



# Prayer

*Conversing with God about what we are doing together.*

## **What is Prayer?**

At its core, prayer is a conversation with God. The goal of prayer is not prayer itself. The goal of prayer is to connect with God - to talk to Him and to commune with Him.

If you were to hang out with a friend over coffee, go on a date with your significant other, or spend time with your kids, the goal of conversing with them is not to simply say some words and check off a box. The goal is to connect and commune. You want to spend time with someone you care about and who cares about you.

The same is true in prayer. Prayer is about connecting and abiding with someone who loves you deeply and invites you to love Him in return.

Prayer is two-directional. We talk to God. We bring to Him our requests, our suffering and pain, our joy and praise (Philippians 4:6, James 5:13, Psalm 150). We go to Him as the good Father that He is (Matthew 6:7-8) and we go to Him even when we aren't sure what to say, trusting the Holy Spirit knows what to pray (Romans 8:26-27).

But prayer is not simply talking to God, but it is also learning to hear from God. And the good news for us as His people is that God speaks! He speaks to us in His created world, in His Scriptures, and through His Son who took on flesh, Jesus Christ (Psalm 19, John 1:1-18, Hebrews 1:1-3).

## Helpful Tools and Tips

### **DISTRACTION FREE:**

Put away phones, laptops, or anything else that could cause a distraction while you are communing with God. Try to find a quiet place where you can be alone with God. Don't be discouraged if your mind starts to wander in prayer. If you find yourself thinking about other things (work, family, to-do's, sports, or anything else really) while you are trying to pray, take a second to give those thoughts, concerns, and cares to God, then continue on in prayer. Some people find it helpful for them to walk while they pray. While for some this practice may be creating more distractions, others find it is helpful for staying awake and staying focused on the Lord.

### **PRAY WITHOUT CEASING:**

1 Thessalonians 5:17 tells us to "pray without ceasing." In addition to any set times of prayer, begin to make it a habit or routine to try and pray throughout the day. Use various markers throughout the day to remind you to stop and pray short prayers to God (think 5-10 seconds). You can make it a habit to pray every time you stop at a red light, every time you take a sip of your morning coffee, or some other intentional reminder. You may even find it helpful to set reminders on your phone to set off an alarm at various points in the day to stop and pray.

### **PRAYING FOR YOURSELF:**

In our prayer lives, most of us default to either primarily praying for others or primarily praying for ourselves. We want to have balance in our Christian lives, because the Bible commands and invites us to do both. The Scriptures are full of invitations for us to present our own requests and needs to God in prayer (Philippians 4:6, 1 Peter 5:7). If you find yourself unable or not wanting to pray for yourself, stop and ask God to reveal any pride or shame within you. Often pride keeps us from praying for ourselves because we don't think we need God in the everyday moments of our lives. Shame can also keep us from praying for ourselves because we believe we are outside the care, love, and providence of God.

### **PRAYING FOR OTHERS:**

Just like the Bible calls us to pray for ourselves, there are also countless examples of commands and invitations to pray for others as well. We are called to pray that others might be healed (James 5:16), that they may share the gospel with boldness (James 5:16), and to pray for our enemies (Matthew 5:44). Talking to God about others is a great privilege of Christian community.

# PRACTICES

## **Practice #1 - PRAYING THE LORD'S PRAYER:**

In Matthew 6 Jesus teaches His disciples to pray. This prayer of Jesus has been a hallmark of the Christian church throughout history, commonly referred to as The Lord's Prayer. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said, "Pray then like this:

*"Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name.  
Your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread,  
and forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil."*

*-Matthew 6:9-13*

When Jesus says, "pray like this", He doesn't mean we simply need to recite these five verses every time we pray (although learning and reciting this prayer is not a bad practice). Rather, this is a model to show us how to approach God our Father in prayer. A helpful practice is to take 15-20 minutes and pray using these phrases within the prayer as prompts to lift our hearts to God in various ways. This can be done in a group or as an individual.

### **"Our Father in heaven..."**

- Take a moment to be quiet and remind yourself that God is a good Father who loves you and wants you to know him.
- Thank God that he has welcomed you into his family through his Son, Jesus Christ

### **"Hallowed be your name..."**

- Spend a few minutes praising God for who he is. "God, you are holy, loving, just, etc."
- "God, I pray that you would be hallowed (honored/treated as holy) in my life, community, neighborhood, city, church, family, workplace, world, etc."

**“Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven...”**

- Take a moment to reflect: What would it look like for God's Kingdom to break into your world? Spend a few minutes asking for God's will to be done in your city/church/community/relationships/life.
- What areas of your life are you wrestling with God for control over? Consider giving that over to God. A simple prayer of, “Your will be done in \_\_\_\_\_,” is a great place to start.

**“Give us this day our daily bread...”**

- Spend a few minutes praying for specific needs in your life or that of your community.

**“Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors...”**

- Spend a few minutes asking God who you need to grant forgiveness to and who you need to be reconciled with (sometimes you may need to make a phone call or send a text before moving any further with the prayer).
- Confess your sins to God and ask Him to forgive you.

**“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.”**

- What specific temptations or trials do you need God's help to overcome? Pray about these things. Ask God to help you bring these before others so they can walk with you in fighting these battles.

**Close by Reading/Reciting the Lord's Prayer**

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For yours is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever. Amen.

## **Practice #2 - BREATH PRAYER:**

A breath prayer is a short prayer that helps you quiet yourself and hear the voice of God. It's exactly what it sounds like: a prayer that can be said in a single breath. It helps us quiet our souls before the Lord in just a single moment or a few minutes. It helps us center our thoughts and our hearts back on God, His truth, and His reality even in the midst of chaos of our lives. Learning to practice breath prayer is a great way to work towards praying without ceasing.

Here's a great way to start:

- Take a moment to breathe deeply.
- Choose a short phrase from Scripture or a line from a hymn. For example:
  - "Speak Lord, for your servant is listening" (1 Samuel 3:9).
  - "There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1).
  - "Nothing shall separate me from the love of God" (Romans 8:39)
  - "Let me hide myself in Thee" (from the hymn 'Rock of Ages')
  - "He cares for me" (1 Peter 5:7)
- Inhale deeply and then say the phrase as you exhale.

The goal of this practice is not simply to parrot a phrase. The goal is to focus your mind and your heart on the beauty of your Father and His love for you. It's the start of a deeper journey into the heart of God and the truths of His Word.

### **Practice #3 - PRAYER OF EXAMEN:**

One of the gifts of prayer is that it brings us into further awareness of God's presence and activity in our lives and in our world. Surrounded by the hectic pace and busyness of our world and our lives, it is easy to go through days, weeks and months without pausing to see God's gracious hand working in the midst of our lives. The Prayer of Examen helps us reframe our reality around God and recognize His sovereign working.

Examen prayer is meant to be done at the end of the day. We set aside time (we recommend 10-15 minutes) before going to bed to reflect and remember (or examine) that day's moments and our experiences of them. As this becomes our practice at the end of our day, over time, the Spirit will help us be more present to ourselves, others, and most importantly to God during the day as well.

Work through these five steps as you practice examen prayer:

#### **1. Recognize God's Presence**

Hebrews 10:19-21 reminds us that, through Jesus, we have confidence to draw near to Him. In prayer, we actively step into the presence of God not in intimidation or guilt but in relational communication. He delights in spending time with you. Take some time to slow your mind down, let your body relax, and as you step into His presence, ask God to give you clarity and understanding as you review your day.

#### **2. Review the Day**

Walk through your day from morning to evening. What did you do today? Who did you talk to? Ask yourself these questions:

- **Delight:** What brought delight to you today? Where did you experience beauty?  
Give God thanks for these things.
- **Presence:** Where you most aware of God's presence through the Holy Spirit today? Where did you see Him at work in your life?  
Give God thanks for these things.
- **Repent:** In what ways did you choose sin over God today? In what ways did your life not align with God's will?  
Ask God to forgive you for these things.

#### **3. Resolve**

Ask God to give you Spirit-filled guidance and power to be more aware of His

presence tomorrow. You may even consider writing down specific next steps as a reminder.

#### **Practice #4 - 'ACTS' FRAMEWORK:**

There are many ways we can approach God in prayer throughout the Bible. At various times in our lives and in our days we need different things from God and need to say different things to Him. Some of us tend towards only praying when we need something and only bringing God our requests. Others of us only give God praise but feel too needy if we ask Him for things.

This acronym helps us to have balance within our prayers as we commune with God. Work through the acronym 'ACTS', allowing each to be a prompt for prayer.

**Adoration** - Give God praise and honor for who He is as Lord over all.

**Confession** - Bring your sins to God and ask Him for forgiveness.

**Thanksgiving** - Tell God what you are grateful for in the world and in your life.

**Supplication** - Ask God for the needs of others and yourself.



## RESOURCES

The following are recommended resources if you would like to journey further into developing a prayer life of communion with God:

- [\*A Praying Life: Connecting with God in a Distracting World\*](#) by Paul Miller
- [\*Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God\*](#) by Tim Keller
- [\*Recapturing the Wonder: Transcendent Faith in a Disenchanted World\*](#) by Mike Cosper
- [\*With Christ in the School of Prayer\*](#) by Andrew Murray