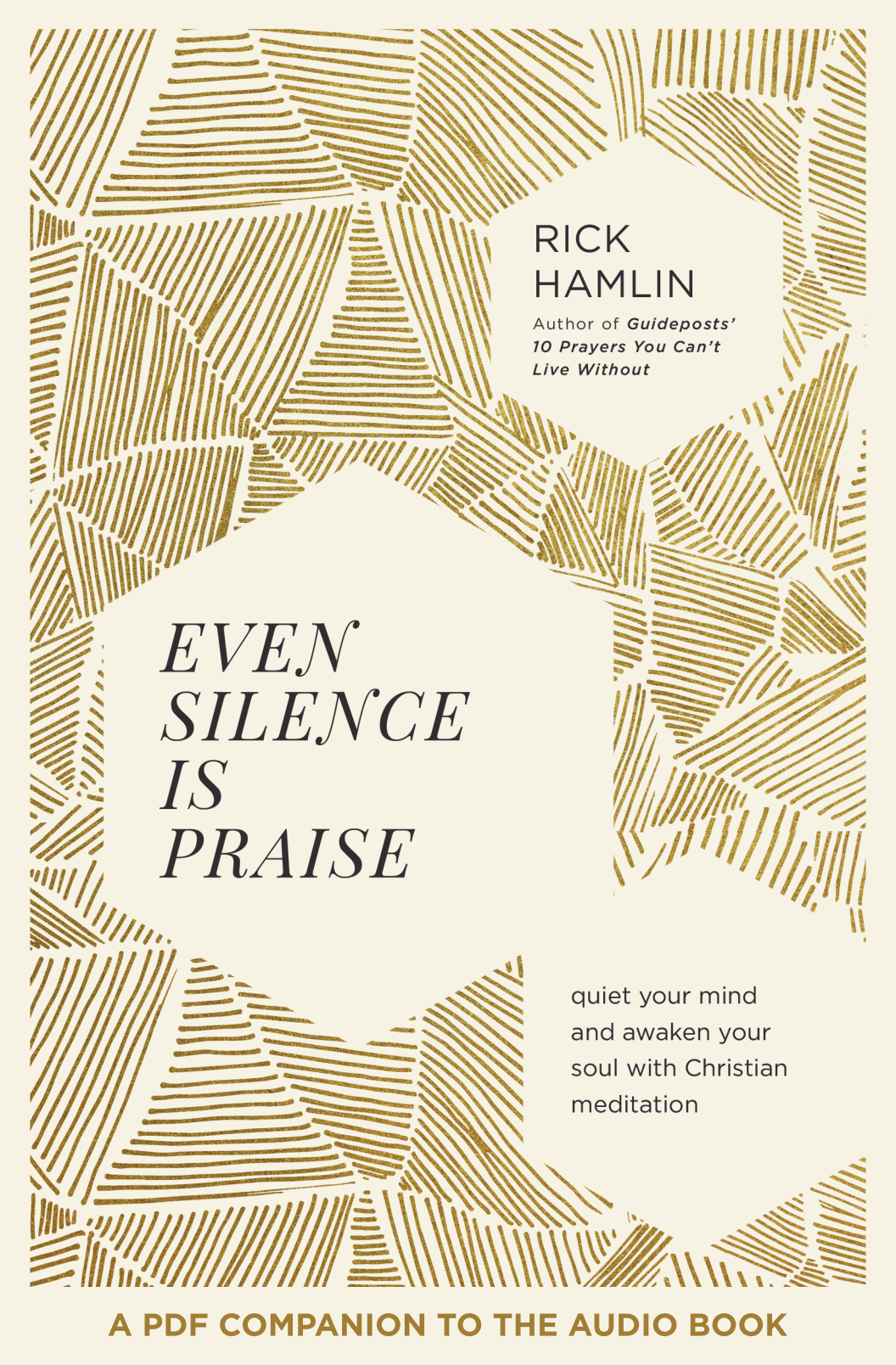




RICK
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Author of *Guideposts'*
10 Prayers You Can't
Live Without

*EVEN
SILENCE
IS
PRAISE*

quiet your mind
and awaken your
soul with Christian
meditation

A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIO BOOK

Even Silence Is Praise

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Appendix 1



Thirty Days of Prayer

Many of us—if not most of us—can find the prospect of meditation daunting. There are so many challenges, not the least of which is our own fear of failure. Fret not. Humility about the process can be your greatest friend. Your own insecurity is fertile ground. All it takes is a seed, that mustard seed. Here are a few ways you can plant those seeds in a day-by-day experience of self-nurture and delight in a thirty-day journey to move forward in faith.

Day 1. Listen. As a kid I used to wonder how those people in the Bible were able to listen to God. How did they do that? Then I'd hear my mom say, "You have to stop talking all the time and listen to me." Be quiet. Get silent. Schedule a time when you will be silent with God, even if it's just a few minutes. Then throughout the day, notice how the silence rings true.

Day 2. Find a place. God can find you anywhere. But it can be easier to pray if you go back to the same place again and again, making it your holy place, even if it's just an old easy chair or a corner of your bedroom. It's your sacred space. Choose it. Bless it with a prayer or two. Then sit there—or lie there—and make it your own. All the external stimuli will be your call to worship.

Day 3: Try a word, one word. It might be something from Scripture. *God, love, mercy, hope, Jesus, sin, forgiveness.* Use it to focus your mind. There's a lot going on in your head. So much noise. Silence has revealed that to you. The word you choose will

be a way to bring you back to the heavenly from your worldly concerns and fears. Find the power in a word.

Day 4: Be in comfortable silence. Loved ones can communicate without saying a word, just by being in each other's presence. It's the same for you. God is present, and you're making yourself present for God. There might be a thousand thoughts going through your head, but you don't have to say a thing. The shared silence is a mutual blessing. Think of how much it must mean to God.

Day 5: Notice the distractions. You've been doing this for five days now, and it bothers you how easily distracted you are. Not just the noise outside your window but the stuff that flies through your brain. Hear it; see it; notice it. Then let it go. In prayer. If you resist the distraction, it will only get bigger. If you pay attention to it, you can do something about it. Give it over to God.

Day 6: Turn to a psalm. The Psalms are a rich resource. Too often I find myself simply reading them rather than praying them. Your prayer time is a chance. Take just one line of a psalm and meditate on that. Or make it shorter each time you say it. "Be still and know that I am God." "Be still and know that I am . . ." "Be still and know . . ." Till you get to "Be . . ." with God.

Day 7: Rejoice in your humility. Jesus tells the story of the publican and the Pharisee, the latter full of self-congratulatory prayers, the publican feeling inadequate, asking for God's mercy as he approaches the temple. Whom does Jesus single out? The latter. "Blessed are the poor in spirit," Jesus said (Matthew 5:3). The poor in spirit. That's a place where you are much blessed. Go with it.

Day 8: Breathe a prayer. God gave us humans the breath of life. Using your breath in a prayer is a way to reconnect with that. Breathe in the love of God. Breathe out those negative emotions: fear, anger, frustration, worry. Hold on to the love of God with each breath, then let it go as you let go of those things that get in the way of that love. You can breathe such little prayers all day.

Day 9: Give to others. Let your meditations open you up to the opportunities. A need will pop into your head, a concern, a way to help. A phone call you can make, an email to send, an encouraging word to pass along, a check to write. We express our faith both vertically and horizontally, looking to the heavens and giving to our neighbors. Both are forms of prayer.

Day 10: Let go of the self-criticism. My head can be full of words of self-congratulation and just as full of niggling critiques. Sometimes I wonder if the former is an attempt to make up for the latter. Prayer is an opportunity to reset. If God can forgive me for my failures, why can't I? We are to love our neighbors as ourselves—*as ourselves*. "Forgive me, God," I pray.

Day 11: Praise God. Praise is rich, fulfilling, and good for the soul. It's a chance to give credit and thanks to God for all the good things that have come your way. Come up with five things that you are especially grateful for. Write them down. Hold them in your head. Then praise God. As we used to say at church camp: "Rub-a-dub-dub, thanks for the grub, yeah, God!"

Day 12: Don't look at the clock. You might start worrying about how much time this is taking. You might yearn to open your eyes and check the clock or your phone or your watch. Two ideas: set a timer to keep track of the time so you don't have to,

and set your phone on “do not disturb” for that time. You’re going into a place beyond time and space (and your watch).

Day 13: Pray through anger. It’s perfectly natural to have moments of anger when you pray. Don’t run away from them. You might replay some perceived injustice—from yesterday or from long ago. It might still infuriate you. Don’t bury it. Notice it. Express your anger, even if it might be addressed to God. God can take it. Then experience God’s infinite forgiveness and love.

Day 14: Keep at it. We often call it the practice of prayer—*practice* being the operative word. Sometimes you’ll wonder if you’re getting anywhere or growing at all. It seems like so much work. Why bother? Remind yourself: trying to do it *is* doing it. In prayer, the trying *is* the doing. You cannot fail. Practice makes perfect because the practice *is* perfect.

Day 15: Let your light shine. “You are the light of the world,” Jesus said (Matthew 5:14). Let it shine. The brightest lights in our home are hooked up to electricity. Guess what? That’s what you’re doing every day: plugging yourself in to the power source. Picture that source. God’s light is there, waiting to illuminate you as you linger in prayer. Plug in.

Day 16: Pray without ceasing. The apostle Paul’s admonition to “pray without ceasing” can feel intimidating (1 Thessalonians 5:17). How do you pray in the middle of a busy day? Getting into the habit is what gets you there. The words you use, the powerful silence you have given yourself, can be called upon in little bits and bursts throughout a day. God’s love is without ceasing.

Day 17: Pray for others. “Hold a good thought” is how my father put it. Holding a good thought is enough. It’s more than enough. Your compassion for whatever someone might be going through—a scary surgery, marital troubles, financial losses—is

part of that prayer. Your compassion will stay with you long after your prayer time is over. Those good thoughts will be passed along.

Day 18: Change the world. Did you not realize that's what you're doing? We change the world by changing ourselves, by growing. Each day of prayer is a step toward that. Picture all the other people who are doing the same thing as you are. Countless souls. We might not see each other or hear each other, but God hears all of us together.

Day 19: Go for a walk. A prayer walk. Get in touch with the Creator by taking a meditative walk in the creation. Stare at the sky, the clouds, the trees, the grass. Breathe the air. Don't listen to a podcast. Don't make this a time to call a friend. Just walk and feel the wonder of creation. Let yourself be transformed and inspired by that.

Day 20: Acknowledge any pains. You are sitting quietly in a meditative moment—and all at once you can feel that ping in your back, something you've been ignoring for a while. Notice it now. Ask God to be part of your healing. Maybe it's something you need to see a doctor or a physical therapist for. They are collaborators in your healing. With God.

Day 21: Go without words. Can't even find the words to pray? Not even sure what to put before God? As Paul reminded us, "The Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words" (Romans 8:26). Being wordless is a powerful place to be when you let the Holy Spirit do the work. That's what prayer is: letting God take charge.

Day 22: Notice the noise. Every morning when I sit on the sofa, trying to get quiet, I can hear all sorts of noises. Birds chirping, cars going past, a dog barking, a distant siren. We

talked about how distractions can only get bigger if you ignore them. It's the same with those noises. You hear the birds? Think of what Jesus said about them. Hear that siren? Pray for any souls in distress.

Day 23: Hear the world's suffering. It can be overwhelming at times. But I'm reminded of how the women who stayed to the end, watching the crucifixion (how awful that must have been), were the first to see the empty tomb, that sign of the resurrection. When sadness and mourning interrupt your prayers, know that we worship one who suffered and suffers with us.

Day 24: Repeat your prayers. A concern, a need, a difficulty, a challenge can linger and force us to come back to God over and over again with the same desires, the same request. That's not bad. Persistence is everything. Be like the importunate widow in Jesus' parable (Luke 18:1–8). Stick with it. The asking is what brings us to this godly place again and again.

Day 25: Lose your life for God. “For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it,” Jesus said (Mark 8:35 NRSV). Losing track of your agenda, your long list of things to do? Good. The list will be there when you're finished with this time. You're in the prayerful daily practice of losing yourself.

Day 26: Think about death. You didn't really want to, but death popped into your head. Your own death. The death of a loved one. The mortality we all face. Take this as an opportunity to make each day count, each day matter. “Make each day your masterpiece,” said legendary basketball coach John Wooden. Facing your mortality is a gift to be found in prayer.

Day 27: Love the Lord your God. The first and greatest commandment: to love the Lord our God “with all your heart and

with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind” (Luke 10:27). It’s so simple and so great. How do you show someone your love? You spend time with them. You listen to them. You do what they say. You enjoy their presence, as you are doing with God.

Day 28: Don’t give up. The pleasures of meditation and prayer are never over. Nor are the challenges. When and if you stumble into what is called the dark night of the soul, know that it’s an opportunity, not a dead end. God will reveal what’s beyond that dark night, the sunrise that’s happening already. As you let go of what is finite, you uncover in prayer what is eternal.

Day 29: Tap a prayer. In your silence, with your eyes closed, you might try this. Using the fingers of one hand, tap at your heart, your free hand, a knee, your cheek. This cues you to external expressions of an inner prayer: to feel God’s love (the heart), to find your strength (the hand), to let go (the knee), to forgive (turning the other cheek).

Day 30: Be bold. As the old expression goes, “Be bold, and mighty forces will come to your aid.” Be bold in love, be bold in service, be bold in creativity, be bold in prayer. The impossible is only possible with God. That’s what you’re finding out. We are all co-laborers with God. And God can do the most for us when we step out in faith. Make that your prayer.

Appendix 2

*Snippets of
Psalms to
Turn To*

Give ear to my words, O LORD; give heed to my sighing.

—PSALM 5:1 (NRSV)

Guard me as the apple of the eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings.

—PSALM 17:8 (NRSV)

You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble.

—PSALM 32:7 (NRSV)

As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God.

—PSALM 42:1 (NRSV)

Be to me a rock of refuge, a strong fortress, to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress.

—PSALM 71:3 (NRSV)

Restore us, O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved.

—PSALM 80:3 (NRSV)

O sing to the LORD a new song; sing to the LORD, all the earth.

—PSALM 96:1 (NRSV)

Do not hide your face from me in the day of my distress.

—PSALM 102:2 (NRSV)

For your steadfast love is higher than the heavens, and
your faithfulness reaches to the clouds.

—PSALM 108:4 (NRSV)

With the LORD on my side I do not fear. What can mortals do to me?

—PSALM 118:6 (NRSV)

Teach me, O LORD, the way of your statutes, and I will
observe it to the end.

—PSALM 119:33 (NRSV)

I lift up my eyes to the hills—from where will my
help come?

—PSALM 121:1 (NRSV)

Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD. Lord, hear my
voice!

—PSALM 130:1–2 (NRSV)

Your name, O LORD, endures forever, your renown, O
LORD, throughout all ages.

—PSALM 135:13

Let everything that breathes praise the LORD! Praise
the LORD!

—PSALM 150:6