

How to PRAY

Prayer is an incredibly important part of the Christian life. Thankfully, Jesus gave his followers a model for how to pray.

“Pray then like this: ‘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.’” --Matthew 6:9-13

What sticks out to you from how Jesus tells us to pray?

There are four main elements we see in this prayer. They spell out the acrostic PRAY. Let's look at each part.

Praise - The first aspect of prayer we see is praise. *“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.”* Hallowed means “holy and honored”. We are to praise God for who he is, this means aspects of his character. We can praise him for his grace, mercy, kindness, and love toward us. We can also praise him for things like his goodness, hatred of evil, his Trinitarian nature, his sovereignty, and his closeness to us. What aspect of God's character makes you want to praise him the most?

Repent - Another aspect of prayer is repentance. *“And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”* Repentance is turning away from your way of doing things (sin) and turning towards God's way of living. Even though we have already been forgiven in Christ, we should still constantly confess our sins to God and turn away from them. We do this because our sin puts static on the line between us and God so that our communication is not as clear. It is also a good reminder that we are in fact forgiven. We don't want to forget that our sins are truly done away with by the blood of Christ. 1 John 1:9 says, *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”* What an incredible promise!

Ask - The third aspect of prayer is asking God for things. *“Give us this day our daily bread.”* Just like a father wants to hear from his children and give them good things, God wants to give his children good things too. Matthew 7:11 says, *“If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!”* Even though God already knows what you need before you ask him, coming to him in prayer shows your humility and dependence on him for all your needs. It also draws your heart nearer to his. We can also ask on behalf of other people. Praying for others is something God wants us to do and it helps us love those for whom we are praying.

Yield - The final aspect of prayer is to yield. *“Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.”* This is a simple acknowledgement of God's sovereignty. We can trust God

to hear our prayer and that he will accomplish his purpose in the world, whether it's something in our lives, the lives of those we are praying for, or the world at large. We can also use this time to sit quietly and fill our minds with Scripture as we yield to God. In Luke 22:42, Jesus prays, *"Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours, be done."* We don't always have our prayers answered the way we want, but we know that God's plan is the best. Is there anything you find it difficult to trust God for?

Even though it's just talking with God, prayer isn't easy. Make sure your area is distraction-free when you sit down for an extended time of prayer. Also, Satan hates it when we pray, so he will try to put things in your way to make sure you aren't nourishing your relationship with God through prayer. It's important to value and fight for your prayer time.

Remember, this acrostic isn't a magical formula. It's a model to help you pray in a biblical way. When you pray, you may not do all four of these things every time, but these are four good ways to talk to our heavenly Father.

Next Steps:

- If you aren't quite sure how to start, try praying with somebody else first
- Try to incorporate prayer into your daily time with God
- Set apart a special time to pray each day
- Have extended times of prayer regularly (once a week, once a month, etc.)

Let's set up a regular time when you can pray right now.