

LEARNING HOW TO PRAY – HOW DO I START?

How do I start learning how to pray? The first thing we need to know is that prayer is simply talking to God. Don't make it more complicated than that! It's our direct line to Heaven. Just as our close relationships are maintained by spending time together, so is our relationship with Jesus. There are no magical formulas, no specific format or time. Prayer is having a conversation with God about anything, everything, anytime, and anywhere.

Here are some simple steps to structure your prayer time using the acronym **ACTS**.

- **Adoration**: Spend time praising and worshipping God. Acknowledge who He is. Praise Him for His attributes of faithfulness, goodness, power, mercy, and love. *"I will praise him from the bottom of my heart: 'LORD, who can compare with you? Who else rescues the weak and helpless from the strong? Who else protects the poor and needy from those who want to rob them?'" (Psalm 35:10).*
- **Confession**: Confess your sins to the Lord, because He always forgives you. Confession is a daily cleansing exercise. *"But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong" (1 John 1:9).*
- **Thanksgiving**: Give thanks to the Lord for the many blessings He has given us. Thank Him for the big and small things in your life. These are the blessings that we easily take for granted. *"Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good! His faithful love endures forever" (1 Chronicles 16:34).*
- **Supplication**: Present your requests to God. God is our Father and He is delighted when we come to Him with our requests. *"Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done" (Philippians 4:6).*

The above steps are examples of the many ways we can learn how to pray. Some people like to get up early in the morning to pray, while others prefer night time. People enjoy talking to God while they take a walk, and others like to write silent prayers into journals. Many read Bible passages and turn them into prayers. When needs arise in the middle of our busy days, we can whisper a short prayer and God will hear.

I believe that God honors us when we come to Him as we learn how to pray. Prayer takes a whole new meaning when we realize that Christianity is a relationship, not a mere religion. Relationships are strengthened through sharing. Prayer strengthens not only our faith, but our love relationship with Jesus. The only key to an effective prayer is prayer itself. *“Remain in me, and I will remain in you. For a branch cannot produce fruit if it is severed from the vine, and you cannot be fruitful apart from me” (John 15:4).*

The Lord’s prayer in Matthew 6:9-13 give us an example as to how we should pray. Let’s break it down and see what we can learn.

"Our Father in heaven" -- *We need to always acknowledge first and foremost who we are talking to. He (God) is our heavenly Father. We address Him with respect just as we should address our earthly father with respect. He is the only true God who created all things in this universe, including ourselves. He loves us and we need to show our love for Him.*

"Hallowed be your name" -- *We must see Him as being holy, sanctified, consecrated; worthy of praise, honor and glory!*

"Your kingdom come" - *We acknowledge His coming kingdom. We pray that Christ will soon return and establish His earthly kingdom where we will reign with Him for eternity.*

"Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" -- *We need to be praying for His will to be done in our lives, so that we might bring glory to Him here on earth as He is also glorified in heaven. We need to do things His way, instead of selfishly doing our own things to satisfy our own desires.*

"Give us today our daily bread" -- *We should ask our Father each day to provide for our needs, just as He promised in His Holy Word. His Word says that we don't have, because we don't ask. Of course, we must first know God through His Son, our personal Lord and Savior. If we don't know Christ, God won't acknowledge this request for daily provision.*

"Forgive us our debts (or transgressions) as we also have forgiven our debtors (transgressors)" -- *This speaks about forgiveness among our associates, neighbors, friends, family and loved ones. Any and all persons in our lives that we come in contact with in social or business situations are included as well. If we can't forgive others, how can we expect our heavenly Father to forgive us?*

"Lead us not into temptation" -- *We need to ask our heavenly Father to help us recognize every evil thing, every temptation before us. We need help to stay focused on our Father and see the evil that we might fall into, for what it is really is, a trap set by Satan to bring us down to his level.*

"But deliver us from the evil one" -- *Help us, dear Father, to steer clear of that liar and deceiver. Let us see clearly the path that you want each of us to walk. By the power of the Holy Spirit that dwells within us, may we never stray from your will and way...*

Lord's Prayer - A Glorious Ending

Some commentators believe that the end of the Lord's Prayer - **"For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever"** - was added by someone other than the original writer. Whether that's true or not, this last phrase simply emphasizes more

praise and glory to God the Father - so it's absolutely biblical... a glorious ending to a model prayer to God!