Holy Spirit to show you how God's sees your day. 3. I look for God in my life: review the day seeing where God was present and how you helped or hindered what the Holy Spirit is doing. 4. I face what's wrong: confess what you did and did not do without putting blame elsewhere. 5. I look to tomorrow: consider how tomorrow might be lived more closely to God's will. [www.diocese.cc/upload/images/originals/Examens070510A.pdf](http://www.diocese.cc/upload/images/originals/Examens070510A.pdf)