

How should I pray?

Communicating with God

Our prayer life begins at the moment we come to a genuine acknowledgement that we are a sinner in need of God's grace. In that life-changing moment we call upon the Lord, asking Him to forgive us, cleanse us and make our lives new through the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross. True communion with God must begin with repentance (turning in a different direction) from our sins and recognising that Jesus alone can save us from the power and consequences of sin in our life.

“--- God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son.” (1 John 5:11)

Eternal life is a new dimension of the life we are now living; our spirit has been made alive by the Holy Spirit, and now we have a desire to communicate with our Father God.

“(God) --- even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), And raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” (Ephesians 2: 6,7)

Before we received Jesus as our Saviour we perhaps brought requests to God in times of distress or for selfish motives. He may well have answered the former in His goodness, but we need to understand the truth that David spoke of in **Psalm 66:18** – ***“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear.”***

Above all, the Lord responds to honest and open hearts, whether we are coming to Him for the very first time or further on in this journey of faith with Him.

So, we can see that prayer is a communication between our Father God and His children, just as a new-born child communicates with his parents, at first simply crying out for his needs to be met then gradually sharing at a deeper level his feelings, aspirations and observations. Finally, as a young adult in a good, healthy relationship with his parents, he is able to understand their needs and find ways to partner with them and contribute to the relationship in a more self-giving way.

Listening to God

It has often been stated that communication in a marriage, and indeed in any close relationship, is vital for its growth. So we need to see prayer as a two-way experience.

*How do you feel when, in conversation, people leave no room for your views and comments?
How do you think we should approach prayer with this in mind?*

Read Isaiah 55:1-3

As you spend time with God in prayer this week, allow Him to speak to you and write down anything you feel that He is saying to you, about your own life or someone else whom He may prompt you to pray for.

What Jesus taught us about prayer

We all know what is called 'The Lord's prayer', and this encapsulates Jesus' teaching on prayer to His disciples, but first of all let's look at His **example** of prayer:

Luke 6:12 - He prayed all night on the mountain. He was alone with God.

Luke 9:28 - He took His disciples and went out on the mountain to pray.

Mark 10:16 – He laid His hands on the children and blessed them.

Read Matthew 26:36-46 - In what way will we be weakened if we do not pray?

2.

The prayer that Jesus taught – (Matthew 6:5-15)

- Firstly Jesus tells us to find a place alone; God will meet us in ‘the secret place’.
- Let your prayers be simple and fresh – from the heart to your heavenly Father. Avoid a ritualistic approach.

“In this manner...” tells us that this is the **pattern** for our praying; Jesus didn’t intend it to be repeated word for word, as so often happens. (However, on occasions we may feel that we want to pray using His exact words)

In these verses Jesus outlines seven major topics, each representing a **basic human need**:

1. **The paternal need:** **“Our Father...” (v.9)**

As we come to pray, we can be sure that all our needs are met by the benevolence of a loving Father.

2. **God’s presence:** **“Hallowed (set apart, holy) be Your Name.” (v.9)**

We enter His presence with praise, confident in the knowledge that we are cleansed by the blood of Jesus.

Read Hebrews 10:19-25

3. **God’s priorities:** **“Your kingdom come ...”(v.10)**

Declare that His kingdom shall be established in your personal life, and in the lives of your family, church and nation.

4. **God’s provision:** **“Give us this day our daily bread”(v.11)**

Jesus, our all – sufficient Saviour, told us to pray daily, asking Him to supply all our needs.

5. **God’s forgiveness:** **“And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.” (v.12)**

We need God’s forgiveness and we need to forgive others. Make a daily choice to walk in love and forgiveness.

6. **Power over satan:** **“And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.”(v.13)**

Pray a hedge of protection around yourself and your loved ones; take up the armour of God.

7. **Divine partnership:** **“For Yours is the kingdom ...”(v.13)**

Praise God for sharing His kingdom, power and glory with you.

The prayer of agreement

Though we need to take time to pray alone with the Lord, there is also a place for praying with another person or a group, which not only encourages our faith, but is a powerful means of bringing God’s kingdom purposes into those areas which concern us. This can start with praying for one another and loved ones, but will extend beyond that to our community, nation and world, as we are willing to be led by the Holy Spirit.

“Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven.

For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.” (Matt. 18:19-20)

In the book of Acts we see that fervent and persistent prayer is a prominent feature of the early believers’ life together.

For further reading look up these verses:

Psalm 91: 9-12; Psalm 100:4; Ephesians 6:14-18; John 17

Finally, here in a nutshell – a definition of prayer expressed in joyful simplicity:

“Prayer means pouring out your heart to the Father with complete confidence and infinite trust in His fatherly love.” (Basilea Schlink)

