

## Shapes for Living

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### **Praying - finding a place to start**

**The golden rule:** 'Pray as you can, not as you can't. Take yourself as you find yourself and start from there'. Life is often hectic and time to pray is short. Most of us need help to settle and become still.

Consider these words by Christian writer, Ruth Fowke:

'Many people suffer years of unnecessary guilt because they seldom manage to pray in the way that they are taught is 'the right way to do so'. Prayer is about finding the most suitable rhythm to enable one to develop a meaningful, vibrant relationship with the living God.'

Here is a suggestion for 10, 15 or 20 minutes praying.

### **A place and a posture**

Choose somewhere comfortable but alert. Sitting, kneeling, standing? Would a visual focus help – a candle, picture, cross, view from a window, something to touch or hold?

### **As natural as breathing**

As you sit quietly become aware of your breathing and then deepen it slightly and let it find a natural rhythm.

Now as you breathe in take in the words: 'Lord Jesus Christ'.  
Imagine him arriving like fresh life into the depths of your life.  
As you breathe out complete the prayer with the words: 'have mercy on me (us)'

*We are receiving the love of God who comes to us as we are ... and who then lovingly clears out the clutter and confusion of our lives and makes space for us to be with him.*

Pray this prayer – which is known as 'The Jesus Prayer' - for a few minutes on the rhythm of your breathing.

### **An act of acceptance and offering**

Quietly reflect on the 'world' you have brought with you to prayer – its moods, problems, joys, relationships. In the quiet you may already be aware of them pressing for attention. Do not push them away or fight them. Instead gather them up as if you hold them in your hands and offer them to the loving care of God.

## **Receiving God's Word**

This is a good place to read a few verses from the Bible – slowly and more than once ... chewing it over. Hold onto one word, phrase or image and make it your focus.

## **Praying for others**

*A suggestion for praying using your hands.*

Hands cupped (as if holding something in them) – gather to God in offering, petition and thanksgiving the events of the past day or week. *Pause in silence*

Hands reaching out (as if you are showing God the world around us) – naming places and people and situations. *Pause in silence*

Hands reaching up – as if in longing and welcome – we express our hope in God that he still comes to save and transform. *Pause in silence*

## **Closing**

The Grace or other words may be used or quietly bowing in worship and thanks.

Take some space before you go back to the everyday busy-ness to take a breath and just think for a moment; be willing to join up your prayer experience with what may come next as you go about your day.