



## Becoming Fully Awake *Living into the Rhythm of the Mission Prayer*

“Our minds like to put reality in compartments, with God there and we here and the rest of the world somewhere else. Sometimes we just have to remind ourselves that God’s presence is not reserved for any particular space. Though we may be more aware of God’s presence in one place than another, we need to remember that **WHEREVER WE LOOK, WHEREVER OUR ATTENTION GOES, GOD IS THERE.**”

–Gerald May, *The Awakened Heart*, 167.

### Invitation to a Daily Rhythm

You are invited into a rhythm of simple daily practice as a way of waking up to the Spirit throughout the ordinary events, rituals, and relationships of our day. Embracing this rhythm is a way of forming a *habit of attention* to God, self, and others. We might find that there are moments we are more aware of divine presence throughout days and also moments we are distracted or less awake. The goal of the practice isn’t to be hyper-vigilant all the time (which might sound exhausting) but to be *awake more often* to the God who is already present wherever we are. Intentionally pausing throughout our day reminds us of our intention to be more alert to God’s activity within and among us, and available to respond to the Spirit in a variety of ways. Gradually, our *natural way of seeing* ourselves and others will be through the lens of a Spirit-filled world.

### How do I become fully awake?

The whole world is sacred— as is everything within it and beyond it. Presence is an act of realizing the sacredness of life and of everything that exists. It is an act of awakening. It is a moment in which our eyes are suddenly opened, and we see what truly is *as it truly is*. Such inner alignment and purity of vision is hard to sustain, and so most of us quickly drop back into ordinary awareness and experience. But if we are attentive to it, each act of presence touches and heals us, restoring something of our lost spiritual perception. —David Benner, *Presence and Encounter: The Sacramental Possibilities of Everyday Life*, 34.

The mission prayer is a summons to be fully awake, but in the rush of daily life it can be hard to sustain attention to sacred presence. Most of us catch occasional glimpses of the “something more” that inhabits the ordinary activities and encounters of our lives. Becoming more fully awake is about developing a habit of catching glimpses more often. We find ourselves increasing in curiosity about where God is already at work in every person and place we encounter. These glimpses can be simple— recognizing the sacredness of our co-workers, sensing an opening for deeper conversation with a stranger or friend, appreciating the beauty of creation, taking the time to listen to a child, or pausing to take a breath in the midst of a busy day. Sometimes these will be powerful encounters of sacred presence. Sometimes they will feel disruptive and unsettling. Sometimes they will be a simple acknowledgement— a momentary glance— and then a return to the day’s work at hand. Practicing our habit of attention to God over time expands our capacity for noticing and responding to God’s movement in our daily lives.

## What does response look like?

“We are so busy, so occupied with many little things, that we are blind to the one great thing... But the glimpses keep coming. In the momentary emptiness when an addictive need is not yet satisfied, in encountering a situation in which we do not know what to do, in finding ourselves giving or receiving a touch of tenderness for no reason at all, in the spontaneous eruption of laughter, another small space opens. The invitation is given again. Time and again we ignore the invitations and fill the spaces immediately, dulling our consciousness with drivenness. But love continues, hoping to catch us in a willing moment. Thousands of little spaces come each day. They exist between the choice we make and the next, after each thought is completed and before the next begins, between each breath and the next, in every hunger or wanting, whenever something wakes us up to presence.

Now and then, through some mysterious interweaving of divine grace and human willingness, we see what is in the space and do not run away. We become aware of our hearts’ response and are given the most wonderful experience to act against our habits, to move beyond our conditioning... In looking for the spaces instead of avoiding them, we begin to notice more of them. We stay with them a little longer, and their tender atmosphere begins to spill over into the rest of our actions.”

—Gerald May, *The Awakened Heart*, 45.

The courage to respond grows in us as we pay closer attention to divine activity in our daily lives. Living into a new habit in the Spirit is about the slow work of transformation that occurs in us over time. The courage to respond may look like changing your mind about something or someone, taking the time to have a meaningful conversation, seeing a person more deeply, an act of reconciliation, or speaking out against an injustice. It could be as simple as looking others in the eye and offering words of gratitude. It might lead to time away to listen more deeply to the Spirit’s movement and invitation in your own life. Response to the Spirit is never just one thing. It can happen in a variety of ways. While we can easily become overwhelmed by the enormity of tasks that need accomplished, urgencies that claim us, and issues to be resolved, response to God’s Spirit is what happens when we pause to notice God’s presence and choose to act in alignment with that presence in whatever we are doing.

## Do I have to risk something new every day?

Some of us are tired. The idea of risking something new every day when life itself feels full, shaky, and ambiguous can feel exhausting! When we pray the mission prayer each day, we are not asking God to keep turning our worlds upside down (though that may be what happens from time to time!). We are offering our ongoing willingness to be open to the Spirit in our daily lives and encounters. Sacred risk might look like keeping our heart open to others in difficult conversation, being vulnerable in relationship, speaking to the person next to us in line, or even taking time to pray. In the moments we notice an opening of the Spirit in ordinary life, risk is about entering the opening even if we are hesitant, or don’t know what will happen, or feel we don’t have the time.

God does not demand that we stay busy with too many things but invites us to make ourselves consistently available to the One thing to which we are called and for which we most yearn. This is the good news of sacred risk. What may at first feel uncomfortable might actually be an invitation to co-create with God the world we most desire to part of— the peaceable kingdom of God on earth, where all people experience “wholeness of body, mind, spirit, and relationships.” In our daily lives, what are we invited to risk to live into this deeper vision and longing?

## How might I become blessing?

All I am saying is that anyone can do this. Anyone can ask and anyone can bless, whether anyone has authorized you to do it or not. All I am saying is that the world needs you to do this, because there is a real shortage of people willing to kneel wherever they are and recognize the holiness holding its sometimes bony, often tender, always life-giving hand above their heads. That we are able to bless one another at all is evidence that we have been blessed, whether we can remember when or not.

–Barbara Brown Taylor, *An Altar in the World*

Just as we catch glimpses of where God is at work in the world, we are invited to *be the glimpse* of where God is at work in the world. We can embody God’s love, justice, and blessing in small ways throughout daily living. Imagine how your life might become a “sanctuary of Christ’s peace” in your daily encounters with family, friends, coworkers, neighbors, and strangers. Waking up a little more to God’s presence in all places and people leads to a greater awareness of opportunities to share *and receive* God’s blessing of love and peace.

## AWAKEN, RISK, BLESS– A Daily Rhythm

*This is an example of what several intentional pauses throughout the day using the mission prayer might look like. Experiment with this rhythm in your own life and discover the sacred pauses in your daily life that help you wake up a little more to God’s presence and invitation in all things.*

### AWAKEN: Morning (2-minute prayer)

**Breathe.** Take a few moments to *wake up*. Give thanks for the gift of your life this day. Pray the mission prayer as a way of waking up to God’s presence.

*God, where will your Spirit lead today?  
Help me be fully awake and ready to respond.  
Grant me courage to risk something new  
and become a blessing of your love and peace.  
Amen*

### RISK: Mid-day (1-minute prayer)

**Breathe.** Pause in the middle of the day to return your awareness to your intent to be fully awake to God in all things.

### BLESS: Evening (5-minute prayer)

**Breathe.** Prayerfully reflect on your day.

*Where did the Spirit lead today? When was I most fully awake? When was I least awake?*

*When did I risk response to the Spirit through a new awareness, action, or way of being?  
When did I resist response?*

*When today did I receive or share the blessing of your love and peace? Amen.*