

## HOW TO PRAY

### What Is Prayer?

*“Now Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples said to him, “Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.” Luke 11:1 ESV*

Many often say that prayer is just talking to God as you would to anyone else. It’s true that a relationship with God contains many of the same ingredients as our other relationships. But there is at least one unique factor: we can’t rely on the senses of sight, sound or touch to connect with God.

Perhaps the best place to begin is by making clear that prayer is more about talking with God than just talking to Him. What you believe about God and your relationship with Him is fundamental to how you will learn to talk with Him. God is ready and willing to listen because He knows you and wants to be known by you.

### Why Should You Pray?

People pray for all sorts of reasons. To be a Christian is to believe God invited you into a personal relationship with Him and to accept that invitation. Saying that you can experience being a Christian in the way God intended without learning to pray is like saying you can be happily married or have a deep friendship without regular communication. But maybe the question is not why should Christians pray, but why should they want to?

Here are four great reasons why you might choose to pray as a Christian:

1. You want to tell God how much you love Him and why.
2. You need to say “I’m sorry” for specific actions or attitudes.
3. You want to thank God.
4. You want to bring a concern about your life or someone in your life to God and invite Him to help.

### How Do You Pray?

- You can sit, kneel, stand or walk around when you pray. God will hear you whatever you do, so choose a position that helps you focus.
- Start by addressing God directly in a way that acknowledges the uniqueness of who He is to you. “Father God,” “Heavenly Father” or “Almighty God.” ...are some commonly used.
- Depending on how comfortable you feel or what kind of situation you are in, you will choose whether to pray out loud or silently.
- Anytime and anywhere can work, but it’s good to find a distraction-free time and place if possible. God deserves your focused attention, and you might find it harder to listen to Him in a busy place.
- A common way to end a prayer is by saying, “In the name of Jesus, amen.” God is choosing to be present in your life. Most importantly, He is the only one with the authority and ability to answer your prayers. This common ending is a respectful reminder of who God is.

## **What Should You Pray For?**

Whatever is on your mind matters to God, because you matter to Him. As you develop the habit of praying, over time you will gain a sense of what things God is talking to you about and what He thinks is worth your attention.

*But if you're ever in doubt, pray like Jesus.*

Jesus' closest friends, the men he focused most of his attention on, faced the same problem we do. So, they asked Jesus to teach them how to pray. The result is the best-known prayer in human history — what we call the Lord's Prayer. Matthew 6:9-13 (ESV)

*"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."*

## **Ways to Develop Your Prayer Life**

*"Call to me and I will answer you and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known."  
Jeremiah 33.3(ESV)*

Do you see prayer as a monologue or a dialogue? Many books on healthy relationships describe communication as the cornerstone. Many say that the hardest part of communication isn't what you need to say, but how well you need to listen.

Most of us never hear from God audibly. And yet many people claim God speaks to them. So how does that work? If you're looking for a formula to get God to talk when you need it most you might be disappointed. But here are three ways that may help you on your way to a habit of prayer.

*Write them down* - For some, praying out loud enables us to clearly communicate with God. Others may find that as we write out our prayers, our thoughts become clearer.

*Schedule time with God* - Jesus' closest relationships on earth were built as He walked with people day after day. Many develop deep friendships doing things side by side rather than talking face to face. So why not schedule some time to connect with God the way you would with anyone else you value?

*Pray with Others* - Think of someone you know who talks about God's tangible presence in their life. Ask if you can pray together. While time alone with God is vital to our spiritual growth, God Himself tells us that when two or more gather to focus on Him, something special happens.

*"For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them." Matthew 18:20 ESV*