

Praying creatively with pen and paper

This is a kind of prayer you do with your eyes open and a pen and paper in front of you. It's well suited as a short exercise of 10 or 15 minutes and is particularly good at getting something stirring when otherwise you are feeling stuck or dull.

Since it takes only a little while. I recommend giving it a try for *real* now rather than just *reading* about it. Don't read all the way ahead but follow each instruction as it comes.

In preparation, find a sheet of paper — A4 sized is fine for now but feel free to experiment later — also maybe something to lean it on and a pen or pencil you can jot with. Also some paints or coloured pencils, so you can add colour as you go along. I prefer to have the paper arranged 'landscape' rather than 'portrait'.

Got all you need?

To begin, focus on God and pray *briefly*, in whatever way feels natural and helpful, this exercise will help you be aware of God's presence.

The first step is to look at your blank piece of paper and right in the centre of it write the word 'GOD' clearly and legibly. Another time it could be any other word that happens to feel like a good starting point given what's going on in your life but 'GOD' is a good start for now.

When you have written your word move on

Now take a long look at the whole piece of paper with the single word in the middle — just look at it unhurriedly, in a undemanding way, openly, contemplatively — and wait for another word to come to you. Don't strain or filter or analyse or worry — just *look* and *wait* for a word — it might take seconds or minutes.

Do that now then come back to these guidelines?

When a word does turn up write it on the paper wherever feels right. It might be next to 'GOD' or above or below, close or distant...

Done?

Now take another look at your sheet of paper which now has two words on it. Just look and wait for a third word to come along — don't try to make connections, not trying *not* to, and not trying at all. Just be.

Do that now...

When your third word arrives put it down on paper too, wherever it seems to want to go.

Done?

You get the pattern: look, wait, write; look, wait, write... Keep doing that until 10 minutes have passed, or the page feels complete, or you feel ready to move on. By then you might have collected a handful of words or dozens — it's up to you. Come back to these instructions when you reach that point...

Now take one last look at your paper laid out, with its pattern of words. Then ask yourself this question:

***'If God were saying something to me through these words:
What might it be?'***

Ask yourself that question and wait for an answer. When it comes, write it down on your paper too, in the form of a simple sentence addressed to you by God — nothing third-person or abstract...

Notice your feelings at seeing (and hearing) these words spoken to you.

Notice how you might respond, what you might say back to God, what you feel moved to do... If it feels right make that response, or say what you want to say, or do what you want to do. Then do that now.

At this point you might consider the exercise finished ... or it might become the starting place for further prayer — either right away or at some later time; maybe continuing the dialogue, maybe sit in silence?

You may like to go on and add colour, stick things to your paper (like leaves, coloured paper, newspaper cuttings etc.)

Whatever feels right, be creative and allow the Holy Spirit to open up your heart and mind to new ways and new encounters with God.

There is no right or wrong way to pray, we are all extraordinary in our gifting and God communicates with us in various ways, all we need to be is open and waiting to respond.

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