

10 Pointers For Prayer

The baby's crying, the dog is whining, and you need to leave for work in five minutes. Finding time for prayer can seem impossible. Amid the busyness of family life, how can one respond to God's ongoing invitation to speak with and listen to him? Here are ten pointers to help you do just that.

1. Pray as you can, not as you can't. God calls most Christians to an active life in the world, with family, work and community responsibilities. Such a call, while holy, does not usually allow for long periods of prayer and reflection. Lay people can become discouraged when they try to pray like a cloistered contemplative. Be realistic about what's possible.
2. Take ten—or twenty. If a half hour for prayer isn't possible, how about ten minutes, or twenty? Choose a good time of day and stick with it. Designate a special site for prayer so that spot become holy. Spouses can help by minding children during respective quiet times.
3. Pray as a family. Build upon rituals such as grace before meals. In addition to the usual "Bless us, O Lord . . .," encourage family members to offer thanks for the blessings of the day, as well as prayers for those in need. Couples can deepen their spiritual relationship by taking a few minutes, perhaps before bedtime, to commend to God the joys and sorrows of the day.
4. Decorate your domestic Church. When we enter our parish church, the statues and pictures focus our minds on Jesus, Mary and the saints. We can create an atmosphere for prayer in our home—the domestic Church—by displaying a crucifix, icons, the Bible and other holy objects. Take the children to a religious goods store and let them choose a picture or statue for their rooms.
5. Short prayers count, too. When you're stopped at a long light or put on hold, consider it as God's invitation to turn your heart and mind to him, if only for a few seconds.
6. Find God at work. Connecting with God in the workplace takes effort. Try to cultivate a

"Short prayers count, too."

few simple habits. For example, offer the day to God as you turn on your computer, or pray for the person you're about to call or wait upon.

7. Jump start your prayer life. Sooner or later almost everyone experiences dryness in prayer. God seems far away and prayer becomes a burden. Praying with Scripture, perhaps the daily Mass readings, can help us focus. So, too, can an inspirational book, especially one of the spiritual classics. A good choice is St. Francis de Sales' *Introduction to the Devout Life*, written specifically for lay people who are striving for holiness.
8. Ask your Mother for help. The Blessed Virgin Mary, our spiritual mother, understands our needs and offers profound comfort. One family, gathered around the bedside of their dying husband and father, found peace and healing through the recitation of the Rosary. The Rosary is ideal for the family since children can be taught the simple prayers at an early age. Check out instructions on how to pray the Rosary.
9. Read a good story. Children and adults alike enjoy an inspiring story, and few stories are more compelling than those of the saints. Whether it's the little way of Therese of Lisieux or the heroism of Maximilian Kolbe, their stories offer something for everyone. Consider the particular virtue that a saint demonstrates and pray for help to emulate it. Perhaps it's the humility of St. Francis of Assisi, the patience of St. Monica, or the courageous witness of St. Thomas More.
10. Walk with a spiritual friend. Prayer can lead to new thoughts and questions. Who better to share them with than a spiritual friend? A friend can help us to work through the concerns that inevitably arise in prayer. Good friends will hold each other accountable for their prayer life, making sure that prayer has not been neglected in the busyness of life. For married couples a spouse is often this spiritual friend, but God will also put wise and holy people in our path when we need them. They can be the answer to prayer.