



First and Center

Pastor's Blog

August 13, 2019

“Let us pray.” I say those words a lot, and I realize that I assume when I say them that people know what I mean, that people know how to pray. And yet, I have come to realize that many people have never been taught how to

pray. But they are often embarrassed, thinking this is common knowledge and they are somehow deficient.

Quite the contrary. Remember that Jesus' disciples, who grew up in a praying tradition, asked Jesus how to pray.

There are lots of patterns out there for regular prayer. Jesus' prayer is one. Annie Lamott encourages us to think of three words: “Help, Thanks, Wow.” The ancients used a five-fold model: Praise, Confession, Prayers for others, Prayers for ourselves, Thanksgiving.

Over the years, I have fallen into a pattern of daily prayer which goes roughly like this:

Sit and look and listen; give thanks for all that I can see and hear that is good and beautiful. Give thanks for all the blessings in my life (family, work, etc.).

Ask forgiveness for anything that comes to mind.

Pray for those I love.

Pray for those I know who are ill or hurting or struggling.

Pray for those I have heard about on the news who are ill or hurting or struggling.

Pray for my church.

Pray for my city and country and world.

Pray for my work to come that day.

Dedicate my body, mind and spirit, stuff and time to God for the day.

Return to thanks.

So, there are no magic words, no special incantation that is prayer. It's mostly a conversation you can have any time, with maybe only one piece of the above in a quick prayer during the day. It's recognizing that God is in your midst 24/7, no matter where you are, and engaging with God for a moment, a few moments, an hour or more. And remember that Augustine is reputed to have said that those who sing, pray twice. Prayer can be in song, in instrumental music, in dance or body movement, in art of all kinds, in thoughts.

In whatever form you decide to pray, know that praying on a regular basis does change your life. It may change the world. Give it a try.

~ The Rev. Shelly Stackhouse,
Transitional Minister