

Let's try praying like this...

{#2 – Reflections on Movies, TV, Art}

What's it like?

It's like watching a movie or a TV show, but watching it with a different "lens." It's like looking at a picture or some art, but not just in a casual way. It's using your eyes and your brain to look beyond the pictures or special effects, beyond the jokes and the plot, and see if there is something else going on that God might want you to notice.

What's it for?

It's for using something you're already watching or looking at to do more than just entertain you. It's for reminding you that God is present everywhere, and that the Holy Spirit tries to reach us in all possible ways, that your faith is not a separate compartment from the rest of your life. It's for growing your faith and your mind to look for meaning beneath the surface of things. Pictures and movies and the like help us see and think of things we couldn't on our own. And it's for fun – what do your favorite shows or movies or art have to teach you about your faith?

When could I use it?

On the one hand, you could use it any time you watch a movie, a TV show, a video online, or look at a picture or art. On the other hand, it might work better if you set aside a special time dedicated to watching/looking at those things in a prayerful way.

Where could I use it?

Pretty much anywhere – there are pictures, advertising billboards, computers, TVs, and movie theaters all over. You can always be on the lookout for God trying to get your attention. But, like the "when" question, it might be good – at least at first – to pick a certain place and time to try it out. You could try this alone or with others, but it's often more fun with others.

How it works...

Pick a show; a movie or a part of a movie; some art or some pictures. Before you start watching, say a little prayer for God to open your eyes, your heart, your mind. Then start watching. Don't try to force your faith or other Christian-y stuff into what you're watching if it's not naturally there. Just try to see if there's a theme or a message God might want you to notice. Or, ask yourself this question: "As a Christian, how would I have acted/behaved if I were in that scene or situation?" And then reflect and pray about what you saw.

Try it!

First, say the short prayer asking God to open you up to what He might want you to see. Next, practice this kind of prayer with both a movie clip and some art. Watch the clip or take a good chunk of time to view the art.

What did you think?

Learning goal: To know that prayer is not only about talking to God, but also listening and paying attention to what *God* might be trying to communicate to *you*, too (and that God doesn't always answer prayers in the way *we* might want or expect). A good way to start exercising "listening" muscles is by looking in places you're already looking at anyway.

Let's Pray Like This

Here are a few short and simple prayers that you can use to help you pray daily for yourself, your loved ones, your neighbors, God's mission, and God's world.

This is just a starting point—be creative and know that praying is really all about talking with God. So, just talk, and enjoy a deeper relationship with your God and creator.

Blessings to you on this endeavor!

A prayer for someone else, adapted from 1 Chronicles 4:10 (The Prayer of Jabez):

Oh God that you would bless _____, enlarge his/her sphere of care, let your hand be with him/her, and keep him/her from hurt and harm. Amen.

A prayer for God's mission:

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in us the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit, and we shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth.

A prayer for yourself:

Lord, thank you, thank you thank you. Help me, help me, help me. Amen.

A prayer of trust:

O God, you have called your servants to ventures of which we cannot see the ending, by paths as yet untrodden, through perils unknown. Give us faith to go out with good courage, not knowing where we go, but only that your hand is leading us and your love supporting us; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

A prayer for times of distress, spoken by Jesus as recorded in Mark 14:36:

Abba, Father, for you all things are possible; remove this cup from me; yet, not what I want, but what you want.

A prayer of thanksgiving:

Glory to God in the highest, and peace to God's people on earth.

A prayer of returning to God, from Psalm 51: 10-12:

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from. Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with your free Spirit.