

# Getting Started

Asking how to pray is a bit like asking how to breathe - it is something we often do without even noticing. There are no right or wrong ways to pray, we just need to find the way that works best for us.



So, let's get started by finding...

**A place.** Try to find a special place where you can pray. Sometimes it's good to pray with other people, but often we will pray by ourselves. This might be in a quiet place at home, or out in the open or on a journey. Some people like to walk or run whilst praying, others like to sit still and be undisturbed. Try out different places and see what works best for you.

**A time.** It can be good to pray at the start of a day, so that we can prepare ourselves in prayer for the day ahead, yet praying at the end of the day in order to reflect upon all that has taken place can also be helpful. You can also pray during the day when you are faced with a situation in which you need to ask God for help or to remember someone in need or to give thanks to God.

**A way.** Prayer is very simple - sometimes even a sigh or an expression of regret can be a simple way to turning to God in prayer. Prayer is just talking to God and trying to receive what He wants for our lives. You can sit or kneel (a sign of reverence) or even stand or walk around. Closing your eyes and listening to the silence can help us to experience God's presence with us. Imagine that Jesus is sat across the room from you - what would you like to ask Him or say to Him? You can talk out loud to Him or else just in your head.

Often, He will speak to us through our own thoughts and imagination or else He will make us aware of something around us that provides the answer to what we are seeking. Talk to Him now.

# down-Up      Out-in

*This is a simple exercise designed to help you let go of the things that separate you from God and take hold of those things that brings you closer to him.*

Make yourself comfortable in a sitting position with both feet on the floor. Place your hands **palm down** on your lap, touching your legs. As you become aware of the weight of your hands on your lap think about the things that you want to lay down in your life. Negative thoughts, bad former experiences, your sense of regret and failure, the habits that let you down, memories that disturb you, your feelings of weakness and frailty. Lay down those thoughts and feelings before God as you lay down your hands on your lap.

Now turn those **palms upward** in a receiving gesture. Receive God's forgiveness, his love and affirmation of you. You are accepted and forgiven. Receive his love and peace for you now. You are good enough, you are accepted, you are God's child. Receive his Spirit.



You can repeat this exercise by concentrating upon your breathing in the same seated position.

Think about your own quiet breathing –  
out and in  
out and in  
out and in  
out and in

**Breathe out** all that holds you back from becoming who you want to be and all that God wants you to be. Release your disappointment and regrets to God. Expel all your striving and resistance.

**Breathe in** all that God's wants for your life. Breathe in his love - his forgiveness - his belief in you - all that he wants for you.

# Praying the Lord's Prayer

A disciple of Jesus approached him one day and asked, 'Lord, teach us to pray.' (Luke 11 verse 1). Jesus' response formed what we now know as '**The Lord's Prayer**', but this was a way or structure for praying as well as a prayer in itself. The shape of the Lord's Prayer shows us how our prayers to God should be directed.



## Look **UP** to God

focussing on who God is and **WORSHIP** of him

## Look **IN** at ourselves

as we prepare to meet with God by **CONFESSING** our sins and asking for his forgiveness.

## Look **AROUND** at others

we plead or **INTERCEDE** for the needs of the wider world, our community, family, friends and the Church.

## Look **BACK** to our past

remembering with **THANKSGIVING** what God has done for us and for others.

## Look **FORWARD** to the future

we ask or **PETITION** God for our personal needs.

**Our Father in heaven**  
**Hallowed be your name**  
**Your Kingdom come**  
**Your will be done**  
**On earth as it is in heaven**  
**Give us today our daily bread**  
**Forgive us our sins**  
**As we forgive those who**  
**sin against us**  
**Lead us not into temptation**  
**But deliver us from evil**  
**For the Kingdom, the**  
**power and the glory are**  
**yours now and for ever.**

Addressing God in worship and in awe  
praising God's for his character.  
Asking for God's work to be done in  
the world and in people's lives - for  
the values of heaven to fall on earth.  
Asking God for our practical needs.  
confessing our needs and weaknesses  
seeking after restored relationships  
and reconciliation with others.  
Help us to focus on God alone.  
Asking for God's protection.  
It's all about God and not us;  
our spiritual growth brings glory to God  
and transformation to the world.

# *making the 'caim'*

For some of the earliest Christians in Britain, not only was the cross an important symbol but they also used the symbol of a circle to help them to visualize the protection and presence of Jesus with them. This led to the practise of making the 'caim', in which they drew a circle as a symbol of the encircling love of God.

Sit somewhere  
and using your right  
your imagination, draw  
around you.

you can use a  
candles.  
are, place  
inside a



on your own  
finger or just  
the 'caim'  
Alternatively,  
circle of  
Wherever you  
yourself  
circle.

You might want to find a Bible and read **Psalm 91**.

Picture each of the protections that God can be for you or you might want to meditate (*think deeply*) upon these words:

*See yourself surrounded by God and his love.*

*Rest a while in that love*

*Let that love fill your life*

*Let it fill the place where you are*

*Know that God goes with you*

*Visualise the next few days ahead... see that God's love is there for you to explore... enfolding and surrounding you.*

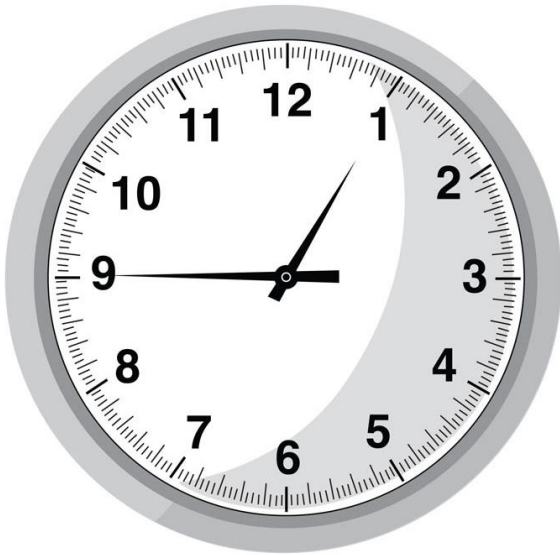
*See God's love in ever-widening circles*

*God reaches out... He seeks to touch your life... He encircles your loved ones... your home... your work... your friends... your travels... your hopes and passions.*

*Know that the love of God radiates in ever extending circles.*

# Reviewing the day

Take 15 minutes to review your day. You can do this at any time of the day.



Ask for the strength that you desire

Be grateful for all that God gives you

Call for God's light, that you may see your life as God wants you to see it

Day review - where was God today? How have you responded to God this day?

Express your gratitude for all that was good about today and your regret for all that wasn't good.

For tomorrow - pray for it.

OR

**A.**

What is your deepest spiritual desire? ASK for this. ASK for change in your life until this happens.

**B.**

You may not always feel grateful. See everything in your life, including life itself, as a gift from God.

**C.**

God's spirit shows us how God sees us. This is not about self-analysis, judgment or introspection. Ask God to show us only the things which we need to see about ourselves.

**D.**

'Playback' the period since the last review. Review the words, experiences, places and people that have been in your life. Where has God been in your life of the life of other people today?

**E.**

The 'playback' will lead you to deeper thanksgiving and perhaps even regret. Note areas of resistance - where these keep occurring it might be a sign that God wants to work to bring about change.

**F.**

Look ahead. What help and guidance are you likely to need for the day ahead? What qualities will be needed? Ask God for them.



# Keeping a Spiritual Journal

It can be helpful to keep a record of your daily thoughts, feelings and prayers.

**FIND** yourself a blank exercise book or something similar which is small, lightweight and easy to carry around. Find 10 minutes each day to sit and reflect upon your spiritual journey. This is an opportunity to think about where God has been at work in the events or thoughts of your life?



**WRITE:** you might want to ask yourself:

- How and when have I been aware of God today?
- Has God felt absent today? Why might that be?
- What is my greatest desire or prayer at this moment?
- What verse of scripture spoke to me? How might it apply to my life?
- What experience, life story or event has inspired me today and in what way?
- What questions am I wrestling with?

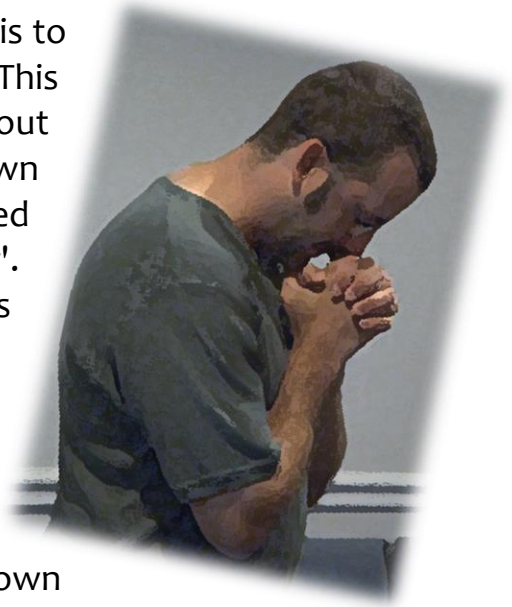
**BE REGULAR:** write something each day, no matter how unimportant or silly it might appear. This is your personal journal – no-one else will ever read it – so use it to express what is what is on your mind.

**REVIEW:** look back over your journal, either every week or month and see how prayers might have been answered and how your understanding and self-awareness has developed.

# *the Jesus prayer*

Prayer doesn't have to be long and complex.

One of the simplest, most helpful ways to pray is to use a centring prayer such as the 'Jesus Prayer'. This comes from a story Jesus told (*Luke 18 v9-14*) about the prayer of someone who recognised their own weakness and need of God. Jesus commended such a way of praying, hence 'The Jesus Prayer'. The prayer can be prayed over and over again, as part of a sigh or the drawing of breath or even when rolling three beads on a chain through your fingers. It is a recognition that we can't make it on our own, we need Jesus, we are calling upon his help and strength for our lives, we are asking him to forgive us and form in his own image.



***Lord Jesus Christ  
Son of God  
Have mercy on me, a sinner.***

Another very simple prayer comes right at the end of the Bible (*Revelation 22 v20*). It is a prayer used by early Christians as a statement of belief and as a rallying cry - often quoted in Aramaic, the language Jesus spoke, as '*Maranatha*' (Come, Lord Jesus). It can be repeated and used as part of our breathing in and out. It is a call upon Jesus to be present with us now, but also a statement of faith that He will come one day in great power to be present among us in a new and special way. We can meditate upon the meaning of each word or else use the prayer when other words fail us. It is a prayer that reminds us of Jesus' victory over evil and the hope we have in His loving presence with us always.

***Maranatha. Come, Lord Jesus.***

# reflecting on life

Fill a large bowl with water (the bowl must be dark in colour). Kneel or sit before the bowl examining your own reflection. Allow the water to become still.

THINK about how you see yourself. What are you grateful for? What would you like to change? How do other people see you?



***"I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made."***

*Psalms 139 verse 14.*

LOOK at your face. Jesus said that what we do for the least of other people we are doing for him. We cannot see Jesus, but we can see his image or reflection in the lives of people in need. Serving the needs of those around us in love, generosity and kindness is a way of serving and following Jesus.

***"For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."***

*Matthew 25 verses 35-36.*

FEEL the water. Let it run through your fingers. Feel its cool and cleansing properties. Submerge your hands. Sprinkle your face. Allow the drops to return to the bowl. Jesus washed his disciple's feet as a sign of his love and service and as an example, showing them how to treat each other.

***"Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet."***

*John 13 verse 14.*

We SEE and know God's love partially, one day we shall see clearly.

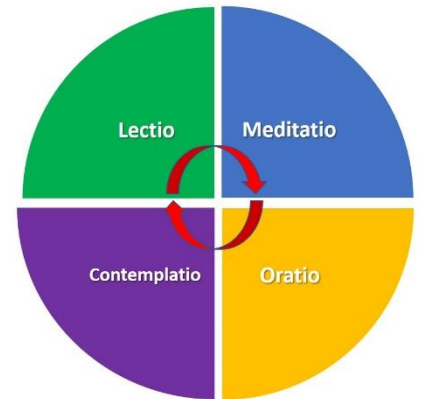
***"Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face."***

*1 Corinthians 13 verse 12.*



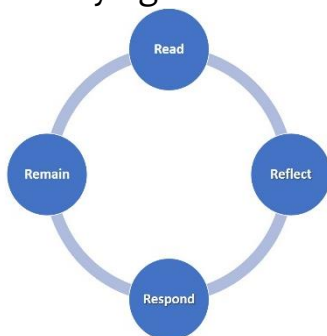
# Lectio Divina

Lectio Divina is a contemplative way of reading the Bible. The method began in 6<sup>th</sup> Century Benedictine monasteries but can be traced back to the earliest Christian leaders (the Church Fathers) in 300 AD. It can either be simplified to a few basic elements or else developed into a much fuller practice. All the methods used by Christians rely upon the slow and thoughtful reading of scripture and repeating the reading in order to reflect more deeply upon its relevance and significance for us today.



Methods differ, but essentially there are four movements to enter into, that seek to bring us closer to God and more aware of ourselves. These are:

1. **Lectio (Reading)** – first of all pray that God will speak to you through His word (see prayer below). Then read a short passage of the Bible. Treat the passage as something to be *received*, rather than to be dissected... let the text come to you. Then read the passage a second time. This time noting any words or phrases that strike you. Write these down if you wish.
2. **Meditatio (Reflecting)** – read the passage again using your imagination. Picture the scene depicted in the passage, put yourself into that scene – see things through the eyes of the characters involved. Ask questions of those characters. Consider any words or phrases that struck you earlier – how do they relate to your life?
3. **Oratio (Responding)** – through prayer we respond to God. How has God’s word shed light on your own life or the world around? Bring your questions and requests to God in prayer, seeking God’s word to bring about change in your life or in the lives of others or the world.
4. **Contemplatio (Remaining)** – we are still in God’s presence – we listen and remain in the presence of God. You may then wish to close by saying the Lord’s Prayer.



*O Blessed Lord, who caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning: Grant us so to hear them, read, mark, learn and inwardly digest them that we may embrace and hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life, which you have given us in our saviour Jesus Christ. Amen.*