

POETRY AS PRAYER

Let my teaching fall like rain and my words descend like dew, like showers on new grass, like abundant rain on tender plants. (Deuteronomy 32:2)

Poetry offers us a way to pray beyond ordinary sentences. Through image, rhythm, repetition, shape, and carefully chosen words, poetry can help us notice what stirs within us and bring it into God's presence. A poem-prayer does not need to be polished or profound; it can hold praise *and* lament, gratitude *and* longing, questions *and* silence. The practices that follow offer different ways to slow down, pay attention, and ask, notice, or simply lean into the God's presence.

Biblical poetry is rich and layered, using imagery, rhythm, repetition, and metaphor to give voice to experiences that ordinary language sometimes struggles to express, inviting us not only to understand with our minds, but also to encounter Scripture with our imaginations and emotions.

The book of Psalms offers a particularly beautiful example of poetry as prayer. Written in many circumstances and for many purposes, the psalms are remarkably honest conversations with God. The psalmists bring their whole selves before God—and their words remind us that we can do the same

WRITE A PSALM

If you're not sure where to begin, simply write an honest letter to God, in whatever words come to mind. When you are finished, tuck your prayer away for a few weeks. Then return to it with fresh eyes:

1. READ YOUR PRAYER ALOUD. Wherever you naturally pause or take a breath, add a slash (/) to mark a possible line break.
2. USE THE PAUSES to shape the lines into a poem.
3. REREAD YOUR PSALM ALOUD. Is there a phrase your tongue trips over—a word that doesn't feel quite right, or something you want to say differently?
4. CONTINUE REVISING until your psalm feels complete.

Your psalm need not sound polished or profound. Like the biblical psalms, it can simply tell the truth about where you are and bring that truth into God's presence.

WRITING HAIKU AS PRAYER

Haiku's simple form invites us to slow down, pay attention, and discover that a few carefully chosen words can become a heartfelt prayer.

Haiku is delightfully bite-sized—just three lines and seventeen syllables:

Line 1: 5 syllables
Line 2: 7 syllables
Line 3: 5 syllables

At its heart, haiku is about noticing. As you read Scripture, notice to a single word, image, promise, or truth that lingers with you, and let it unfold into prayer.

1. KEEP YOUR FOCUS SMALL

   Choose a small detail that draws your attention—a word, image, promise, or emotion. Let the constraints of haiku's form help narrow your focus. Less can often hold more than we expect.

2. LET CREATION SPEAK

   Haiku traditionally draws attention to the natural world, making it especially suited to prayer, helping us notice God's presence and character in fresh ways. Let a sparrow, morning dew, wildflowers, rain, wind, sunlight, still water, or the changing seasons find their way into your prayer.

3. MAKE ROOM FOR HOPE

   Consider allowing the final line to turn gently turn toward gratitude, love, courage, peace, or hope—a small window through which you can watch for God's presence and redemption.

WRITE HAIKU FROM SCRIPTURE

Try writing one haiku a day based on your Scripture reading. Notice what catches your attention, then shape your response into seventeen syllables. Don't worry about making it profound or perfect. These small poems can become quiet conversations with God—brief moments moments to notice, respond, and remember His presence and faithfulness.

Whether your prayer fills a page or rests quietly in three short lines, let the words become a place to meet with God. Write honestly, notice deeply, and leave room for His presence between the lines. You are not simply writing a poem—you are giving your heart another way to pray.