



# Prayer

## *A Practical Guide<sup>i</sup>*

There is no one right way to pray. This is why Jesus didn't introduce the Lord's Prayer by saying, "Pray these exact words," but instead said, "Pray then LIKE this."<sup>ii</sup> So, please don't view the information in this guide as the "final word" on prayer meant to restrict you, but as a "first word" on prayer meant to liberate you. Let this be a launching pad to help you soar in prayer as a vessel uniquely designed by your Heavenly and Holy Father. Below are a few frequently asked questions, suggested practices, and resources to help you do just that.

### **1. How often should I pray?**

In his model prayer, Jesus teaches us to pray for our "daily" bread.<sup>iii</sup> This strongly implies that prayer should, at the very least, be a daily habit. Beyond that, Scripture doesn't explicitly command how often we should pray, even though it does give us examples of different daily prayer habits. Below you'll find outlines for twice-daily prayer: once in the morning and once in the evening. However, the most important thing is to find a rhythm of consistent, daily prayer that works best for you in your unique circumstances and season of life.

### **2. How long should I pray?**

The Bible does not explicitly teach us how long our prayers should be. Some of the prayers recorded in the Bible are lengthy, while others are short. Remember, Jesus taught that our Father doesn't hear us simply due to heaping up "many words." He also already knows what we need before we ask.<sup>iv</sup> The primary purpose of prayer is to come to know our Father better and experience His love and power to change us. Like communication in any loving and healthy relationship, there is a sense in which genuine, heartfelt prayer will never be too little, but also never be enough. Don't beat yourself up for not praying long enough, but also don't be afraid to linger in the presence of your Father.

### **3. What do I pray for?**

The Lord's Prayer is a great guide for knowing what to pray for. That model prayer can be broken into 5 different categories. We should pray for...

- God to be honored for who he truly is. (Hallowed be Your name)
- God's kingdom to spread and His will to be done. (Your kingdom come, Your will be done)
- Our daily material needs. (Give us this day our daily bread)

- Our daily spiritual needs. (Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who have trespassed against us)
- Protection and rescue. (Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil)

To better understand how to pray for those things or what words to use when praying for those things, it is very helpful to pair Bible reading with your prayer time. That's why the outlines below all include some sort of Bible reading and meditation at the beginning of the prayer time. If you don't know where or how to start reading the Bible, you may consider using a Bible Reading Plan, Bible Reading App, or daily devotion book. Check out the resources at the end of this guide for some ideas.

Also keep in mind that while prayer must include a focus on your personal needs, it should also be a time to focus on the needs of others. However, because there are so many people in our lives with so many needs, praying for them can quickly become overwhelming. To help lighten this burden, it may be helpful to pray for different groups of people on different days of the week. Here's one example:

- Mondays: Family and friends
- Tuesdays: Church family and church leaders
- Wednesdays: Your local community/state and their leaders
- Thursdays: Your nation and its leaders
- Fridays: Other nations and their leaders

#### **4. A Pattern for Daily Prayer**

The outlines below are just two of countless numbers of ways to help you structure your prayer time and avoid the feeling of being lost or distracted. Feel free to customize and adjust these outlines in a way that works best for you. Above all, remember that prayer is ultimately a conversation of love between you and your Heavenly Father, so allow yourself room to be spontaneous and sincere in what you say to Him, especially as the Holy Spirit moves you in response to His Word.

Morning Prayer (25 minutes)	
<i>Approaching God</i>	Remember the gospel. Acknowledge to God that, in and of yourself, you don't deserve access to Him, the Holy and Heavenly Creator, Sustainer, and Judge of the Universe. But through faith in Christ and what he did on the cross and by the Spirit of adoption dwelling in you, you are grateful for the privilege of approaching Him boldly as your Father. Ask Him to help you pray, speak to you as you pray, and make you aware of His presence and love. <i>**You may also find it helpful to listen to/sing a worship song to prepare your heart and emotions to meet with God**</i>
<i>Bible Reading, Meditation, and Introductory Prayer</i>	Read a portion of Scripture and think about what it means. Consider asking 2 questions about the text: 1) What does this tell me about God? and 2) What does this tell me about myself or other people? If it's helpful, write your answers to these questions in a journal. Then take these thoughts and turn them to God into prayer. Begin by praising God for who he is as revealed in the Scripture passage and then pivot to

	praying for yourself based on what you learned from the Scripture passage.
<i>Paraphrase the Lord's Prayer for Yourself</i>	<b>**If you feel like your prayer time from the previous section was sufficient, you can skip this section.**</b> Re-word the different petitions of the Lord's prayer to focus on you and your unique circumstances. Think about it like this: How can you better honor God's name as holy? How can his kingdom and will be done in your life? What do you need Him to provide you with today? What sins do you need to confess and who has wronged you that needs your forgiveness? In what areas of your life do you need God's rescue, guidance, strength, or power?
<i>Pray for Others</i>	Ask God to meet the needs of other people. Try to incorporate themes that you learned during your Bible reading time. Because there are so many people with so many needs, you may want to pray for different groups of people on different days of the week. See the "What do I pray for?" section above.
<i>Closing Prayer</i>	Once again, remember the gospel. Give thanks to God for having access to Him as Father through the work of His Son and His Spirit. Remember what you learned about God from your Bible reading time and praise Him for those things.

Evening Prayer (15 minutes)	
<i>Approaching God</i>	Remember the gospel. Acknowledge to God that, in and of yourself, you don't deserve access to Him, the Holy and Heavenly Creator, Sustainer, and Judge. But through faith in Christ and what he did on the cross and by the Spirit of adoption dwelling in you, you are grateful for the privilege of approaching Him boldly as your Father. Ask Him to help you pray, speak to you as you pray, and make you aware of His presence and love. <b>**You may also find it helpful to listen to/sing a worship song to prepare your heart and emotions to meet with God**</b>
<i>Psalm Reading and Meditation</i>	Read a Psalm or portion of a Psalm (try to limit this to no more than 15 verses). Consider asking 2 questions about the text: 1) What does this tell me about God? and 2) What does this tell me about myself or other people? If it's helpful, write your answers to these questions in a journal.
<i>Paraphrase the Psalm</i>	Take the thoughts from your reading and meditation time and turn them to God in prayer. Since the Psalms are often written as prayers, you can just pray the Psalm itself by re-wording it to fit you and your unique circumstances.
<i>Closing Prayer</i>	Once again, remember the gospel. Give thanks to God for having access to Him as Father through the work of His Son and His Spirit. Remember what you learned about God from your Bible reading time and praise Him for those things.

## 5. Additional Resources for Prayer

- Books
  - [\*Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God\*](#) by Timothy Keller
  - [\*The Songs of Jesus: A Year of Daily Devotions in the Psalms\*](#) by Timothy Keller
  - [\*In the Lord I Take Refuge: 150 Daily Devotions through the Psalms\*](#) by Dane Ortlund
  - [\*Morning and Evening Devotions\*](#) by Charles Spurgeon
  - [\*The Valley of Vision: A Collection of Puritan Prayers and Devotions\*](#) edited by Arthur Bennett
  
- Bible Reading Plans
  - [One Year Navigators Plan](#)
  - [Robert Murray M'Cheyne Plan](#)
  - [Bible-in-a-Year](#) (available through the YouVersion app)
  - [Every Word in the Bible](#) (3 Year Plan)
  - [One Psalm-A-Day](#)
  
- Bible Reading/Study & Prayer Apps
  - Read Scripture ([Apple](#) or [Android](#))
  - YouVersion ([Apple](#) or [Android](#))
  - OliveTree ([Apple](#) or [Android](#))
  - [Biblical Training.org](#) ([Apple](#) or [Android](#))
  - Daily Prayer by RethinkMe LTD ([Apple](#) or [Android](#))
    - This app is based on the Church of England's Book of Common Prayer and features a number of pre-written prayers. Use these to help stimulate your own prayers, rather than merely reciting them as a substitute for your own prayers.

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<sup>i</sup> Many of the ideas and practices in this guide have been adapted from Keller, Timothy. *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God*. New York, 2014.

<sup>ii</sup> Matthew 6:9

<sup>iii</sup> Matthew 6:11

<sup>iv</sup> Matthew 6:7-8