



The Heart Beneath This Practice

(Offering the Whole Self to God)

Scripture describes human beings as embodied, relational creatures formed from dust and breath (Gen 2:7), created in the image of God (Gen 1:26-27), and invited into covenant love. To “*present ourselves*” to God (Rom 6:13; Rom 12:1) is not a demand for performance. It is an act of belonging.

Throughout the biblical story, God moves toward humanity not to erase our humanity but to restore it. In Jesus, we see a life fully aligned with the Father... responsive rather than reactive, grounded rather than driven. The Spirit forms that same life within us, not through pressure, but through presence.

The Prayer of Intention is a daily re-orienting. It honors the space between instinct and response... the inner threshold where habits, trauma, hope, and the Spirit’s prompting may all be present at once. That space is not a problem to solve. It is holy ground.

For those carrying stress, racialized trauma, grief, or exhaustion, approaching God may stir vulnerability. You are free to move at your own pace. You may pause. You may adapt. You may step away and return later. This is an invitation, not an obligation.

Arriving as You Are

To intend with God is to come as you are—alert or foggy, trusting or unsure, hopeful or worn thin—and to allow this moment of awareness to shape the way you walk forward.

It is a way of saying:

*Here I am.
I bring my body, my story, my longings, my resistance.
Form my responses in love.*

No part of you is outside God’s compassionate attention.

A Brief Breath Practice

(1 – 2 minutes)

Let your body settle in whatever posture feels steady.

- Notice where your body is supported—feet on the ground, back against a chair, shoulders resting.
- Allow one natural inhale.
- As you exhale, sense the space inside your chest or abdomen.
- Without forcing the breath, let it move at its own rhythm.

On the **inhale**: *Receive life.*

On the **exhale**: *Release what you are gripping.*

If helpful, place a hand over your chest or abdomen. Feel warmth. Feel contact. Feel that you are here.

You might pray: *Holy Spirit, meet me in the space between my instinct and my response.*

Nothing needs to change. Awareness itself is enough for this moment.

I Intend with God

(Move slowly. You may spend more time where your heart lingers)

1. PRAYER OF HONESTY (Ps 139:23-24)

“Search me, O God, and know my heart.”

Begin by noticing what is already present.

Sensations. Memories. Anticipation.
Tension. Relief. Numbness.

Rather than evaluating what you find, simply acknowledge it.

A prayer: *God, You see me fully. Help me notice what is stirring within me.*

Invitational Reflection:

- What begins to surface as awareness widens?
- Where in your body does today feel light or heavy?
- What inner undercurrent seems to ask for compassion rather than correction?

2. PRAYER OF PRESENTING

(Rom 12:1-2)

"I present my body as a living offering."

To present yourself is to stand before God with consent. Not as a sacrifice of harm, but as an offering of trust.

You may pray: *God, I offer You my attention, my limits, my desires, and my unfinished places. Shape my responses in love.*

Distraction is not disqualification. Resistance is not rejection. Everything you notice becomes part of the offering.

Invitational Reflection

- What emerges inside as you turn your attention toward God?
- Where does willingness feel strong?
- Where does hesitation ask for patience?

3. PRAYER OF IDENTITY IN CHRIST

(Gal 2:20; Phil 3:8-9)

Your truest identity is rooted in union with Christ. It offers a rootedness deeper than roles, emotional states, or performance.

You were first created in the image of God... your body and story bearing sacred worth from the beginning. Union with Christ does not replace that dignity; it restores and anchors it in covenant love.

As you sit with that truth, you may begin to notice that your embodied story is not dismissed but gathered into something deeper.

Your belonging and worth rests in Christ, steady beneath every other name.

Life in Christ is participation in God's faithful love... a belonging that precedes effort and outlasts failure.

You may pray: *Christ, live Your life through mine. Anchor me in belonging that cannot be taken away.*

Invitational Reflection

- What sense of belonging begins to take shape as you rest in Christ?
- Where does striving loosen its grip, even slightly?
- What part of your story longs to remember it is held within God's steady, renewing work of love?

4. PRAYER OF CONCERNS

(1 Peter 5:7; Ps 138:8)

Bring what weighs on you into the open. Name it plainly.

Work. Family. Justice.

Finances. Health. Decisions. Fatigue.

You may pray: *God, hold what feels too heavy for me to carry alone. Strengthen what requires courage. Guard what feels vulnerable.*

Entrusting concerns does not deny reality. It situates reality within Divine companionship.

Invitational Reflection

- What changes in your body as your concerns are spoken aloud or silently named?
- Where might shared burden begin to replace solitary strain?
- What form of courage feels timely for today?

5. PRAYER OF DISCERNMENT

(Heb 4:12; Phil 2:13)

Discernment is less about achieving certainty and more about noticing alignment.

The Spirit often works through steady shaping... through conviction, compassion, discomfort, clarity, or deepened resolve.

You may pray: Holy Spirit, illuminate what is life-giving and expose what constricts love.

Pause.

Listen.

Invitational Reflection

- What movement within feels consistent with love, truth, and courage?
- Where does unrest signal something worthy of attention?
- What small next step begins to form as you sit in awareness?

Discernment does not rush. It ripens.

Closing Intention

Choose one phrase that feels true:

God, walk with me in what unfolds today.

Keep forming my responses in love.

Strengthen me for what requires courage.

Remain still for a final breath.

You are not striving toward transformation.

You are consenting to presence.

The Spirit continues the work.

Footnote: This framework draws from biblical theology and Christian formation, informed by insights from Barbara Holmes, Howard Thurman, Lisa Sharon Harper, Sheila Wise Rowe, Lisa Fields (Jude3 Project), Adele Calhoun, and Tim Mackie (BibleProject).