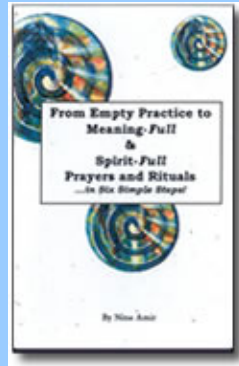


# How to Transform Empty Practices Into Meaning-*Full* and Spirit-*Full* Prayers and Rituals

These steps are excerpted from:



## **From Empty Practice to Meaning-*Full* and Spirit-*Full* Prayers and Rituals ...in Seven Simply Steps**

By Nina Amir

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- **These steps work no matter the religious origin of a prayer, ritual or practice.**
- **They work for anyone and everyone if used consistently and conscientiously.**
- **The work at home as well as in any house of worship or at work.**
- **They can be used for religious, spiritual or mundane rituals, prayers or tasks.**

Every time we perform a religious ritual, we create a sacred space into which we then invite the Spirit of the Universe. Every time we say a prayer we build a sanctuary so The One can come closer and dwell there with us. I liken this whole process to inviting a special guest – in this case a Divine Guest – to dinner. To make a prayer or ritual meaningful and spiritual, begin by imagining that each time you undertake a spiritual practice of any kind you are inviting God to dine with you. Then take the following steps:

**Step 1 – Spiritual Preparation:** Learning *why* we do what we do and finding personal meaning in the rituals.

Before we can begin a religious or spiritual practice, we must understand *why* we do what we do or say what we say. Discovering the *why* represents the first step in the process of creating *meaning-full* and *spirit-full* religious rituals. Without this preparation our words and actions will be meaningless – devoid of meaning or having less meaning than we would like. With little or no meaning, our rituals and prayers will not stir our spirits. When the meaning behind our words and actions touches our souls in such a way that we feel drawn to them, that we want to practice them and make them part of our life, then we know we are on the right path, the path to meaning-full and spirit-full religious observance.

When we perform rituals or say prayers that possess meaning for us, when they stir our soul, we are setting the stage for a spiritual – or spirit-full – experience. So, in the process of discovering *why* we do what we do and say what we say when performing rituals and reciting prayers, we discover which ones are meaning-full enough for us to commit to practicing them on a consistent basis for a length of time.

**Step 2 – The Sacred Place Setting:** Learning *how* to perform the rituals and practicing them until they can be done by rote or come naturally.

The second step towards creating meaning-full and spirit-full rituals and prayers, The Sacred Place Setting, involves learning *how* to perform certain rituals and *how* to say specific prayers. Very simple; we learn *what* to do.

If God were going to sit at your dinner table, you might want to know *how* to set the table “correctly.” You might want to know *how* to cook the meal you want to serve and to plan *how* you will serve it so you don’t stumble through putting a burnt, rather than a roasted, chicken on the table before your Divine Guest.

Once you know the *how*, you must practice, practice, practice. Perform the ritual or say the prayer until doing so becomes rote. Although this practice will feel empty at this stage, that’s okay. For now, just remember that you simply want to be able to say the prayer or perform the ritual without needing to think about *how* you are doing it.

**Step 3 – Creating the Meal:** Combining the *why* and the *how* to create a meaning-full ritual that feeds the soul.

By learning how to perform rituals and say prayers without thought – by rote – we create a “place” for *meaning* to reside. Now we can fill the space with meaning. We’ve set the table, we are ready to add the food – the personal meaning you have attributed to your spiritual or religious practice.

This is where the first step enters the picture again. As you perform your ritual or say your prayer, remember *why* you are doing what you are doing. When you go through the motions of your ritual, focus on the meaning behind each

action. Let your body move as if guided by something outside yourself while your mind concentrates on the reasons, the purpose, of those movements. When you recite the prayer that by now you have practically memorized, let the words flow as if channeled while your mind concentrates upon the meaning, the symbolism, the purpose of each of those words.

Now you've performed a meaning-full ritual, you've said a meaning-full prayer. And you should feel spirit stir within you.

**Step 4– The Divine Invitation:** Setting and expressing the *intention* to invite the Divine and to experience Its Presence.

Send an invitation to God by adding *intention* to the mix. Before you begin your ritual or prayer, think about what you want the “doing” or the “saying” to achieve. Most people looking for a spiritual practice perform rituals and prayers with a desire to feel close to the Spirit of the Universe. You might invoke God's presence by saying simply, “I intend to feel close to God,” or “I intend to feel connected to the Spirit of the Universe. With this prayer or ritual I invite the Divine Feminine Presence into my experience.” Say this, or something like this, strongly and emphatically before you begin your ritual. Take a deep breath and visualize what this would look and feel like, and then proceed with your ritual or prayer.

So, if your dream or goal is to have a spiritual – which is the same as a spirit-full – experience, you must focus on that as your intention. Be clear and single minded with your intention, and over time your goal will be achieved.

**Step 5 – The Finishing Touch:** Having *faith* that God will arrive.

When we create our Divine invitation, but we lack the *faith* that God will actually respond and show up at our rituals or prayers, our invitation remains unmet. It's hard to respond to a request for attendance at an event when you don't know the event is happening.

If we don't think God will show up at our rituals and prayers, if we don't believe we will have a spiritual experience or that we will feel the closeness or connection to a Higher Source that we desire, a high likelihood exists that we won't.

**Step 6 – Welcoming Your Guest:** Having the *courage* to let the Divine Presence into your experience.

To have a meaning-full and spirit-full experience while performing rituals or saying prayers, we must have the *courage* to let the Divine Presence into our experience. Opening the door to welcome our holy guest, however, requires courage – which most of us lack.

You might argue, “If what I've been seeking all this time was an experience of the Divine Presence, why wouldn't I run to open the door when

God arrives?” The fact of the matter is simple: Fear prevents most of us from actually having that spiritual experience we say we want most.

What are we afraid of? We are afraid of the experience of the Divine itself, of how such an experience might change us. We are afraid of God. We are afraid of ourselves. For if we are created in the image of God, meeting God can be likened to meeting ourselves – really meeting ourselves – for the first time.

If this is true, how do we then find the courage to open the door and face God? Remember that when we let the Divine Presence enter our lives and our experience, we complete ourselves. In other words, we allow part of ourselves, the part which we have felt was missing, to return. We allow ourselves to feel complete. So, rather than fearing this experience, remember that it is a chance to become all that you are, all that you can be.

**Step 7 – Enjoying the Company:** Taking the time to *experience* the Divine Presence and feel spirit-full.

We live in a fast-paced world. Our lives are rushed, harried and over scheduled. For many people, a daily prayer or meditation practice is squeezed into an allotted time slot, and a short one at that. This leaves little time to really *experience* anything, let alone to really feel the presence of the Divine in our lives.

If we go to the trouble of preparing for, inviting and welcoming in our Divine Guest, we should at least allow ourselves the chance to linger over coffee and dessert and maybe even to have an after dinner drink. In other words, don't rush off after completing your rituals or prayers. Allow yourself to simply sit, enjoy, experience what comes after you are finished. Allow yourself to feel, to sense God. Allow yourself to really experience what it means to have transformed an empty ritual or prayer into a meaning-full and spirit-full one. Allow yourself to experience yourself with the Divine, as part of the Divine, as Divine. Sit with the Divine Presence as if He or She were a dear, old friend come to visit.

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