

Prayer Course: Week 7

Creative prayer: Hymns as prayers

Introduction:

The arts have always been used in prayer, both through the appreciation of sacred arts and through their making. In this exercise we will make music as a way of offering prayer and praise to God.

Background:

The arts have been used in worship and prayer right from the building of the first Temple in the Old Testament and the Psalms are themselves hymns to be sung in that Temple, which was according to the Bible richly decorated with images. This use of the arts in prayer fell into question in the sixth century with the Muslim invasions, but all the major denominations agreed that so long as the art is intended and used for the worship of God it is appropriate to be used in worship or prayer.

The arts can offer a more physical and emotional approach to prayer, as the arts require us to use a range of our senses and our bodies, both in their appreciation and manufacture. In the exercise we will use the singing of hymns to help us to engage our bodies and emotions as well as our minds in worship and prayer, but you could use any of the art forms if you are comfortable with their manufacture. So this can just as well be done through drawing pictures inspired by the Bible, or writing poetry in praise of God: what is important that you are physically involved in the making of the art you are offering as praise. It should be noted that the quality of the singing is not the point here, it is the quality of our prayer that matters, so sing as well as you can and praise God with your heart.

Purpose:

To use music to open our beings to praise God and pray to him.

Process:

- Chose two or three hymns, one joyful and one quiet.
- In prayer offer your singing to God.
- Prayerfully sing the joyful hymn first
- Silence (1 minute).
- Then sing the quiet hymn.
- Silence (1 minute).
- Finish with either another joyful hymn or repeating the first hymn.
- Notice how God has touched you in your singing.
- Say the Lord's Prayer.
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Further reading and resources:

Any hymn books you may have

Online hymnal: <https://hymnary.org>