

Ten Steps to a Better Prayer Life

1. **Designate A Prayer Space:** Whether it is in the corner of your desk or a little stand in your room, it is important to have a place where you can put your Bible, Icons, etc. Dedicate the use of that space for God alone.
2. **Acquire Time:** Incorporate prayer in your routine and set time aside to center your thoughts to God.
3. **Acquire a Library:** Start with a Bible, then get a small Orthodox Prayer Book, after that start collecting books. Here are some suggestions: 'Living the Liturgy' (Fr. Stanley Harakas), 'The Way of a Pilgrim' (Monk of the Eastern Church), 'For the Life of the World' (Fr. Alexander Schmemmann), 'Beginning to Pray' (Metropolitan Anthony Bloom), 'Bread for Life' (Fr. Theodore Stylianopoulos), 'The Orthodox Way' (Bishop Kallistos Ware), 'Way of the Aesetic (Tito Collander).
4. **Assemble an Altar:** In your prayer center gather icons (Christ, Theotokos, Guardian Angel and patron saint), service books, incense, votive light, a cross, a prayer rope, etc. Incorporate your five senses in prayer.
5. **Pray:** Speak from your heart. Learn prayers of the Church. Try the Jesus Prayer or the Lord's Prayer. Also incorporate your own prayers and thoughts.
6. **Acquire a Spiritual Guide:** This is a very important step. One should build a relationship with either a member of the clergy, monk or nun, who will become your spiritual guide. He/she will help guide and pace you to a balanced prayer life. The Sacrament of Confession can be arranged through your priest.
7. **Fasting and Almsgiving:** Fasting adds a dimension to your prayer life. Your fasting practice should be regulated to avoid physical and spiritual harm. As for alms, give where you see a need and trust that the Lord will provide.
8. **Build On What You Already Have:** If you already have a routine, build on it. If, for example, you pray before you go to sleep, it will be easier to read a chapter from the Bible before your bedtime prayers, than to set up some time during the day to read.
9. **Sanctify All That You Do.** You may have set aside a time and space for a prayer routine, but that doesn't mean you should separate your life into sacred and secular. Privately thank God for what you have at all times, and make Him aware of your every concern. Dedicate everything you do to Him.
10. **Remember the power of the Life-giving Cross,** The sign of the Cross is a reminder of Christ in our lives. Blessing oneself with the cross by holding the first two fingers of the right hand and thumb together represents the Holy Trinity. The last two fingers held to the palm represent the two natures of Christ – God and man. Orthodox Christians cross themselves from the head to the breast and from shoulder to shoulder, right to left. This unique and all embracing symbol shows that the cross is the inspiration, power and indeed the very content of our lives.