

How Do I Pray?

Six Ways to Help You

**Reinvigorate Your Prayer Life
or Get Started for the Very First Time**

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Introduction



I know *why* I should pray, but sometimes I just don't know *how* to pray.

As ReFrame Ministries' Prayer Coordinator, these are words I've heard often over the years. Have you ever said these words to yourself? I know I have. My first piece of advice is "don't overthink it." Prayer doesn't have to be complicated. It's an intimate conversation between you and God. And there is no single right way to do it. But sometimes trying a new approach to prayer can reinvigorate your prayer life. That's why we've created this collection of ideas, strategies, and methods to help bring new life to your practice of prayer.

We often think of prayer as something we do. We pray to God. However, God is actually the one who initiates prayer. He acts first by placing the desire to pray on our hearts. When we pray, we're responding to God's invitation and call.

We find an amazing picture of God's initiating love in Genesis 3. Just after Adam and Eve sin, God calls out to his children and initiates a conversation:



Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" ([Genesis 3:8, 9](#))

Here, in the midst of their disobedience, God reaches out to Adam and Eve with compassion, asking questions and listening. In this interaction, even as God explains the consequences of their rebellion, he offers Eve and Adam that very first promise of restoration and forgiveness ([Genesis 3:15](#)).

Wherever you are today, and whatever obstacle you are facing, God is reaching out to you and inviting you to pray. We hope the six ways to pray found in this ebook will help you faithfully respond to God's call and offer you:

- Inspiration for those seasons when prayer feels like a heartless chore
- Creative energy if your habit of prayer has run bone dry
- Reassurance that God hears your prayers even when you may feel unworthy
- Encouragement that when you pray, God will answer

Together, "Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need" ([Hebrew 4:16](#)).



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Praying Through Scripture



I lift up my eyes to the mountains—where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth. ([Psalm 121:1-2](#)).

The testimony of Scripture assures us of God’s faithfulness. This particular psalm reminds us that the Lord is our helper. When we are in need, we can take anything to our Creator God in prayer. But sometimes we don’t know where to start. Like glasses improve imperfect vision, examining our needs and concerns through the lens of Scripture helps us see our situation from God’s perspective. Praying through Scripture can give us words to pray when situations and people weigh heavily on our hearts.

Consider this brief list of common prayer needs and see how Scripture can guide your prayers:

Prayer for a loved one who is not walking with the Lord:

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe ([Ephesians 1:18-19a](#)).



Prayer for employment, job challenges, and co-worker issues:

We are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do ([Ephesians 2:10](#)).



Prayer for struggles with addiction, temptation, and sin:

No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it ([1 Corinthians 10:13](#)).



Prayer for healing:

Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective ([James 5:14-16](#)).



Prayer if God says “No” or “Wait”:

Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me ([2 Corinthians 12:8-9](#)).



Prayer if you feel unloved:

For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord ([Romans 8:38-19](#)).



Prayer if you feel attacked or overwhelmed:

I love you, Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I called to the Lord, who is worthy of praise, and I have been saved from my enemies ([Psalm 18:1-3](#)).



Take a moment and reflect on your prayer life. Ask yourself: “How often do I recall God’s promises from Scripture when I pray? Do I directly connect prayer requests to God’s biblical promises?”

The Bible assures us that God loves us and knows what is best for us. The lens of Scripture significantly improves our vision, giving us confidence to lift all of our requests to God. He will always be our help in his perfect time, in his perfect way. As you pray through Scripture, rest in the assurance that your “help comes from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth” ([Psalm 121:2](#)).

ACTS Prayer

Sometimes, all we need to kickstart our prayer life is a little structure. One simple tool is the acronym ACTS. This acronym helps us remember four major postures of prayer and it places them in order of importance, creating a natural flow for our prayers.

Adoration

We start our prayers with worship. Adoration means to praise God, to celebrate who he is and what he means to us. For example, we might pray, “God, you are loving and care for me,” or “I praise you because you are powerful and holy.” Sometimes it may be helpful to recite a favorite Bible verse. We might pray the words of [Psalm 100:5](#), “The Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.”

Confession

From worship and adoration, we move to confession, admitting to God our sins and failures. What sin is keeping you distracted from growing in your faith? Who do you need to forgive? Who or what—instead of God—are you depending on for comfort and guidance? When we confess our sins to God, we open ourselves to God’s forgiveness. “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness” ([1 John 1:8-9](#)).

Thankfulness

Confession frees our anxious minds to move confidently into thanking God for all he has done for us. Again, the psalms provide guidance on offering prayers of thankfulness. Let the words of [Psalm 107:9](#) inspire your gratitude: “He satisfies the thirsty and fills the hungry with good things.” If you created a list of everything you are thankful for, what would be your top ten? Could you create a different “top ten” every day for a week?

Supplication

Lastly, we ask God for help. Supplication includes asking for help in the meeting of needs, direction for action, and intervention (or intercession) on behalf of others. When we pray, we humbly go before God with our requests, trusting that he listens to every word and will answer in his perfect way and time. [Psalm 86:6-7](#) tells us why we bring our requests to God: “Hear my prayer, Lord; listen to my cry for mercy. When I am in distress, I call to you, because you answer me.”

Whether you are a seasoned prayer warrior or just getting started in your prayer life, we hope that the ACTS prayer acronym will help keep you focused and serve as an everyday guide for your prayers.

The Prayer Hand Method

Similar to ACTS prayer, the Prayer Hand is a simple and easy method: use the five fingers of your hand to help you remember five essential elements of prayer. There are different versions of the Prayer Hand method, but this is the one I learned as a child and that I still use today.

Praise

Start with your index finger. Just as an athlete might point to heaven to give God the credit for a big play, this finger reminds us to praise God, to adore him, to tell God what he means to us. For example, "I praise you, God, for being the Creator."

Confession

Second, comes the middle finger, the finger of confession. As the longest finger on our hand, it reminds us of the length and depth of our sin and selfishness and our vast need for God's forgiveness. We might confess, "Forgive me, God, when I lose my temper."

Intercession

The third, or ring finger, is the finger of intercession. Just as we might put a ring from a significant other on our ring finger, this finger reminds us to pray for others. We might ask, "Father, please protect Christians around the world who are persecuted for their faith."

Petition

The fourth, or pinky finger, is the smallest finger on our hand and is a countercultural reminder to think of ourselves less. We are to pray for our own needs, to petition God on our own behalf. For example, "Please God, give me financial wisdom and help me be kind to others."

Thankfulness

Last is the thumb. It represents thankfulness. Notice how the thumb has the dexterity to touch each of the fingers on the hand. When the thumb touches each of our other fingers, we are reminded to rejoice and be thankful in every aspect of our prayer life—our praise, confession, intercession, and petition.

When you feel stuck in your prayer life or feel like you don't know what to pray, look to your hands. By lifting our hands in prayer we can remember to lift our praise, confession, intercession, petition, and thanksgiving to God.

Alphabet Prayer

Our prayers can often become merely a list of our wants and needs: “heal my knee,” or “help me financially.” While it is important to pray for our needs, we must not forget to ground our prayers in worship and praise for God. It is easy to ask God for blessings, but it can be harder to create a thoughtful prayer of praise and adoration. In his book, *The Air I Breathe*, Louie Giglio writes:

“What a miraculous thing that we’re invited to respond to this incredible God... How can it be that God is infinite in being and power, yet you and I can touch him? We can touch his heart. We can cause joy to come to him. Cause him to smile. We can bring pleasure to God. Make him happy. Your worship matters to God (p. 69).”

Giglio reminds us how important our worship is to God. But have you ever prayed an entire prayer and not asked for anything? Praying prayers of worship, or adoration, can be incredibly affirming and help us trust in God’s love and promises. An easy way to begin a prayer of praise is to create a list of God’s attributes using each letter of the alphabet. For example, “God, you are **A**wesome. Lord, you are a **B**eautiful Creator. Father, you are **C**aring. God, you are **D**ivine.” You get the idea.

Try to finish the list in one sitting, and pray over the entire list. Or pray one letter’s praise a day for 26 days. What attribute can you come up with that starts with the letter Q? How about X? The Alphabet Prayer method seems simple, yet it really makes you think deeply about God’s character as you search for just the right words to praise and adore him. As we list God’s attributes, our praise not only affirms God’s majesty and power, but it also calms our anxious hearts, motivating us to keep praying, knowing that God rejoices in our praises.

The Alphabet Prayer method can also be helpful if you’re struggling with other aspects of prayer, like praying for others or creating a prayer of thankfulness. While praying for ourselves may come naturally, investing time and intention into praising and thanking God—and lifting up the prayers for others—will not only deepen your prayer life but also draw you closer to God and his heart for our world.

Prayer Circles

Sometimes I have difficulty knowing where to start when life's busy schedule distracts me from prayer. Recently, I learned a visual tool that has helped me focus my prayer time when I'm feeling stressed or scattered: concentric circles.

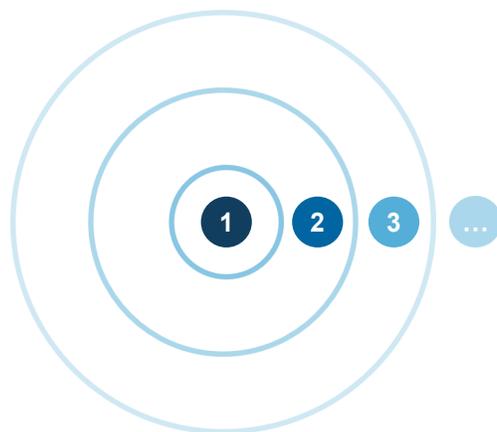
In his [Desiring God](#) blog, Pastor John Piper shared how he uses a model of concentric circles to guide his prayer. The smallest, inner circle represents his own soul. The largest, outer circle represents God's entire world. He starts by praying for the smallest circle and then incrementally moves outward, praying for each circle along the way. He explains:

I pray for my own soul first. Not because I am more deserving than others, but because if God doesn't awaken and strengthen and humble and fill my own soul, then I can't pray for anybody else's. So I plead with the Lord every morning for my own soul's perseverance and purification and power.

Start by praying for yourself as you worship God and confess your sins. After this first circle, pray for each of your family members by name; pray for their safety and that they will seek after God's heart. In the next circle, pray for your friends, neighbors, and co-workers. Pray for their needs and that you will have many opportunities to share Jesus' love with them. Next, pray for your spiritual leaders, church, missionaries, political leaders, and so on.

Visualize as many concentric circles as you feel led. It may be helpful to create prayer circles on a sheet of paper and to write down who you are praying for and what circle they belong in.

We hope that the prayer circles approach will be a guide that helps you focus and order your prayers as you grow deeper in your love for God and his people.



Breath Prayer

Breath Prayer is an ancient Christian practice of uttering simple and repeatable phrases that can be spoken in one breath. Paul's instruction to "pray without ceasing" ([1 Thessalonians 5:17](#)) means that prayer shouldn't be confined to set times of the day, such as at meals or bedtime. As the name implies, we pray these short prayers as we breathe. Breath Prayer enables us to pray while we are doing other things; it is as much an act of worship as it is prayer. For example, when I'm busy or I feel stressed, anxious, afraid, or even bored, I often pray a breath prayer. "Peace, be still" ([Mark 4:39](#)). This focuses me, calms my heart, and reminds me that God is ever-present in the chaos of my day.

I experienced the value of breath prayer once while hiking with my family in the Rocky Mountains. The path was steep and strenuous, and my exhausted kids kept asking to turn back. But I pushed us to keep going—toward the promise of a beautiful view at the top of the trail. With each breath (and step farther up the mountain) we prayed, "Beautiful creator God." Our focus turned from fatigue and frustration to the majesty of our God. Finally reaching the top, we all enjoyed the vista of a crystal clear lake glistening between the trees. Our fatigue forgotten, we marveled at the handiwork of our beautiful creator God.

Breathing God's Word

Here are some examples of breath prayers from Scripture:

- "Lord, have mercy" ([Matthew 15:22](#))
- "God, here I am" ([Isaiah 6:8](#))
- "Father, your will be done" ([Matthew 6:10](#))
- "Holy Spirit, speak; I am listening" ([John 16:13](#))
- "Know that the Lord is God" ([Psalm 100:3](#))
- "Trust in the Lord with all your heart" ([Proverbs 3:5-6](#))
- "Alleluia, Amen" ([Revelation 19:4](#))

Can you think of any other short, repeatable phrases from Scripture that you can pray in one breath?

As you climb through your strenuous day, use breath prayer to remember what you are pursuing: our beautiful creator God who always keeps his promises. Take a moment and cheerfully give each breath to God as you "pray without ceasing."

More Resources

Looking for more resources to renew your prayer life?

Books:

A Guidebook to Prayer: 24 Ways to Walk with God by MaryKate Morse. Copyright 2013, published by InterVarsity Press.

Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God by Timothy Keller. Copyright 2014, published by Penguin Books.

The Air I Breathe: Worship as a Way of Life by Louie Giglio. Copyright 2003, published by Multnomah Books.

From ReFrame Ministries:

[The Value of Praying the Scriptures](#). By Deb Koster

[Prayer: Heart to Heart with God](#). Devotional Series by Peter Hoytema



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