

How the Book of Common Prayer Schooled Me in Prayer

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 30 March 2014

Preacher: Dr. Bruce Hindmarsh

[0 : 00] 1 Thessalonians 5.17 Pray continually. Pray continually. I did not grow up Anglican, though I grew up actively involved in an evangelical church in Winnipeg.

But there was a children's hospital book sale at the Polo Park shopping mall annually, and I used to love to go down there. And they had, just throughout the mall, these little kind of kiosks with used books that they would sell, and I would love to rummage among the used books.

I was very much a book lover, couldn't resist buying some of the books on sale there. And almost every year, I would buy another little wine-colored Anglican Book of Common Prayer.

I don't know, it must have been Anglican churches closing or something or moving over to the BAS. And I was fascinated by these. I think this is one of them, actually, quite worn now, with a nameplate from one of those churches.

There were lots of them on sale in Winnipeg at the Polo Park shopping mall, Children's Hospital book sale, and they were typically 25 cents each. So it was a good deal.

[1 : 09] It was some years later, as a young married man at graduate school here at Regent College, that I began to use one of these little books for my private devotions. I found the book a little bit confusing, but also intriguing.

It was complicated, but I was also quite attracted to it, deeply attracted by the spirit of devotion in the Book of Common Prayer. This was probably the beginning of my conversion into the Anglican church.

Cranmer had got his hooks into me and was dragging me in. This book is now worth to me much, much more than 25 cents. Almost unconsciously, I was schooled by the prayer book in my private prayers, formed in habits of devotion, molded by the pattern of words day by day, week by week. I had enrolled in a school for prayer that was to shape me for years to come. Isn't it amazing that after 450 years or so, that this book could still attract a young person in his 20s in modern Vancouver?

I think it was Winston Churchill who said, we shape our buildings and then our buildings shape us. The same is true with liturgy. There's a Latin phrase, *lex orandi, lex credendi*, which means what we pray is what we really believe.

[2 : 41] Is that the law of prayer is the law of belief, that these are interpenetrating realities. The liturgical form that we share in the Book of Common Prayer is, I like to work just a little bit with a metaphor, is like a house in which we live, picking up on what Churchill said about we shape houses and then they shape us.

It's like a house in which we live. Its rooms are designed like a house is designed to enable life to be lived. The life of a family and its guests are constrained by the house they lived in and life flows according to the architecture of the house.

Day by day, this architecture is properly forgotten. It is taken for granted and one indwells the house. One indwells the house and lives out of it.

This is what it's for. You use the house. The structure and design of the house quietly does its work unnoticed. So life flows through a house from the entrance where one is welcomed and people are gathered into the house such as the sentences that are declared at the beginning of our morning prayer service and the dearly beloved.

And then there may be a mudroom where one can disrobe and shed your dirty boots and coats and use the washroom on the main floor to wash up. Here's our confession and our absolution.

[4 : 15] And so the life of the house flows on to the warmth of the living room and the hearth the passing of the peace or where we greet one another which goes on for quite a while at our 7.30 service until you've met everybody, right?

Also the call and response that we're engaged together back and forth. The Lord be with you and also with you. The life continues to flow on to the learning and the receiving of wisdom that takes place in the study or the library of the house.

We think of the creed and the sermon to the meals and the fellowship around the dining room or the kitchen table the Holy Communion to the intimacy and rest of the bedrooms.

Think of the praise and prayers that we speak and so on. The life flows through the house. We shape our buildings and then they shape us. I want to use this metaphor just to help us appreciate two things at this point in our common life as a congregation.

Number one, the need for renovations from time to time since no house can go on forever without being repaired and adapted for its owners at some point.

[5 : 26] Some of you in Vancouver I know live in very old houses. Our first house in Vancouver was built in 1932 and there were various renovations that took course over the life of the house.

That's still a relatively new house compared to when we lived in England. So there are renovations and if a liturgy is to be common prayer in the vernacular it must of necessity be a changing liturgy as C.S. Lewis acknowledged.

Even if this change is to be slow and conservative so C.S. Lewis said he was all in favor of liturgical revision. One or two words a century. So first of all if it is to be vernacular and it is to be in the common language there is to be revision.

Secondly the way in such renovation the second thing though is that to acknowledge is the way in which such renovations are unsettling and difficult. for the owners for a period during renovations one feels insecure and even a little homeless and worried about whether these renovations will retain the beauty and the function of the house because we're so invested in this house.

Even after they are done for a period one is distracted and notices over notices the new details the new molding over the doorway becomes an eye catcher for a few months.

[6 : 53] It takes a while until one can again forget the house and indwell it. Again C.S. Lewis as long as you notice and have to count the steps you are not dancing.

A good shoe is a shoe you don't notice and so on. A perfect church service would be one in which we are almost unaware of it. Our attention would have been wholly on God.

So I say that and use that metaphor just in the we're aware that there's consideration being given now to ways in which our common liturgy is to be revised is just both to validate two things to validate the revision and to validate the feeling of insecurity that might create as we go through it. I think both of those things are valid. But the whole point of liturgy and this is my emphasis this morning is to be schooled by it.

It is a school for prayer until it is unconscious because we have formed a trained habit and the flow of our lives has been directed along its paths for so long it is second nature.

[8 : 02] We are formed schooled quite deeply I think by the way we pray together week by week in public. It goes deep into our psyches.

So can you complete these sentences for me? Here's a test. cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by That's an A.

O Lord our Heavenly Father Almighty and everlasting God who has safely brought us Almighty and most merciful Father we have erred Almighty God Father of all mercies we thine unworthy servants do that was the prayer of general thanksgiving that doesn't come up as often that's only every communion service right?

How can we learn from the forms of prayer we use in public and apply this to our private devotions? My theme is the prayer book is a school for prayer and my outline is first of all school colors be true to your school and I have a number of pairs of things that I'm going to talk about how this school is biblical and doctrinal there's a series of pairs which is in deference to Cranmer who always liked pairs we'll talk about that but I'm going to talk about our school colors and then secondly I'm going to talk about homeschooling about what it means to take this and enter into homeschooling so that's my outline but first of all we are schooled deeply I think by the liturgy it's a school for prayer not only on Sundays but Monday to Saturday that helps form us as Christian people and I encourage you in my exhortation this morning is for you to use the prayer book as I know many of

you do as a part of your daily lives perhaps the

Holy Spirit will prompt you this morning to consider one new practice and there might be one idea that you take away that you can begin to use in your own private life to have our minds changed by Bible teaching is crucially important but the whole point of the teaching of scripture as Augustine said in *De Doctrina* in his treatise on how to teach the Christian faith the whole point is to have our loves changed and for this the prayer book is a wonderful companion transformation that occurs is that we're looking for is how biblical teaching opens out into prayer that we personalize and respond to God's word and the whole structure of liturgy is always God's word to us and our word to God so be true to your school in many ways to be schooled as a Christian in biblical faith is to be to be formed you need to give yourself to a particular discipline and structure of a particular way you can't just be an interdenominational

[11:16] Christian generally you can't just be transdenominational in the introduction to C.S. Lewis' *Mere Christianity* he talked about how in this book he was going to talk about the common faith of Christians but he said that's like entering into the hall sort of the English term for the main room of the house that you gather in right but he said the meals and the fellowship are in the rooms and you go on into the rooms that you are schooled in a particular way I've been thinking more about this to be schooled to be apprenticed to a particular way is like being apprenticed to a skilled trade our middle son just became a welder and he's being apprenticed to that trade learning the art or like training to be an artist we need to be formed in a particular tradition we need to be traditioned even if one recognizes colleagues who are trained differently so there's a school or a paidea for us to enter into and so we talk about schools of philosophy schools of philosophy or schools of art

I was doing some work in my 18th century research on the Royal Academy in England when it emerged in the 18th century and how concerned they were to establish an English school of art and just think about this it was particularly English distinctively English the things that Gainsborough was doing that Reynolds were doing were distinctively English came out of their own particular history and their setting were true to it but they acknowledged that this was not the whole of the artistic tradition there was an Italian school there was a French school there were other schools of art but also what they were doing was a gift to the whole world not just to England even though it came out of England and so even though it's a particular school it's not a sectarian school it included an apprenticing and training element that the Royal Academy did not only have its public exhibitions but it had sort of model paintings and there was a training and an apprenticing going on and there was a past masters tradition they had examples of Raphael and others from which to learn so in various ways you can think about there is an Anglican paidea there is an Anglican way there is an Anglican school and we don't need to say it is just the only way or it's just even you don't even have to say it's the best way but it is you need to give yourself to a particular way to be formed as a

Christian and my testimony and I think that was the title of the talk is that I have found this to be fruitful and a valuable way to be formed as a Christian this little prayer book for the past 450 years has been training people and has created a kind of Anglican paidea or school of prayer so a few of the characteristics of this school your school of colors is first of all it is biblical and doctrinal biblical and doctrinal 80% of the prayer book you can correct me if I'm wrong Jim Packer but I think about 80% of the prayer book is simply scripture the other 20% is prayer is pretty much based on scripture right so we are praying scripture so it's not like the prayer book overgets the bible it is deeply scriptural but notice that it's not simply a geyser of feeling I sometimes make fun of some of our modern worship songs and modern worship has the character of something like I love the way I feel when I love you you know in worship that's what I call a geyser of feeling it's not just and really prayers Lord I just really want to pray that you would just really help me just really stop saying just and really in my prayers you know the prayer book is sinewy meaty teaching throughout the emotions are not desiccated but the prayer book connects our emotions to their proper occasion and grasps this with a firm theological intelligence this is seen clearly for example in the colics that begin with doctrine unto whom all hearts be open all desires known from whom no secrets are hid before proceeding to petition cleanse the thoughts of our hearts and aspiration that we may perfectly love thee there is feeling there is plenty of feeling here but it is connected to its moment doctrinally so the first thing about your school colors is that biblical and doctrinal secondly catholic and reformed catholic and reformed and by here

I don't mean sort of you know capital R capital C Roman Catholic I mean catholic in the sense of we worship in a church that exists through time and through space there is a universality there is a common faith that we hold we pray in this prayer book with the eastern church and the liturgy of saint james in chrysostom we pray with gregory the great in the seventh century I remember reading a 14th century english writer and coming across the collect for purity that we've just been quoting how wonderful is it to be deeply connected to the lives of the saints the communion of the saints the communio sanctorum through time to be connected to that church which has existed since the time of the apostles we also pray geographically catholic in a catholic sense with our brothers and sisters in Malawi

[17 : 04] Nigeria Kenya Malaysia Hong Kong Mumbai we pray with the church across space the idiosyncrasies of my prayers are corrected and enlarged in the company of all the saints I love some of the ways in which the prayer book has developed in different countries especially in Kenya in the Kenyan book of common prayer the closing blessing in the Kenyan service is not just and now the blessing of God Almighty Father Son and Holy Spirit and so on or may the Lord bless you and keep you the Aaronic blessing but listen to the Kenyan blessing may the Lord of the harvest bless your crops your maize and beans your rice and potatoes your tea and coffee may the Lord of creation bless your animals your cattle and camels your sheep and goats your chickens and pigs may the Lord of life bless your families your husbands and wives your sons and daughters your brothers and sisters may the

Lord have mercy have compassion on all the sick ones in the hospitals and at home all who mourn your loved ones your orphans and your widows and the blessing of God Almighty Father Son and Holy Spirit be among you and remain with you always there's this sense in Kenya that you just can't talk about this without talking about the whole community to which we belong and our brothers and our sisters and our uncles and our aunts and so on right and there's we pray with our brothers and sisters in Kenya when we pray common prayer I said it's Catholic but also reformed Cranmer's concern to purify the liturgy to revise it in light of a fresh reading of the Bible is something we also get to participate in this school here's what one critic says one historian the doctrine of the mass as sacrifice to God was replaced by the evangelical teaching of its being service of thanksgiving for the unique sacrifice of the cross and spiritual communion with

Christ what was derided as a magical attitude to sacraments and ceremonies needed to be enlightened by a true knowledge of God's word and scripture purgatory and the abuses connected with it were to be rooted out and so on this is the work the kind of work that Cranmer did one example is the black rubric so called that Cranmer introduced that explained the meaning of kneeling at communion to receive communion was a matter of humility not of superstition about the bread and wine in the 18th century somebody wrote about that there was the etymology of hocus pocus when you say this is a bunch of hocus pocus this is a bunch of superstition and magic and they said hocus pocus came from hocus corpus mayum this is my body right and so whether that's true or not the concern was about superstition and cranmer's concern was to reform that so it is biblical and doctrinal it is catholic and reformed it is thirdly liturgical and seasonal these are ready made set prayers rather than homemade prayers some thought has gone into them they're designed for worship and orient us towards worship there's always of course a liturgy even when unacknowledged even an unliturgical church has forms become habitual and there's tremendous thought given to this in the prayer book there's a sense also of the time of day as also of the church year thought has gone into these words mapping our experience of time not as secular but as sacred in the morning in the benedictus we're reminded that the day spring from on high hath visited us that the dawn from on high has shone upon us just as we're in remember the quality of the morning the newness of the morning in the evening the night admit us that thy servant may depart in peace there's a recognition of the time of day at which we're praying here's what Tertullian said in the early church touching the time the extrinsic observance of certain hours will not be unprofitable those common hours I mean which mark the intervals of the day which we may find in scripture to have been more solemn than the rest albeit these practices stand simply without any precept for their observance still it may be granted a good thing to establish some definite presumption which may both add stringency to the admission to pray and may as it were of our day unto such a duty and he assumes that we will pray on the entrance of light and night morning and night that there is a kind of tearing yourself as by a law to pray at these times of day is not unprofitable likewise we enter into the larger seasons of a calendrical time as sacred not just the

time work discipline of capitalism to structure our days and not fasting cycles of the church of advent through trinity it was a triumph of the Nicaean church to take over pagan time and replace it with Christian time the feast of paternalia is replaced by all saints day and so on we experience the structure of time it's one of those things like a house again we take for granted but we experience time culturally it's another one of those houses we live in that shape us and today our time is shaped very much in secular terms the church calendar helps us to live our days and our seasons in the framework of salvation history our time is taken up into God's time so biblical school colors biblical and doctrinal catholic and reformed liturgical and seasonal fourthly it is corporate and individual the common prayer in the common language for us all not just for priests and scribes not just in Latin not just performed in front of the people but now prayers of all the people in the medieval period devout lay people would come to church and do their own private devotions while the service is going on up front the [23 : 42] Latin liturgy went on up front instead in the common prayer we are involved individually in the common faith we are involved individually in the common faith how wonderful week by week to say together and to each other the confession and the creed it's nice for me to know that you're confessing your sins too you know even Jim Packer you know so it means much to me as a theologian as somebody who studies Christianity I remember once in Oxford my pastor saying basically saying well the service isn't for you theologians it's for other people and I thought oh you have no idea how important it is especially when you've been doing the work of studying and for a moment you may feel like it all depends on your own instrumental reasoning just to repose in the common faith to say the creed with you all like that matters our common faith that we receive together it doesn't depend on me the common faith is received and affirmed together with all the faithful it is a corporate faith but we have work to do as individuals we have to take up our instruments in the orchestra we must add our hearts and voices to the choir and this is something prophetic in our culture of commercial individualism and entertainment to engage in a corporate act of worship in which we individually belong and we participate it doesn't happen without us it is not an entertainment event at which we are spectators it is not a concert for which we bought a ticket we are all on stage as the performers together trying to enact the play again and get it right trying to perform the drama being led in for our part in the production biblical and doctrinal catholic and reform liturgical and seasonal corporate and individual it is contrite and aspirational this is a school of prayer that is contrite and aspirational in lent we worthily lament our sins and acknowledge our wretchedness every week all desires all hearts open all desires known no health in us and so on every week we say these sorts of things and we are

I think it's one of the distinctives you say what is the distinctive of English art in the 18th century the English school what is the distinctive of Anglican worship I think people who come into Anglican worship from the outside recognize in it this element of contrition to be formed in what is to be there is much aspiration here the structure of liturgical prayers such as the colics is oriented this way often signaled forgive the grammar here by a conjunction the word that or in order that introducing a purpose clause that we may perfectly love thee that we may come to your eternal joys the direction of this is salvation historical it's oriented toward compunction to the desire for heaven and so we have these cycles

Jim Packer has written about this these cycles in the liturgy of proclamation confession forgiveness and praise and we go through that U-shaped pattern I think at least three times in Holy Communion right where we declare we're absolved and we praise and that's the way in which we're formed in a school that is contrite and aspirational finally in terms of our school colors before we get practical it is aesthetic and literary aesthetic and literary it's been called Cranmer's immortal bequest I like my favorite tribute to this comes from Paul Simon the singer he refers to a girl as pretty as a prayer book along came a young girl she's pretty as a prayer book sweet as an apple on Christmas day I said good gracious can this be my luck if that's my prayer book

Lord let us pray even in popular music there's a recognition of the beauty of the prayer book everybody wants phrases from the prayer book for their wedding right it comes out of the golden age of the English language Spencer Shakespeare Milton there is a simplicity a dignity an elegance a rhythm balance periods and cadences one of the most interesting I just read this last night the analysis of all this in one of C.S.

Lewis's scholarly works it was his English literature in the 16th century excluding drama in the Oxford History of English literature series and he especially notes the rhythms of the prose but he

calls the peaks and valleys and the way that they're structured he talks about the word or the weaving of words ringing changes to a great rhythm like the changing of English change ringing of English bells that what's going on in the language is just utterly remarkable and that's why you get Cranmer's fondness for doubles have you heard English change ringing the pattern of a bell ringing it is unique to England I think this pattern of bell ringing and it's like a cascading like waterfalls of sound it's just magnificent to wake up in Oxford on a Sunday morning and hear the bells calling you to worship and the language is like that right and so you get the doubles you don't need to say sins and wickedness because nobody's going to misunderstand it's not that you misunderstood the word sins so he says wickedness just in case you misunderstood sins it's more there's a rhythm to it so you have once I say this you're going to find it everywhere and it's going to be like one of those eye catchers you'll notice all these doubles devices and desires erred and strayed sins and wickednesses pardoneth and absolveth pure and holy create and make balanced by new and contrite and there's often this kind of pattern and there's a beauty to it now

[30 : 21] I love it okay and I'm a historian like you know I'm there just I can live in this space and I can live here for a long time but there's a danger here there can be a literary distancing a stylistic preoccupation there's dangers of a piety that becomes too literary too pretty and which loses the prophetic force of what the new testament calls parisia boldness or freedom of approach it is the freedom of the citizen and the assembly to speak in their own proper voice the freedom to extemporize and if there's a weakness in prayer book devotion I think it can be this it becomes pretty literary and it can be a surrogate for the real thing just something to enjoy sort of like classical music however it it has preserved for us something of the beauty of holiness in form and content and here too we may enter into this in private prayer and be schooled like being schooled in classical music there is here a good formation but it would make a very poor status symbol somebody said the Anglican philosophy of evangelism is that someday all people of good taste will become

Anglican that would reflect the danger that I'm talking about here and of course there are other dangers just a misunderstanding in a liturgy that unrevised an older liturgy one of the phrases today is when we talk about the comfortable words most people think of comfortable as like a really nice lazy boy sofa whereas of course in that context comfortable meant to be strengthened fortitude the root fort to be strengthened these are strengthening words this is not just indulgent comfy words right and so there's a danger there too so that's just a little bit about our little bit about our school colors are you on board you're part of the school okay finally and more briefly how to be shaped by this how are we shaped by this and how can we do some homework what is our homeschooling how do we use the prayer book as a school for prayer

Monday to Saturday and again I know many of you do this but I'd just like to talk about five ways we can be schooled by this in our daily prayers first of all and I talked about this a few years ago in Learner's Exchange I did a whole session on the colics and how to pray the colics and how we learn from the colics you could look at the colics which are laid out week by week in the section that goes through the church year in the prayer book and learn to pray doctrinally learning to pray doctrinally and learning to turn scripture into prayer there's a five fold structure in the colics of address almighty God doctrine unto whom all hearts be open all desires known and from whom no secrets are hid petition cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of thy holy spirit aspiration that we may perfectly love thee and worthily magnify thy holy name and pleading through Christ our Lord who lives and reigns with you in the Holy

Spirit one God now forever that's the structure and it's a structure like a sonnet once you recognize the structure and understand it again to use the same image you can see changes being rung on it and you can also by the way enter into it more quickly and easily when we use them in church because they tend to come by pretty quick and they're really dense but you can enter into it on the basis of what we believe faith what does our love ask and what do we hope for faith hope and love is the structure of these prayers right on the basis of what God has done and revealed what do I ask and for what do I aspire we can ask these questions in the presence of God through the mediation of Christ as we learn to pray the colics we learn to respond to all of the scriptures in this way to turn from what the scripture teaches us to be true to prayer and to praise so here's some things you could do you can memorize some colics I have a few colics that I've memorized that when I go out running I repeat them as I run you could pray them on Sunday before church and practice your role in the choir so when you come to church you're ready to pray the colic because you've practiced

you could use it as a pattern for your own prayers and bible reading that after you've read a passage of scripture in the morning you think about what is true about this and you use that in prayer and then you think on the basis of this what do I ask God for and on the basis of this what do I ultimately hope for and where is my heart directed and you could pray out of your bible reading you can extemporize or embellish these as a structure for prayer you can pray out of them you pray over each phrase and after a phrase stop and paraphrase it in your own words and add to it use it as a structure for prayer one of the most marvelous prayers that the prayer book for me and one that you could use this way is the prayer of general thanksgiving I think Bishop Reynolds wrote it in the later 17th century but it's a wonderful prayer of thanksgiving and that sets us up in this sort of way so praying the colics is a homeschool exercise for you that's some homework and this will school us in praying doctrinally secondly sentences sentences learning to pray often that's the second thing the sentences of scripture that are used at the beginning of morning prayer that are used at various places in the liturgy for invocations and responses have been used for centuries as an aid to prayer the verse from Psalm 70 verse 1 oh god make speed to save us oh lord make haste to help us is one of these that appears in the prayer book again the prayer book mostly takes scripture and puts it into a form of prayer this was one that was used by the desert fathers as one of the short frequent prayers that could be repeated throughout the day to help you pray without ceasing

[36 : 56] Abba Isaac in Cassian's conferences says when Cassian and Germanus come to him and ask about prayer and he says yeah I've got the secret to prayer go away and come back tomorrow they come back tomorrow they say with their hearts burning and they say what is the secret to prayer and he says it's Psalm 70 verse 1 come to my help oh god oh lord make haste to help us that's it they go that's it he says yes and then there's this kind of anconium of praise to this verse about how you can pray this in any condition exalted or despondent in need or in happiness that there's no condition of life in which you cannot pray oh god make speed to save us oh lord make haste to help us just wonderful and one of the the genius of the desert fathers is learning to pray without ceasing by praying these sentences over and over again sentence prayers over the course of your day and we can learn to do that this is my mom and dad are here this is one of the things my dad taught me when I was younger he said if you forget god and the little things in life you'll live about most of 90% of your life and these prayers are a way to be sentence prayers are a way to be recollected to the presence of god you could just take a phrase one of the sentences of scripture or take another one not to us but to your name be glory and then you pray that over and over in the course of the day and like a bird's claws returning to the branch that it's you know you just come back again and again to these and you recall the presence of god in recollection and sentences help us pray often so it in that actually bit in john cassian in the desert fathers in the fourth century is precisely the way that this verse made it into our liturgy right and it made it into the monastic office and then into the cathedral office and then into the prayer book we pray this prayer at the beginning of our service but there are many of these scattered scattered throughout also the the oh lord open our lips and our mouth shall show forth thy praise out of psalm 51 i have a student who prays that every morning as soon as his eyes open in the morning oh lord open our lips and our mouth shall show forth thy praise so you can through the colics you can learn day to day to pray doctrinally through the sentences that are embedded in the liturgy you can learn to pray throughout the course of the day to be recollected to the presence of god thirdly there's the psalter and i think mary maxwell has recently spoke to you about praying and you thought about praying the psalms and this is something where frankly i've been very inspired by my wife and watching her practice of praying the psalter and i'm praying right now half the psalter because i'm praying it in the morning but i'm too tired at night and it's divided so i've got about half the psalms but the prayer book nicely divides the psalms up for daily prayer morning and evening so that one can pray through the whole of the psalter each month when praying the psalms we pray with israel and the church we pray with christ to pray the psalms daily is not just electio divina but electio continua we are schooled in petition lament confession praise and we pray this like a loop that runs as we live our lives each month this is a loop that plays that we a background against which we live our lives if you are with roommates or a spouse this is something you could pray responsively even pray through the psalms that's the third exercise that's the third bit of homeschooling the fourth bit of homeschooling is

morning prayer and then fifthly evening prayer morning prayer we learn offering up evening prayer we learn laying down from the benedictus with its words in the tender mercy of our God the dawn from on high shall break upon us that sense of in the morning the light breaking in to the call up for grace morning prayer teaches us to offer up the day into God's hands an act of offering up an act of consecration to the one who has safely brought us to the beginning of this day who alone can defend us guide us strengthen us to do always that is righteous in his sight so the act of devotion in the morning what is the fundamental act of devotion in the morning it's to offer up the day this day is a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving this day you've given me to live to live it as in your presence and I learn to offer it up morning prayer teaches us to do that and in this little wine color prayer book 25 form of morning prayer that can structure this matter of offering up thankful for the night this past we offer up the day ahead finally we learn as we're schooled to also at the night to lay things down from the nunc dimittis to the call for aid against all perils evening prayer teaches us a proper resignation of all we are of all we hope for of all those whom we remain undone to lay these down into the hands of

God we lay down our worries our cares our responsibilities to the one alone who can lighten our darkness and by his mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night there's an examination of conscience at night one of the things I like about praying in the morning is I haven't screwed up yet you know not very much but at night time it's a time to lay things down it's a time to examine oneself and again lay things down C.S.

Lewis has a wonderful poem called After Prayers Lie Cold and it's about how what it's like to kneel beside your bed and then to get under the covers and lie there cold because it's England it's always cold inside and so you crawl under the covers and death element that every night is a kind of death a kind of practice for dying we lie there for a moment cold prepared to lay down our lives in faith that he will raise them up again every night we prepare it's a kind of death and resurrection and we all the things that are undone we submit to the hands of God knowing that he is the one alone in whom we trust and who will raise us up again so I mentioned the abbreviated forms of prayer to be used in families at the end of this book that can help us with this daily and evening prayer as a personal way to offer up and lay down each day if you're one of the many people who struggle with anxiety there's a wonderful prayer for anxiety in the evening form of evening prayer about laying down our worries at the end of the day in at the end here in the forms for families there are many more ways of course that

Anglicans have found the book of common prayer to be a school for private prayer but this is at least a start Hans Urs von Balthasar describes our private devotions as deeply connected to our public liturgy in the sense that we extend the public prayers into our daily lives and in our daily lives we continue to participate in the prayers of the whole church we aren't doing this individually just you and your small corner and me and mine we are doing public prayer in private the 17th century Anglican Jeremy Taylor thought of this a little bit more poetically I love this public worship was he says like rain falling from heaven private devotion was like the refreshing of a garden with a watering pot the prayer book serves us well in our public worship but it is good to remember that it also serves us well as a daily watering pot thank you