

# How to Pray in Your Own Way

Participant's Workbook  
for Ministry with Youth and Adults



Kathy Cawsey



## **How to Pray in Your Own Way: Participant's Workbook for Ministry with Youth and Adults**

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Kathy Cawsey, whom Presbyterians may remember as a youth columnist for the *Presbyterian Record*, wrote and taught this resource for Knox PC, Waterloo, Ontario, when the church started developing a program of adult education. Knox now has a thriving adult education ministry, including a “Wednesdays at Knox” lecture series. Kathy currently teaches English at Dalhousie University in Halifax where she attends St. John's United Church.

This resource is designed to be used with the Participant's Workbook. The idea for these resources was inspired by the book *Pray Your Way: Your personality and God* by Bruce Duncan (London: Darton, Longman and Todd Ltd., 1993).

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*Forms  
of Prayer*

**Green Prayer:**  
**Sensing**  
*God's reality*

**of God**

**Awareness**

**Response**

**to God**

**Blue Prayer:**  
**Thinking**  
*Understanding  
God*

**Red Prayer:**  
**Feeling**  
*Loving God*

**Yellow Prayer:**  
**Intuiting**  
*God's mystery*

# The Green Prayer

## The green prayer is

- The sensing prayer: we pray using our five senses to become aware of God's reality in our lives and in the world around us.
- A prayer of wonder and joy, of childlike pleasure and gratitude for life in all its revelations.
- Consistent with the cataphatic theological tradition; that is the tradition that suggests we can know of God through our experiences.
- The prayer of the incarnation of God: God's immanence in Jesus, Holy Communion, all of creation and everyday life.
- Image-filled; it is concrete, sensory and detailed.

## Mark's gospel

While Mark is the shortest of the gospels, the stories are full of graphic details. Mark is written with a sense of urgency, emphasizing the actions of Jesus, the disciples and the people they encounter more than their spoken words. Despite being brief and straightforward, the simple stories are clear with sensory details. The healing stories are often about restoring one of the senses to a person, and Jesus uses everyday objects in his parables.

Check out some of these passages or others that interest you.

Mark 1:6–8 (John the Baptist)

Mark 4: 37–40 (Jesus Stills a Storm)

Mark 10:13–16 (Jesus Blesses Children)

Mark 1:40–44 (Jesus Cleanses a Leper)

Mark 6:39–44 (Feeding the Five Thousand)

Mark 14:51–52 (The Man Following)

Mark \_\_\_\_\_

Mark \_\_\_\_\_

Mark \_\_\_\_\_

Mark \_\_\_\_\_

## Notes:

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## Hymns

The hymns below include sensory details. What other songs could be added to this list?

- All things bright and beautiful (#435)
- In the bulb there is a flower (#674)
- Morning has broken (#814)
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## Praying a green prayer

### Prayer #1

List the ways you experienced or sensed (i.e. saw, tasted, touched, smelled, heard) God in your life today.

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### Prayer #2

Go for a walk. Stop. Pause. Meander. Focus on something that catches your attention—a rock, leaf, twig, flower. Look at it more closely. For example, if it is a rock, run your hand over its surface; turn it over to see what it's like underneath; think about the forces of nature that create rocks—glacial movements, volcanic action, movement of the earth's plates. If it is a leaf, follow the branching veins from the stem to the fractal patterns that break smaller and smaller. Think about photosynthesis and chlorophyll. Consider that this rock or leaf is unique in the universe and a part of God's creation.

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**Prayer #3**

Close your eyes. Imagine God. What does God smell like? What does God feel like? If you touched God, would you feel the solid rock of the firm foundation on which to build your faith? Or would you feel the soft downy feathers of a mother bird protecting her young? If God had a taste, what would the taste be—the sweet luxuriousness of chocolate or the plain comfort of your mother's mashed potatoes?

**Notes:**

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# The Yellow Prayer

## The yellow prayer is

- The intuiting prayer; it goes beyond what we can understand with our senses or our reason, approaching the mystery of God.
- Consistent with the apophatic theological tradition; that is the tradition that suggests that God is the unimaginable, ungraspable, the “cloud of unknowing.”
- The prayer of God’s transcendence—the majesty and infinity of the God who created everything, but is beyond space, time, understanding.
- Image-less. Without using our experiences, we simply have an awareness and a knowledge of God’s presence.
- A freewheeling, butterfly prayer that depends on free association and metaphor, making connections and gaining flashes of insight which aren’t obvious or natural; sometimes it is deeply contemplative.



## John's gospel

John is sometimes described as the “big picture” gospel, the transcendent gospel with patterns and symbols. The author does not focus on facts; there is not one parable. There are lots of abstract ideas like “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12) and “I am the way, and the truth, and the life” (John 14:6).

Check out some of these passages or others that interest you.

John 1:1–14 (The Word Became Flesh)  
John 8:12 (Jesus the Light of the World)  
John 14:1–6 (Jesus the Way to the Father)

John 6:33–40 (The Bread from Heaven)  
John 10:1–5 (Jesus the Good Shepherd)  
John 15:1–5 (Jesus the True Vine)

John \_\_\_\_\_

John \_\_\_\_\_

John \_\_\_\_\_

John \_\_\_\_\_



## Notes:

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## Hymns

The hymns below include an intuitive awareness of God. What other songs could be added to this list?

- Immortal, invisible, God only wise (#290)
- Before the world began (#341)
- Spirit, Spirit of gentleness (#399)
- 
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## Praying a yellow prayer

### Prayer #1

Draw God (below or on a separate piece of paper).

## **Prayer #2**

Choose an object, an idea, or a place. Write that word in the centre of the space below or on a blank piece of paper. Think about all the ways that object, or that idea or place, reminds you of God. Spiralling outwards, write all the connections you can think of between God and that object/idea/place. Try to fill the space. Don't worry if the connections or associations don't make sense; don't try to order or arrange them. Write as quickly as you can.

## **Prayer #3**

Find a quiet place to do this exercise. Say the words "Forever and ever. Amen." Say them again. And again. Concentrate on the words. Repeat them over and over again. Let your mind focus on the words until they become meaningless. Continue to do this until you become still in your being. Note that any familiar prayer or phrase or Bible verse may be used. Write some of your favourites on the lines below.

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# The Blue Prayer

## The blue prayer is

- The prayer of the mind.
- The thinking prayer. It is thoughtful, reasoned, logical.
- A prayer that values rigorous honesty and truth, justice and integrity.
- A prayer that attempts to understand God and to take faith to the limits of reason and logic.
- Sometimes angry, argumentative, challenging—pushing God to explain God's self and to justify the suffering of the world.



## Matthew's gospel

Matthew's gospel is considered the “rational” gospel. The gospel's author reveals a liking for order and logic. He links and parallels Old Testament stories with stories about Jesus, marshalling arguments and evidence as if to prove Old Testament prophecies are fulfilled in Jesus. He shows concern with the law. His favourite word is “righteousness,” which we sometimes translate today as “justice.”

Check out some of these passages or others that interest you.

Matthew 4:12–17 (Jesus Begins His Ministry)  
 Matthew 13:10–17 (Purpose of the Parables)  
 Matthew 22:34–40 (The Great Commandment)

Matthew 12:1–8 (On the Sabbath)  
 Matthew 17:1–13 (The Transfiguration)  
 Matthew 25:31–46 (The Judgment)

Matthew \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew \_\_\_\_\_

Matthew \_\_\_\_\_

## Notes:

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## Hymns

The hymns below include reasoning and logic. What other songs could be added to this list?

- How long will you forget me, Lord (#6)
- Teach me, O Lord, your way of truth (#80)
- Thy word is a lamp unto my feet (#496)
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## Praying a blue prayer

### Prayer #1

List all the things you're really angry about in the world today. Tell God about them.

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### Prayer #2

Select one of the things you wrote down in Prayer #1. Think about it for a few days. Think about the real causes behind the situation that is making you angry. Now plan to do something about it—think of a creative, effective, workable way to take even a small step toward changing the situation.

**Notes:**

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**Prayer #3**

Sit down with pen and paper or use the space below. Imagine you are before the angel on the Day of Judgment. Write down everything that will be counted against you. Be honest. Don't avoid or make excuses for actions you might be ashamed of.

Ask God for forgiveness. You might want to talk to a minister, a counsellor, or a friend; you may want to ask them to pray with you. Pick one of the items on your list and think about what you are going to do/or have done to make yourself into a person who will not do such a thing again.

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# The Red Prayer

## The red prayer is

- The feeling prayer; it is warm, emotional, unreasonable.
- Prayed when one has experienced the love of God and responds with an outpouring of love back to God and out towards the world.
- An “affective” prayer—the prayer of affection, of the heart.
- An expression and response to the personal, intimate relationship we can have with a loving God.
- The prayer of supplication and intercession. This is usually what people mean when they say, “I’m praying for you.” It’s what most of us think of when we feel guilty for not praying enough, or for not praying for specific people or causes. This is also the most familiar form of prayer for most people.



## Luke's gospel

Luke's gospel focuses on the poor with stories advocating on behalf of the poor, the oppressed and the suffering. The author describes a message of God's good news that extends to everyone—Jews, Gentiles, tax-collectors, foreigners, women and children. Some well-known stories and parables are recorded only in Luke, such as the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan. Underlying both parables is the message of the immensity of God's love that we are to imitate.

Check out some of these passages or others that interest you.

Luke 1:46–55 (Mary's Song of Praise)  
Luke 6:27–36 (Love for Enemies)  
Luke 15:11–32 (The Lost Son)

Luke 5:27–32 (Jesus Calls Levi)  
Luke 10:25–37 (The Good Samaritan)  
Luke 19:1–10 (Zacchaeus)

Luke \_\_\_\_\_

Luke \_\_\_\_\_

Luke \_\_\_\_\_

Luke \_\_\_\_\_

**Notes:**

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**Hymns**

The hymns below include emotional responses to God. What other songs could be added to this list?

- We are one in the Spirit (#471)
- Amazing grace (#670)
- When the poor ones (#762)
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**Praying a red prayer****Prayer #1**

Spend a week observing the people around you. Pick one person you know who is having trouble in some area of their life. Pray especially for that person—talk to God about them, lift them up for God's consideration. Think of something to do for that person that will let them know that they are a child of God.

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## Prayer #2

Close your eyes. In your mind, reach your hands up to the heavens. Feel God reach down to you and grasp your arms—not just your hands, but a firm grasp on your wrists, that will never break. Feel the love and support—become like a little child swinging from a parent's hands, sure that no matter how hard they swing, the parent will never let go. Carry this feeling with you throughout your day. If you lose it, close your eyes for a moment and reach upwards again.

## Prayer #3

Jesus said we are to love our enemies. Below make a list of your enemies—not the people who annoy you at work or the neighbour you secretly loathe, but the people you truly, deep down believe shouldn't get into heaven, who are anathema to everything you hold dear—perhaps terrorists or murderers or child abusers. Think about why you find it hard to emulate Jesus' compassion and love in these cases. Pray for these people.

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# Wrap-Up

## Exercises

## Summaries

With words or images, note the outstanding characteristics of the four forms of prayer.

Green Prayer	Yellow Prayer	Blue Prayer	Red Prayer

## Sentence completion

Complete the following sentences.

The form of prayer I appreciate the most is \_\_\_\_\_.

The form of prayer I appreciate the least is \_\_\_\_\_.

The form of prayer I would like to try using more often is \_\_\_\_\_.

The form of prayer used most commonly in church is \_\_\_\_\_.

The form of prayer which is not done well in church is \_\_\_\_\_.

## Self-awareness

Reflect on your type of personality. How might your personality relate to the form(s) of prayer you use the most?

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## Scripture

Many of Paul's letters to early Christians addressed the tensions caused by growing diversity in their faith communities. Check out some passages and add others as you find them.

Romans 12:4–8      1 Corinthians 12:4–13      Ephesians 4:4-7, 11–16

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## Hymns

The hymns below remind us that we reflect different aspects of God while being part of one body and one family of God. What other songs could be added to this list?

- God be in my head (#572)
- Christ, you call us all to service (#585)
- We have this ministry (#590)
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- 



## Pray a different form of prayer

Prepare to pray a form of prayer you haven't used very often. Make notes, quote scripture and hymns, or draw images below to represent how you might do this. After you try the new way of praying, reflect on the experience. Add more notes or images.

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