

# INWARDLY DIGEST

THE PRAYER BOOK AS GUIDE TO A SPIRITUAL LIFE



DEREK OLSEN





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Praise for *Inwardly Digest*:  
*The Prayer Book as Guide to a Spiritual Life*

Too often, *The Book of Common Prayer* is open to a few familiar pages on Sunday and closed the rest of the days, with little regard to the deep, transformative spirituality inside. With humor, deep reverence, and academic insight that is anything but dry and boring, Derek Olsen reminds us of the breath of the Spirit, the lives of the saints, the love of Jesus, and the magnificence of God held in the words, silence, and worship of our *Book of Common Prayer*. Clergy and laity should read this to discover and re-discover the daring words and liturgies of our faith spanning eons and to engage the prayers and worship of our faith.

—LAURIE BROCK

Episcopal priest and author of *Where God Hides Holiness: Thoughts on Grief, Joy, and the Search for Fabulous Heels*



Derek Olsen is the patron saint of the overlooked; campaign manager of the undervalued; tour guide to the taken for granted. His patient, scholarly watchfulness and his gift for rendering complex ideas in clear, concise prose make *Inwardly Digest* an insightful guide to *The Book of Common Prayer* and a sure and steady introduction to Anglican spiritual practice.

—JIM NAUGHTON

Founder of Episcopal Café and  
partner of Canticle Communications



Written in an engaging style that is both conversational and informative, *Inwardly Digest* is a timely invitation to life in the Spirit sustained by the patterns and rhythms of the Prayer Book.


—FRANK GRISWOLD  
25th Presiding Bishop of The Episcopal Church



With the spiritual foundation in *The Book of Common Prayer*, Derek Olsen shows how everyday Christians can grow closer to God through a “training regimen” that incorporates the spirituality of Anglican liturgy as a daily practice. In straightforward and accessible writing, Olsen provides a guide to Prayer Book spirituality for everyone.

—SUSAN BROWN SNOOK  
Episcopal priest and author of *God Gave the Growth:  
Church Planting in the Episcopal Church*






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DEREK OLSEN

FORWARD MOVEMENT  
CINCINNATI, OHIO



Dedicated to my three ladies:  
Meredith, Greta, and Hannah



# Table of Contents

## Foreword

There Are All Sorts of Different Ways of Being Christian .....	3
Chapter 1 — Fundamentals.....	11
The Book of Common Prayer .....	20
The Prayer Book System.....	21
The Spirituality of the Prayer Book System .....	25
The Prayer Book System and the Anglican Tradition.....	28
Basic Principles for Liturgical Worship.....	30
Adoration.....	30
Formation.....	32
Repetition .....	34
Variation .....	36
Continuity .....	38
Stability.....	39
Basic Disciplines for Liturgical Worship .....	40
The Need for Disciplines.....	40
Participation .....	41
Attentiveness .....	45
Memorization.....	49
Diligence .....	51
Stability.....	53
Intentionality.....	56
Next Steps.....	58



**Section 1 — The Calendar ..... 61**

Chapter 2—The Essence of the Calendar ..... 63

Living the Creed ..... 65

The Seasons and the Religious Affections ..... 69

Liturgy, History, and the Powerful Present ..... 72

Commemorating the Saints and Heroes  
of the Faith ..... 74

A Baptismal Ecclesiology: Where the Rubber  
Meets the Road..... 75

All Saints and All Souls ..... 77

Back to Baptism ..... 79

Chapter 3 — The Anatomy of the Calendar ..... 87

The Shape of the Calendar ..... 92

Chapter 4 — The Collects ..... 127

The Liturgical Manifestations of the  
Church Year..... 127

What Is a Collect? ..... 130

Collects and the Liturgical Year ..... 143

The Seasonal Collects ..... 144

Calendar Conclusions ..... 146

**Section 2 — The Daily Office..... 151**

Chapter 5 — The Essence of the Daily Office ..... 153

Psalms, Hymns, and Spiritual Songs..... 154

To Pray Without Ceasing ..... 157

The Sacrifice of Praise and Thanksgiving ..... 165

Chapter 6 — The Anatomy of the Daily Office.....	171
The Services .....	171
The Structure of the Offices.....	175
The Elements of Morning and Evening Prayer .....	178
The Lessons.....	186
The Prayers.....	197
Chapter 7 — The Psalms.....	201
The Source of the Psalms .....	201
The Formative Quality of the Psalms.....	207
Praying the Psalms in the Office .....	222
Conclusion of the Daily Office .....	227
<b>Section 3 — The Holy Eucharist .....</b>	<b>229</b>
Chapter 8 — Spirituality of the Eucharist.....	231
Starting with Sacrifice .....	231
Eucharist as Sacrifice .....	236
Eucharist and Oblation .....	240
Chapter 9 — The Shape of the Eucharist .....	243
The Services .....	244
Introductory Material .....	249
The Word of God .....	252
The Holy Communion .....	268
The Lord’s Prayer .....	282
The Breaking of the Bread/ Fraction Anthem .....	283

Prayer of Humble Access .....	285
Distribution .....	288
What Do You Feel? .....	289
Post-Communion Prayer .....	291
Blessing .....	291
Dismissal .....	292
Chapter 10 — The Body of Christ.....	293
The Physical Body of Christ .....	296
The Resurrected Body of Christ .....	297
The Ascended Body of Christ.....	298
The Pneumatic Body of Christ .....	299
The Mystical Body of Christ.....	300
The Social Body of Christ .....	302
The Marginal Body of Christ.....	305
The Eschatological Body of Christ.....	306
The Sacramental Body of Christ.....	308
Real Presences .....	311
The Eucharist as a Gift to the Church .....	314
Perceiving the Body .....	316
Conclusion on the Eucharist .....	318
<b>Afterword</b> .....	<b>319</b>
<b>About the Author</b> .....	<b>323</b>
<b>About Forward Movement</b> .....	<b>325</b>



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FOREWORD

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## FOREWORD

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### There are all sorts of different ways of being Christian

I grew up Lutheran and had been working toward ordination in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America when I felt a subtle tugging at my soul. As I explored this further, I found myself being pulled toward a different way of being spiritual than I had known in the Lutheran church. It was an older path, one that gave more credence to mystery and sacrament than I saw in my Lutheran environment, one more heavily populated by the psalms. I began praying with *The Book of Common Prayer* and found a liturgical and sacramental depth that answered the call that I felt in my heart. For me, this spiritual path was more authentic to who I had been created to be. After much agonizing and long conversations with my wife, I left the Lutheran church and the ordination process and found a home in The Episcopal Church.

Don't get me wrong—I have nothing against Lutherans, and I treasure the many things I learned and the many friendships I maintain with my Lutheran colleagues. It simply wasn't the path for me.

I had always intended to pursue a doctorate after seminary. Following my move to The Episcopal Church, I earned a PhD in New Testament for which I focused specifically on the connection between scripture and liturgy—how liturgies use scripture and are, in turn, informed by it. I never entered a discernment process for ordination in The Episcopal Church, nor did I take an academic job after graduation. In the final years of my academic studies, I found a good job doing computer work for a major corporation, and I remain there today.

These biographical facts make me a weird author for this kind of book. Most writers on spirituality tend to be priests or professors or both. I'm neither. I have the same training as a parish priest (including a full year serving a Lutheran parish complete with preaching, teaching, and counseling), and I have a doctorate in a spirituality-ish field. But nobody pays me to study; nobody pays me to pray. My days aren't spent in scholarship and pastoral work with dedicated time for prayer, but in working the day job, cooking dinners, and shuttling my daughters to and from their activities. The only ivory towers in my life are the ones I pass on my way to my older daughter's ballet studio!

As a lay theologian living an ordinary life, I am not under any illusions about the difficulties of balancing a spiritual life in addition to and in relation to all of the other demands in my life and on my time. Figuring out that balance is an important piece of the puzzle for me.

Yet I have found an answer. The spirituality informed by and grounded in *The Book of Common Prayer* leads me most directly into the depths of God. Out of the many possible ways that there are to be Christian, my focus in this book is Anglican liturgical spirituality. Those last three words are terms that we ought to get clear upfront.

Anglican comes from the name *Angles*. It pertains to one of the many Germanic tribal groups that invaded Britain during the Migration Era of the fourth through seventh centuries. These tribal groups took over the place and renamed it Angle-land, which eventually became England. Through a series of events, the Church of England developed and was characterized by a certain perspective on the faith—a way of being Christian—embodied within *The Book of Common Prayer*. As English-speaking people spread across the world, they brought Anglicanism with them. The Episcopal Church is the heir of the English state-supported church in the America colonies. Other groups with Anglican lineages have appeared in America since then, most having split off from The Episcopal Church at some time or another.

Liturgical refers to a set of spiritual practices that use established formulas to structure regularly occurring worship services. Or, as some of my Methodist friends like to kid me, it means that we use “wrote-down” prayers. It’s more than that, though. The term liturgical brings with it a sense of patterns that we as individuals and as a church value. These patterns include the seasons of the church year and the rhythm of daily prayer as well as how services on Sundays are ordered. I’ll let you in on a little secret: Most Christian churches are liturgical, even those that would be horrified at being called such. If a church uses some sort of regular pattern when the congregation gathers for worship, then they are using a liturgy. Of course, in the Anglican tradition, we have moved quite a bit up the liturgical scale. Not only do we have liturgies and patterns, but we also embrace them as a basic principle of our spiritual practice. And that is where we are going to start. The first section of this book wrestles with the whys, hows, and wherefores of being liturgical, investigating the principles and logic of such a decision.



The word spirituality gets thrown around a lot these days, particularly in church circles, but often the word is dropped without any sort of explanation. What is spirituality? How does it relate to being spiritual? In one way, the answer is simple: Spirituality refers to a set of thoughts, ideas, feelings, habits, and practices that lead us deeper into the reality of God. Spirituality is an intersection of these things in a more or less systematic way that helps us live our faith, get more out of it, and share it with the people around us, aiding us—with God’s help—to open and align our lives alongside God’s own hopes for this world.

At the heart of Anglican liturgical spirituality is *The Book of Common Prayer*. Some of what I say here can and should apply to any book of common prayer. However, since I am an Episcopalian living in the United States, I will focus specifically on the prayer book authorized in my particular part of the Anglican Communion, the Episcopal *Book of Common Prayer* officially adopted by the Church in 1979. My contention is that the prayer book has at its heart a pattern for Christian living, a rule of life that represents a deeply authentic and well-trodden path toward Christian maturity.

Now—does this mean that this book is only for Episcopalians? Actually, no. My belief is that the Anglican tradition and The Episcopal Church hold a treasure in trust for the larger Church, for that great mystical body of believers that transcends organizational structures and denominational lines. That treasure-in-trust is the liturgical life that flows from the prayer book with its balance of classic Christian elements: the Calendar, the Eucharist, and the Daily Office (Morning & Evening Prayer). I hope that any liturgical Christian will find this book to be a resource for their spiritual journey whether they use *The Book of Common Prayer* or not.

The title for this work comes from a prayer that is as old as the prayer book tradition itself. Near the beginning of the

English Reformation, an assembly of bishops created a new prayer book to be used by the whole country, replacing the Latin masses of the Roman Catholic Church and the many Reformation-inspired forms that were springing up. The leader of these bishops was the Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Cranmer. He had been experimenting with and composing English-language liturgies for many years, but King Henry VIII steadfastly refused to allow public services in any language other than Latin. Once Henry died and his young son, Edward VI, took the throne, Cranmer and his colleagues had the opportunity they had been hoping for: to present the English people with liturgies in their own language, liturgies in continuity with the services they had heard all of their lives (whether they had understood them or not), infused with a renewed focus on scripture.

While many of the prayers had been translated from the Latin sources, many others were newly composed and underscored the theological principles of the reformers. The brief prayer (or collect) for the Second Sunday of Advent was one of Cranmer's new compositions:

*BLESSED Lord, which hast caused all holy scriptures to be written for our learning; grant us that we may in such wise hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by patience and comfort of thy holy word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which thou hast given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ.*<sup>1</sup>

At the heart of these words is a desire for the scriptures to take root in human lives. This encapsulated the reformers' hope: to instigate a renewal of Christian life in England,

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<sup>1</sup> Joseph Ketley, ed., *The Two Liturgies, A.D. 1549, and A.D. 1552: With Other Documents Set Forth by Authority in the Reign of King Edward VI* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1844), p. 42.

grounded in the scriptures and mediated by the liturgies of the Church. This hope remains with us today. While the language has changed a bit, this prayer is still with us. Its position has shifted around a bit—it's appointed for a Sunday just before Thanksgiving now—but the longing embodied within it remains just as keenly felt now as centuries ago when it was first written.

It is still my hope, an Anglican hope, that the authorized liturgies of the Church serve as a vehicle to connect us to the deep wisdom of the Christian tradition, to its scriptures and teachings. By living the liturgies week by week, day by day, we do—literally—hear and read the Word of God. Eventually, with practice, we come to mark and learn the scripture. But it's that next step of the prayer that is critical: It's not enough to just learn holy scripture. We need to make it a part of ourselves, part of our being.

We have to inwardly digest it.

And that's my hope here. I'm trying to give you a pathway to the riches of our prayer book so that you can understand them more deeply. I am trying to infect you with some of my love for these texts—and not just the words on the page but the energies that can spring from acting them out in your life.

One last note—this book contains a lot of “we” and “us” language; hopefully not much “I” and “you.” That's not just a stylistic convention. Rather, it is born out of the conviction that this whole spiritual business that we're engaged in is a group activity. We don't—we can't—do it by ourselves and, indeed, trying to do it solo is frequently one of the warning signs that we're going off track. Instead, we practice our spirituality within a community of other people who are alternately supporting us, challenging us, frustrating us, and reminding us what authentic love looks like. This book took shape within the context of several such overlapping communities without which it could not have happened and

without which it would have been a much shorter and poorer work.

The most basic community that enabled it to happen is, of course, my family. My wife, Meredith, is an Episcopal priest as well as being a wonderful mother, a wise friend, and a faster runner than I'll ever be. She has put up with and pushed back on most of the thoughts in this book in one way or another, and they are stronger and richer for it. Our two delightful daughters, Greta and Hannah, relentlessly remind me to “keep it real” verbally and otherwise. Without the support of my family, none of this would have been possible.

The team at Forward Movement has been tremendous. Executive Director and Pamphlet Baron Extraordinaire Scott Gunn helped me hash out the shape and direction of this work. Richelle Thompson, Melody Wilson Shobe, and Nancy Hopkins-Greene were steadfast editors who helped improve the structure and content of the work in spite of my resistance. Michael Phillips has an incredible process for coming up with compelling and fitting cover art, and Carole Miller has a keen eye for detail and consistency in layout. And, of course, Jane Paraskevopoulos and the rest of the staff that authors rarely interact with keep the ship righted and moving forward.

Lastly, this book has already been profoundly shaped by its readers. Over a decade ago, I started a semi-anonymous blog and gave it the obscure, unpronounceable, and unspellable name of *haligweorc*. Hey, it made sense at the time. The blog was a creative outlet for me to write and think about things that had absolutely nothing to do with my doctoral dissertation. Over the years, the blog became a community of readers, writers, and responders who have helped me grow in my writing and my thinking. While many of the ideas in this book were informally worked out first on the blog, some of them achieved a more concrete form because of relationships created through it. Part of the first chapter grows out of a post

spurred by Jim Naughton when he was still running the online *Episcopal Café*. Parts of the seventh chapter started life as an address to the Society of Catholic Priests at the instigation of David Cobb and Robert Hendrickson.

Once the book concept became more clear, I blogged much of it as I went, and I owe a debt of gratitude to all of the readers who commented and improved what I wrote. In particular, Barbara Snyder, Christopher Evans, and Nicholas Heavens have been there from the start. Susan Loomis, too, continually pushed me to write more clearly and to remember for whom I was writing. Brendan O’Sullivan-Hale and Holli Powell, hosts of *The Collect Call* podcast, read and improved the chapter on collects. In addition to my Internet comrades, Brooke Watson and Steven Dalle Mura (my uncle-in-law) commented on every page in order to make this a better and more accessible work.

And finally, dear readers, I invite you to continue the conversations—in your homes, your parishes, and your Internet communities. I’ve renamed my blog to the more user-friendly *St Bede Productions* ([www.stbedeproductions.com](http://www.stbedeproductions.com)), and you’re always welcome to join us there.

Derek Olsen, PhD  
Feast of Saint Bede

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## CHAPTER 1

### FUNDAMENTALS

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## Keeping the Main Thing the Main Thing

My wife is, among other things, a coach with our local running club. Runners come to her and complain that they don't feel like they are making progress. Her first question is, "What's your goal?" Whether it's maintaining a certain pace for a number of miles, setting a new personal record for a given race, or losing a few pounds, there has to be a goal. Otherwise the idea of progress is a futile one! Whether they have a goal or not, she then asks to see their running log. Well—they haven't filled it out. Or they have, and it shows sporadic workouts scattered across a couple of weeks. Or the log shows consistency but no differentiation between types of workouts. With the log in hand, she can coach the runners to develop training plans that will help them get to their goal. She helps the runners establish a connection between their daily and weekly training and the accomplishment of their

longer-term goal. Then they understand: The training has to be tailored to the goal.

The practice and metaphor of physical training has been connected with the process of spiritual development since the ancient world.<sup>1</sup> It takes the same kind of discipline and consistency to progress in the spiritual life as it does in physical fitness. Indeed, the technical term for the theory and practice of spiritual development is “ascetical theology” taken from the Greek word *askesis* that simply means training. Paul taps into the language of physical training (and running specifically) when he speaks to the Corinthians of his own self-disciplines: “Do you not know that in a race the runners all compete, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win it. Athletes exercise self-control in all things; they do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable one. So I do not run aimlessly, nor do I box as though beating the air; but I punish my body and enslave it, so that after proclaiming to others I myself should not be disqualified” (1 Corinthians 9:24-7). Paul reminds us that we have to have a goal. Not only that, but also we have to understand and believe that our training is directly contributing to our attainment of that goal.

There is a disconnect between the way most people approach their spiritual lives and how they approach a project like getting in shape to run a marathon. When you’re working on such a project, there are concrete tasks to accomplish; there’s a goal to work toward, and success can be measured by progress against that goal. We don’t tend to think of prayer and meditation in the same way; you can’t see it taking shape—you cannot check off the workouts or mark off the dates on the calendar as the big day approaches. Yet just because spirituality cannot be easily measured does not mean that there aren’t steps toward progress. Anglican spiritual writer Martin Thornton reminds us that there is one true test

of an effective spiritual practice: Does it make me a more loving person?<sup>2</sup>

The use of “training” language doesn’t work for everyone; it’s not the only metaphor that the Church has used for this kind of work. If it doesn’t work for you, consider other metaphors. For example, one can speak of relaxing into the person of God, an approach that doesn’t use the language of effort and progress. This path recognizes that a relationship with God isn’t something we have to create; it already exists. It frames spiritual growth as a process of clearing away impediments that prevent us from experiencing this relationship as fully as possible. Another classic metaphor is that of healing. We are sick with sin and need to be restored to full health in our relationship with God and with all of creation.

I am using the training language because it has a long and significant history in the Church. I also think it is a concept that connects with many people in today’s world. Use the other metaphors if they work better for you. These three perspectives share three implicit assumptions: 1) God already loves us and is reaching out to us in a variety of ways, 2) the state that we are in now needs to be transformed by God, through God, and toward God, and yet 3) we have a role in this process as well. At the very least, we have to be attentive to the action of God’s graces leading us toward love and the practices of being more loving.

At the end of the day, this is what we are created for. We have been created in the image and likeness of God. At the beginning of our making, before even the first cells of our bones were constructed, God framed us in his own image. A God-shaped pattern lies at the heart of our being. As scripture and tradition have revealed again and again, God’s own character is rooted in love, justice, mercy, and fidelity. The psalms struggle to use the immensity of creation to



describe the character of God: “Your love, O Lord, reaches to the heavens, and your faithfulness to the clouds. Your righteousness is like the strong mountains, your justice like the great deep; you save both man and beast, O Lord” (Psalm 36:5-6). These same attributes of love, justice, mercy, and fidelity were woven into our being before the cords of our sinews were knit. Where are they now? As beings created to love and serve God and one another, are we in touch with this fundamental pattern?

Truthfully, we fall far short of the promise of God’s pattern for us. We don’t consistently manifest the characteristics that have been built into us. This is the result of sin. Through our own choices, through the choices of others, through the choices that society makes and heaps upon us, we lose sight of who and what we are. We invest ourselves in stories at odds with God’s story, stories about riches and success and fame where what matters is getting ahead. Or perhaps our stories are about needs and hungers and habits where what matters is quieting the cravings...until they kick up again. We invest ourselves in patterns of life, in ways of living, that are skewed from the pattern that God has laid down for us, patterns grounded in something other than love and faithfulness.

One central point of Christian spirituality, then, is to recall us to ourselves. It is to reconcile us to the God who loves us, who created us in his own image, and who cared enough for our redemption to take frail flesh and demonstrate the patterns of love, mercy, and justice in the person of Jesus Christ—patterns that led him through the cross to resurrection. In Jesus, in God’s ultimate act of self-revelation and of self-emptying for our sake, we have been called back; we can get in touch with the “us” that God originally created us to be. Therefore, the true test of a Christian spirituality is whether it helps us address this question and accomplish our goal: Are we free to love and to be who God created us to be?

But we can't stop there, either. The Christian enterprise isn't just about us individually. While God cares deeply about the redemption of each one of us, there is a much bigger scope in view here. God wills the redemption of all humanity, of all creation. Our spiritual work isn't just about being the best we can be—it's about participating in God's monumental effort to reconcile all creation back to the patterns of love, justice, mercy, and fidelity, back to the goodness that it had once and can have again.

To put it another way, Paul reminds us again and again in his letters that we have been baptized into the Body of Christ. He means this in a mystical sense—that we are connected to the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus—but he means it socially as well—that we are connected to the community of all the others who have been connected to Jesus as well, the Church. But being incorporated into the Body is the beginning of the process, not its end. It's not enough to be grafted into the Body of Christ if we don't share in the Mind of Christ, which is laid out in the Christ-hymn of Philippians: “Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross...” (2:5-8). Ephesians reminds us that this is the point of the whole exercise; Christian spirituality isn't just about you. Rather, your spiritual success is tied to everyone else around you. Indeed, that's the point of the Church: “To equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until **all of us** come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ. ...But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into

Christ, from whom **the whole body**, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love" (4:12-13; 15-16, *emphasis added*). We are not on this journey alone; our own spiritual maturity is tied up with how we model and encourage that maturity in others. Any spirituality or spiritual exercise that cuts us off or makes us feel superior to those around us is not being rightly used.

Thus, the goal of Christian spirituality is to bring the whole Body of Christ to Christian maturity. We do this by cultivating that maturity in ourselves, modeling it for others, and encouraging them in their own path. We build up the Body by using the gifts that we have been given. No matter how it may appear, Christianity is a team sport.

If that's the goal, then how do we get there? How do we measure our progress toward it? Well, this is a little more subjective. It is not like running; I can't see how I'm doing in the same way that I glance down at a running watch to check my pace or look at the path behind me to see how far I've come.

As Thornton suggests, the most reliable guide is an honest appraisal of how we treat those around us. Are we treating the inevitable provocations of daily life with anger and resentment or with patience and compassion? When I sit and ponder how my spiritual life is going, one of the best measures I know is to consider how my wife and kids might rate me. Am I being a more thoughtful and patient husband? Am I responding to their demands on my time in appropriate ways? And not just them. How would my coworkers answer the same questions?

The habits of devotion foster in us the habits of virtue. We are transformed—slowly and with a certain amount of inevitable backsliding—gradually toward the Mind of Christ. As disconnected as worship and virtue might appear from one another, both the wisdom of the Church and our own

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## AFTERWORD

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I ran across a quote a couple of years ago that I liked well enough to print out in big letters: “Discipline is remembering what you want.” The internet attributes it to a David Campbell, identified variously as the founder of Saks Fifth Avenue or perhaps a Canadian politician. Whoever said it, the statement certainly rings true for me. I would like to say that I hung that sign over the place where I keep my running shoes, but I’m pretty sure it is buried in a pile of papers in my office.

Tying on my running shoes and hitting the pavement is an act of discipline. Sometimes I run because I am able to keep the big picture goal in mind: to enjoy good health with my family for as long as I can. I hope, decades from now, to be able to play and run around with my children’s children as a result of embracing healthy habits now. Keeping this goal in mind helps me get out the door. But sometimes it’s a lesser, more frivolous reason that gets me going. Like vanity, I run when I realize that the scale numbers are starting to creep up as beach season is drawing near or pride, as I realize that my wife’s race times are getting better and better and mine aren’t. Or sometimes I simply feel the need for a break: to stop what I am doing and immerse myself in something different, to feel the sun on my face and the wind on my back. And, although I thought I would never say this, sometimes I run because I find it fun, something to be done for its own sake.

Picking up my prayer book, or firing up my tablet, for Morning Prayer is likewise an act of discipline. Sometimes I can see the end goal far off: a life drenched with the presence of God, a way of being where the recollection of God is a near-constant experience. Awareness of that presence lends a dignity, grace, and wisdom to my daily dealings and relationships. On my clearest days, I aspire to draw ever closer to the Pauline goal of praying without ceasing. But sometimes the lesser goals keep me on the path. Like trying to keep a good streak with the number of times I have said Morning and Evening Prayer without missing. Or dragging myself out the door to church despite the beautiful weather because I know I should, because going provides a good example for my daughters, and because I will enjoy seeing my friends at the parish. And yet the prayer book itself draws me to it as well: the poetry, the rhythms, the spiritual depths, the organic continuity with generations of Christians who have prayed these words before me. Truly the prayer book services are something that I love for their own sake, too.

Hopefully what we have done here together is a beginning. Hopefully it will inspire you to pick up your prayer book more frequently, more attentively, and with a deeper understanding of its ways and riches. With a clearer sense of why we do the liturgies, what those liturgies communicate to us, and what strategies they employ to draw us further into the life of God, we may move toward a deeper communion with one another and the God who calls and reconciles us.

At the end of the day, that is what all of this is about: more perfectly embodying the Gospel of Christ in love and patience and good cheer to those around us and encouraging them in the same path, so that the whole Body of Christ might—together—possess the Mind of Christ.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Derek Olsen is a biblical scholar and an active layman in The Episcopal Church. He earned a master of divinity degree from Emory University's Candler School of Theology and a master of sacred theology degree from Trinity Lutheran Seminary. He served as pastoral vicar of a large Lutheran (ELCA) church in the Atlanta suburbs before beginning doctoral work and being received into The Episcopal Church. He completed a doctorate in New Testament in 2011 from Emory University under the direction of Luke Timothy Johnson.

His chief areas of interest are in the intersection between scripture and liturgy, the history of biblical interpretation—particularly in the Church Fathers and the Early Medieval West—and liturgical spirituality. He served as the liturgical editor of the recent revision of *Saint Augustine's Prayer Book*, published by Forward Movement.

An information technology professional in the corporate sector by day, Olsen maintains an active online ministry of teaching and programming; he writes the *St. Bede Blog* at [www.stbedeproductions.com](http://www.stbedeproductions.com) and is the creator of the *St. Bede's Breviary* ([breviary.stbedeproductions.com](http://breviary.stbedeproductions.com)), a highly praised online resource for praying the Daily Office. He has written for *The Episcopal Café* and *Grow Christians* blogs, and his work appears regularly in *The Anglican Digest* and *The Living Church* as well. He is also one of the celebrity bloggers for *Lent Madness*, an online formation resource.

He currently serves on The Episcopal Church's Standing Commission on Liturgy and Music.

Olsen lives in Baltimore, Maryland, with his wife, an Episcopal priest, and their two daughters. In his spare time, he enjoys running, martial arts, cooking, and reading anything he can get his hands on.



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