



# Growing in Prayer

Exploring 15 different ways to pray  
for individuals and groups

**Edited by Susanne Carlsson**

## **From those who have used *Growing in Prayer***

*'At once useful, challenging, instructive, flexible and really helpful.'*

*'This works on a personal level to use and experiment with different types of prayer for yourself. You can also use it in one-to-ones to help deepen prayer and the reading of the Bible. I have also used it successfully with groups where we have tried several different types of prayer in one session, to help people experience praying in different ways to help develop their own prayer life.'*

*'It is a fantastic versatile resource that will benefit so many people.'*

*'We would highly recommend this invaluable resource for anyone drawn to encourage their community into deeper and more varied approaches to prayer. Equally the booklet would be just as helpful for individual exploration of different prayer practices.'*

*'We meet once a month for an hour and a half to experiment with one of the ways of praying, to talk about our experience and to encourage each other in our spiritual journey. With thanks for this wonderful resource!'*

*'The creative ways of praying outlined invite growth, adventure and, occasionally, surprise in our desire to grow closer to God.'*

*'A treasure chest of gems. An a la carte menu of options that you can try depending on your spiritual needs. Some become a favourite like your choice at a local Indian restaurant, others you try like a dish on the menu of foreign country while on holiday. A book for life.'*



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Exploring 15 different ways to pray  
for individuals and groups

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All of us pray in different ways at different stages in our lives. Sometimes our way of praying changes as we grow in our relationship with God. The original 'Prayer Pack' was developed eight years ago, a joint effort within the Diocese of Rochester, to help individuals develop their prayer life. Since then, the pack has been used by many different people, helping them to explore new ways of praying at home or in the church community. Now it is time for the 'Prayer Pack' to evolve further, hence you hold in your hands *Growing in Prayer*, which BRF Ministries has produced from the original pack. With thanks to all those who have been involved:

- To the Sisters of St Andrew who have provided and reviewed most of the material for the different ways of praying, which were used at their 'Spirituality Centre' in Edenbridge, and now in Lewisham.
- To Karin Dixon who helped produce most of the original text.
- To Matthew, at Studio 4, who designed the original version of 'The Prayer Pack'.
- To the team at BRF Ministries for this version, with updated content and new design.

*Susanne Carlsson, 2025*

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# Introduction

Prayer lies at the heart of the church and at the heart of our lives. In the words of Thomas Green, it is an ‘opening of the heart and mind to God... a personal encounter with God in love’.

Prayer is being present to ‘presence’. If we take time and persevere in prayer, this sense of God’s presence in the whole of our life can grow and develop. We can then begin to experience God’s love in the ‘ordinary’ of each day and celebrate God’s kingdom here ‘on earth as it is in heaven’ (Matthew 6:10).

Naturally, every person has their unique way of praying; there are no right or wrong ways. As the saying goes: ‘Pray as you can, not as you can’t.’

But for those who are searching for a new or different way of praying that suits them, or in those moments when inspiration has run dry and God’s voice and presence seem to have faded, this book will hopefully offer some guidance – a gentle nudge in the right direction – towards deepening your relationship with God.

## Using the resource

*Growing in Prayer* presents 15 different ways of praying. Each one is briefly explained, followed by simple steps to enter into the experience, either by yourself or as a group. At the end of each section are a few pages for you to write any notes or thoughts you want to record. This is to encourage you – having taken time to reflect on your prayer experience – towards further spiritual growth.

Of course, prayer cannot be categorised quite as easily as this selection may suggest, and this list is certainly not exhaustive. Each section provides ideas for going further, including books and websites. You do not have to work through the book in order, nor need you use a section that doesn’t suit your context – the pack can be ‘personalised’ to suit your needs, or those of your group.

This resource is offered simply to be a tool towards deepening your prayer, both personally and in community.

## How to use *Growing in Prayer* in a group

- You may want to provide a book for each person in your group, so that everyone has access to the material and can make their own notes.
- For your first session, choose a way of praying that you feel will go down well in your group or community. You can move on to the more challenging ones once people are on board with the structure and content.
- Plan a day or an evening to introduce each way of praying. This should be at a regular time, at intervals that suit your group. You could structure it as follows:
  - 30-minute introduction to the way of praying
  - 30 minutes of practice
  - 30 minutes of sharing in small groups. (Sharing should always be optional and it is up to you to decide if it would be appropriate for your group.)
- Encourage people to practise what they have learned at home. You might suggest keeping a simple prayer diary noting their experiences and whether they find this way of praying helpful or not.
- Praying often takes practice before it becomes a natural part of a prayerful life – so a little patience and perseverance may be required. ‘Waiting on God’ is also a spiritual experience in itself!

## Reviewing your prayer times

Whether you are using this book on your own or in a group, make sure you take time to reflect on what you have done. You may want to consider whether you felt the following:

- 1 'Warm spots' – feelings, thoughts bringing some sense of God's closeness – e.g. peace, trust, hope, love.
- 2 Any feelings or thoughts that felt negative, disturbing, etc. and may have brought a sense of distance from God. These are often springboards for growth if you can own them and pray with them.

As you practise these types of prayer again, always begin by returning to the 'warm spots' and then ask God to enlighten and teach you through the feelings of distance and disturbance. After a period of reviewing your time of prayer, you may feel drawn to keep a prayer journal. This may help you to revisit and notice the patterns emerging which affirm and encourage you in your relationship with God.

A scenic view of a forest with vibrant autumn foliage reflected in a calm lake. The trees are in various shades of orange, yellow, and red, with some evergreens still green. The reflection in the water is clear and detailed.

**'Be still, and know  
that I am God.'**

PSALM 46:10

## 1

# Listening to God in silence and stillness

It is in silence and stillness that we may 'hear' God with inner ears. Blocking out all sounds and activity in this fast-paced, noisy world of today is a challenge. But the following steps can help you to relax and focus on that silence within.

You can do this whenever and wherever – even if you only have a few minutes! Allow yourself to be gently drawn into this space, eventually spending longer periods in silence.

## Introduction to silence and stillness

Silence as a discipline is at the heart of all prayer. It plays an essential part in the process and development of spiritual growth throughout the history of the church. In the third and fourth centuries, the Desert Fathers and Mothers went out to the wilderness to find silence and stillness, and later the discipline of silence and stillness became an essential part of the daily routine in monastic life. Today, many retreat houses offer people a place where they can explore and experience the value of stillness and silence. It is, however, important to remember that silence and stillness in this context are not ends in themselves but a means to building and deepening our relationship with God.

## How to practise silence and stillness

First, get into a **comfortable position**.

**Focus on your body.** Starting at the top of your head, work your way down, closing your eyes, relaxing your facial muscles, your shoulders, then your torso, your arms, hands, legs and feet, right down to your toes.

Now **listen to the sounds** around you. Don't try to block them out, just acknowledge them and be aware of God's presence in them, in the people and activities that are causing them.

**Remember God's presence in you**, in your body and in your feelings, and remember that you are loved.

Become aware of **your breathing**, and pay attention to each breath without altering it – in and out, in and out.

Remember **God's presence** in your breathing. As you breathe in, accept God's love and life; as you breathe out, let go of anything that is worrying or distracting you, placing it in God's loving hands.

As you finish, you may want to pray:

*In me, O God, you live and move and have your being. In you, O God, I live and move and have my being.*

*God of stillness and creative action, help me to find space for quietness today, that I may discover the inner meaning of silence and hear your still, small voice through Christ, in the love of the Spirit.*

## Review

As outlined on page 9, you may want to consider whether you experienced:

- 1 'Warm spots' – feelings, thoughts bringing some sense of God's closeness – e.g. peace, trust, hope, love.

- 2 Any feelings or thoughts that felt negative, disturbing, etc. and may have brought a sense of distance from God. These are often springboards for growth if you can own them and pray with them.

## Go further

### Books

David Cole (Brother Cassian), *The Art of Peace: Life lessons from Christian mystics* (BRF Ministries, 2021).

Martin Laird, *Into the Silent Land: The practice of contemplation* (Darton, Longman & Todd, 2006).

Benignus O'Rourke, *Finding your Hidden Treasure: The way of silent prayer* (Darton, Longman & Todd, 2010).

The Retreat Association, 'Time to be' and 'Finding silence and stillness', available at [retreats.org.uk/individuals](https://retreats.org.uk/individuals).

Lucy Rycroft, *Be Still: 30 devotions for those who feel anything but* (BRF Ministries, 2025).

John Skinner, *Sounding the Silence* (Gracewing Publishers, 2004).

### Websites

The Retreat Association – [retreats.org.uk](https://retreats.org.uk)



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**Growing in Prayer** will help individuals and groups develop their prayer life. It can be used by anyone to help you explore new ways of praying at home or in the church community, on your own or in groups. It offers a brief introduction to 15 different ways of praying and gives space for you to practise, develop and reflect on your time of prayer.



The Revd Canon Dr **Susanne Carlsson** is the spiritual advisor for Rochester Diocese.

