

How to Pray

What?

Prayer is talking with God. Love desires relationship. Prayer is the place where we become aware of the heart of God and share our heart with Him. Richard Foster states that in prayer, “God is inviting you into the place of deepest intimacy, where we know and are known to the fullest.”

We are called to pray and God shows that prayer has great value. Millard Erkeson notes, “prayer is more than self-stimulation. It is not a method of creating a positive mental attitude in ourselves so that we are able to do what we have asked to have done. Rather, prayer is in large part a matter of creating in ourselves a right attitude with respect to God’s will. Prayer is not so much getting God to do our will as it is *bringing our hearts in line* with God’s will and that His will be done.”

The Apostle Peter tells us to “cast all your cares on Him because He cares for you.” You are loved by God. In prayer we become mindful of the presence of God - sharing time with our great Love and Savior.

Why?

My sheep know me and listen to my voice. Jesus says, “I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me.” John 10:14

Jesus, our Shepherd, is speaking to us. He speaks that we might know Him and that He might guide, protect, and lead us in this world as we walk by faith. Reuben Torrey in his book *How to Pray*, gives many reasons why we should pray: because through prayer we resist the devil, we obtain what we need from God, it is the pattern given to us by the apostles, It was central and prominent in the earthly life of Jesus, because even now Jesus is interceding for us (Hebrews 7:25), through prayer we receive grace and mercy, it is the means of obtaining the fullness of God’s joy, prayer with thanksgiving sets us free from anxiety unto peace that passes understanding, by prayer we are kept watchful and alert to Christ’s return, and because God works in prayer to shape us, bring power into the work of our hands, and bring all other blessings to Christ’s Church.

We were made for the presence of God. Just as Adam and Eve walked and talked with God in the garden, so our hearts need the awareness of the presence of God. In prayer we practice the presence of God.



Bible reference:

“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.” - Colossians 4:2

“And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.” - Ephesians 6:18

“Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise.” - James 5:13

“Pray without ceasing,” 1 Thessalonians 5:17

A quick introduction to Prayer

Prayer is conversation with God. There are many types and modes of conversation. There are many ways we can order and structure our thoughts and time with God in prayer. In prayer we praise, thank, request, confess, listen, learn, lament, and remember. There is not one right way to pray. We pray in many ways in accordance with Jesus’ words in Matthew 6:5-13, and Hebrews 11:6 “And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.” In the additional resources section you can find help learning about these types of prayer.

At the core of it all, is the question that the disciples asked Jesus, and we ask it today. “Teach us to pray.”

When the disciples asked Jesus to teach them how to pray, he crafted a meticulous, memorable, rhyming prototype.

The Lord’s Prayer are words we can actually say – and when we repeat these familiar lines, we echo the words of Christ himself, alongside billions of Christians throughout time, all over the world.

This prayer given by Jesus can be used in two quite distinct ways:

As a model. The Lord’s Prayer serves as the ultimate prototype. It is a condensed liturgical poem clearly intended for frequent repetition. It teaches us what to pray.

As a map. The Lord’s Prayer guides us as we express the things in our hearts. Each line can be applied and expanded in personal conversation with the Father. It teaches us how to pray.



Do it: How to pray the Lord's Prayer

The Lord's Prayer as a model: knowing what to pray

The Lord's Prayer is the most famous prayer in history, crafted by Jesus himself. This prayer tool will unpack its significance and demonstrate how it can be used as a model and a map.

It was traditional for rabbinic bands at the time of Jesus to have their own unique creedal prayer. John the Baptist's followers seem to have had such a prayer because, when Jesus' disciples asked, 'Lord teach us how to pray,' they added 'just as John taught his disciples.' (Luke 11:1)

They weren't just asking Jesus for a few good prayer tips. They were also saying 'We need a statement of faith!' This makes the Lord's Prayer the earliest Christian creed, given to us by Jesus himself some three centuries before the Council of Nicaea.

As such, it is our primary doctrinal foundation for life and faith, well worth repeating regularly so that its foundational truths can slowly shape our hearts and our minds.

An easy way to build the Lord's Prayer into your regular routine is to set a daily reminder for midday.

This will be annoying. That's the whole point. It will interrupt your relentless busyness with a reminder to pause and put first things first, to focus for a minute on what you most truly believe.

Understandably, some people worry that mechanical recitation might turn into the kind of 'vain repetition' that Jesus explicitly warns us against, just before he gives the Lord's Prayer in Matthew 6.

Clearly it's important that we don't recite the Lord's Prayer mindlessly, or treat it superstitiously- but rather use this powerful prayer to shape our lives and earth our beliefs.

The Lord's Prayer as a map: knowing how to pray

The Lord's Prayer is also a map that helps us to pray our own prayers from the heart. When Jesus said, 'this then is how you should pray,' he was telling his disciples to use it more as a guide than a destination.

Many people find prayer difficult. We get distracted and struggle to know what to say. But praying the Lord's Prayer is a simple answer to these problems.



'Our Father' prompts us to pause and pray for our families.

'Hallowed be your name' is an invitation to worship.

'Let your Kingdom come' is an opportunity to request help for the particular people, places and situations on our hearts.

'Give us this day our daily bread' invites us to pray about our most practical needs.

'Forgive us our sins' is a challenge to name the ways in which we have sinned.

'Lead us not into temptation' calls us to seek the Lord's leading on how we can live as His disciple in the world today.

Prayed in this way, each phrase of the Lord's Prayer becomes an invitation to embark upon our own declaration of adoration, petition, intercession, confession and spiritual warfare.

Books on Prayer

- The Lord's Prayer – William Barclay
- Prayer - Robert Foster
- Fifty-Seven Words That Changed The World – Darrell W. Johnson
- Praying the Lord's Prayer – J.I. Packer
- The Lord and his Prayer – Tom Wright
- How to Pray: A simple guide for normal people – Pete Greig

