

# Easter to Pentecost: A Season of Prayer

## Week 5: Focus on self

Methodism arose out of a concern that Christianity should be more than an external form of religion, but should touch our hearts and shape our lives. Prayer has always been central to that.

Here are some resources that put prayer in this wider context of spiritual growth:

- Some pointers towards prayer as part of a 'Methodist way of life'

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/life-and-faith/a-methodist-way-of-life/>

- A short article by Roger Walton reflecting on how a Methodist way of life might resemble a new form of monasticism

<https://theologyeverywhere.org/2017/07/03/a-methodist-rule-of-life/>

- A longer article by Steve Harper about Wesleyan spirituality.

<https://goodnewsmag.org/2013/06/embracing-wesleyan-spirituality/>

These articles remind me of the hymn 'O the bitter shame and sorrow' ([https://hymnary.org/text/o the bitter shame and sorrow](https://hymnary.org/text/o_the_bitter_shame_and_sorrow)), because it speaks about a process of spiritual growth as we walk daily with God.

The 4 verses each refer to one of the 4 types of grace mentioned in Steve Harper's article - prevenient, converting, sanctifying, and glorifying.

I have had a look at the three links. The first link I find very helpful in providing a simply worded reminder (guidelines) on how we might aim to live our lives.

The idea of rules and monasticism in the article by Roger Walton seems to imply a withdrawal mentality, circle the wagons which is the opposite of what is suggested in the 'Methodist way of life' link.

The article by Stephen Harper gives a detailed historical interpretation of what Wesley understood by holiness and spirituality. Perhaps Harper's interpretation would be challenged? This issue has divided Methodists and Methodism in the past.

I don't know if this is the issue that you are referring to that has divided Methodists in the past, but can we, as Wesley believed, experience perfection in this life or only in the next? Whilst I can pray "less of self and more of thee", I find it difficult to pray "none of self and all of thee".

I don't really understand the monastic ideas, to my simple mind it seems as if it would segregate people, although I read an interesting comment after the article suggesting that a true challenge would be an interfaith one.

The **Examen** is a form of prayer that seeks God's presence in our lives in the day just gone and looks ahead to the next day. It takes us through several stages, encouraging us to review the day with gratitude, noticing what we feel positive about as well as anything we might regret. In bringing the day before God we seek renewal and strength for tomorrow.

Here is a video introduction to the *Examen*:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pDQgjzJINdk>

Here are two articles, also introducing the *Examen*, and taking slightly different approaches: <https://www.ignatianspirituality.com/ignatian-prayer/the-examen/how-can-i-pray/> and <https://www.upperroom.org/resources/the-examen>

Another approach to seeking God's presence in our lives is the **Prayer Journal**. Like the *Examen*, keeping a journal is a spiritual practice with a long history. For some, it is a helpful way to focus the mind when praying and avoid distraction, as well as helping to review the day and reflect on it through God's eyes.

There are many ways of using a *Prayer Journal* (and many websites trying to sell you a special book for the purpose!). The following resources introduce various ideas that you might like to try:

This article briefly outlines six ways to use a journal.

<https://www.guideposts.org/faith-and-prayer/prayer-stories/power-of-prayer/6-ways-to-prayer-journal>

This article takes a different tack in outlining ways of using a journal and then offers a longer document you can read if you would like more depth.

As we focus on prayer, self and our relationship with God we will be called to look out. 'Thy Kingdom Come' is the theme for prayer between Ascension and Pentecost. Prayer begins with relating to God and then transforms us and enables us to look to others and their needs. See

<https://vimeo.com/420701776>