

...learn from Me the unforced rhythms of grace...

LOVING, LIVING, LEARNING *I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full. (John 10:10)* By committing to shaping our life on a pattern of consistence, stability and rhythm we learn to live life more fully.

There is no one better that we can learn from than Jesus himself, the Word made flesh. In committing time to learn more about Him and His teaching, we can grow more into His likeness.

Praying - How will I nurture my relationship with God through regular prayer, the Bible and other people's insights?

Talk/Video

We all live in a family of Christians from a very broad range of traditions in the Anglican Church (Church of England). Some of us have known and loved the Book of Common Prayer all of our lives and can recite the liturgy word for word. It upsets us when somebody comes along and treats it lightly, mixing up one of the phrases or missing out a word. It is the foundation stone of our prayer life. Some of us struggle to sit through a service at all, preferring to roam the great outdoors in solitude, or work an allotment, silently conversing with the Divine Silence that says all things through all things, speaking only when absolutely necessary. Some of us lift up our voices in shouts and cries of praise and joy, interceding with passion and might as we speak powerfully into the needs our world and those of the people upon our hearts. Many even those we have just mentioned, wondering if we can pray at all, unsure of where to start, never daring to admit that we find prayer troubling at least and almost impossible at worst.

It's why this week comes after last, because prayer is very much about our conversation with God. It's the relationship that comes first, and it's out of our relationship that the way we communicate grows. Teresa of Avila wrote, "For prayer is nothing else than being on terms of friendship with God".

This is exciting news because it reminds us that God is not expecting us all to be carbon copies of one another, and neither does the Church. The joy of the Church of England is its breadth, and the way that people from every tradition and style of prayer and worship can find a home. The only things that God asks from us are to ensure that our prayer is not performance; to be mindful that the whole point of the conversation is that it is an intimate one, between ourselves and our Creator.

Jesus also gives us a blue print to ensure that we cover all the bases in the Lord's Prayer. We could spend another five weeks working through the implications of every line - space does not allow for that here but it might be worth pursuing that if prayer seems difficult. Could we sit with each of its lines before God and let all that they mean have the opportunity to speak to and transform us?

Finally – and this note, too, deserves its own course - despite it featuring within the Lord's prayer Jesus reiterates the most important part of teaching when it comes to prayer – forgiving others in order that we might be forgiven, or at the very least, praying that we might be willing to forgive those whom we currently fail to be able to forgive. This is not to return to destructive or toxic situations or relationships, and certainly not to place ourselves in harm's way, but to release our pain and bitterness to God that we might be freed to love again, in places where God's love can flow through us to those who most need it; to quote St Teresa again, 'God save us from gloomy saints!'

Prayer is nothing more than the ebb and flow of a conversation between us and our Creator, and nothing less than the transforming grace of God at work in our very souls. It is oxygen for the soul – and for our own – and the worlds' - good health.