

The Adventure of Prayer

2. HOW TO PRAY

READINGS

Epistle: 1 Thess 5.16-23

Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not treat prophecies with contempt but test them all; hold on to what is good, reject every kind of evil. May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Gospel: Luke 11.1-4

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, "Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples." He said to them "When you pray, say:

"Father-

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come.

Give us each day our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins,

for we also forgive everyone who sins against us.

And lead us not into temptation."

TALK

WHAT IS PRAYER

- communication with God
- not performance – like some people in Jesus' day

Verses: Matthew 6:5-6

"When you pray, do not be like the show-offs, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.

But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. Matt.6.5-6

→ Private, real, not showing off - you don't need fancy words - just be honest – a conversation with God

1. SAY WHAT'S REAL, HOW YOU REALLY ARE

Heavy backpack: prayer "I'm tired"

- Life may seem heavy to carry (school, stress, people)
- In prayer = take it off

Verse: Psalm 62:8 "Trust in him at all times, you people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge."

2. ASK FOR HELP: prayer "Help me"

- Simple prayers count
- Exams, friends being unkind
- "Help me stay calm"
- "Help me not mess this up"

Verse: 1 Peter 5:7 "Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you."

3. SAY THANK YOU

Bunch of flowers: prayer "That's amazing!"

- Small things matter
- Changes your mindset

Examples: food, friends, beauty in nature

What do you want to say to me God? – through this flower? - unique and beautiful – thank you for making it – God, you're amazing!

4. LISTENING

Headphones: prayer "Help me listen"

From the first reading in 1 Thessalonians, how do we "pray constantly" or "not quench the Spirit" - not shut God's Spirit up ?

- Prayer not just talking
- Also listening

Verse: Psalm 46:10

→ "Be still"

- Not a loud voice
- Thoughts / nudges / reminders about even really everyday things
 - to-do lists
 - as we listen, he speaks to us e.g. through the natural world - beauty of a little tree

5. GUIDANCE

Torch: prayer "Show me the way"

- Like light in dark
- Something becomes clearer
- Picture God / Jesus - both with us AND ahead waiting to welcome us wherever we're going. God sent his Spirit to do just that.

1. Be still
2. Ask: "God, anything to say?"
3. Notice thoughts

6. EXPECT PRACTICAL REMINDERS

Prayer: "One thing to do?"

- Sometimes nothing happens
 - Mind wanders to thinking about someone or something to do
 - Feels awkward
- That's normal, again you can picture Jesus with you
- Check on that person or situation that's come to mind
 - Don't overthink – you've prayed – God hasn't switched himself off

7. SILENCE

- Lord, anything I should notice?
- Do you want to show me a picture in my prayer-imagination about me, that is just how you see me today?
- Or a word or line from the Bible or a song
- 20–30 sec silence

8. THE LORD'S PRAYER

Even Jesus' disciples needed help when it came to prayer.

What did the disciples actually see or hear when Jesus was praying? - whether in private, out on the hills, or in public at the temple. Was he kneeling, standing facing the direction of the temple, just sitting on a rock? Was he silent? Or his lips moving or murmuring or speaking quite clearly? Eyes closed or open? Hands out in front or in lap or holding the tassels of a prayer shawl? Did he cover his head with his cloak?

How did Jews pray at the time of Jesus? - at set times: morning (shacharit), afternoon (minchah), and evening (maariv), Psalms, the Shema (Deut. 6:4–9), and the Amidah (a set of 18 benedictions). Short blessings (berakhot) were said before and after food.

The Lord's Prayer follows a two-part structure typical of Jewish prayers of the time - where each line is supposed to be a starting-off point for our prayers, especially our prayers together.

The Lord's Prayer was not something radically new - but a deeply Jewish prayer-form, reshaped and simplified by Jesus.

Looking at the reading from Luke's gospel of the Lord's prayer, **who's the first half about?** And **who's the second half about?**

This provides another angle on prayer when you may feel stuck.

First - focus on something about **God**

Prayer: Thank you Lord for your love, even though I may not always feel it – I really want to know you better and do what you want.

Second – focus on **our own needs**

Prayer: Please Lord, forgive us, again; please provide the strength we need today.

Note these are “us” prayers – where we metaphorically hold hands and bring the big issues of our world to God; he will teach us how to pray

PRAYER-WRITING ACTIVITY – 2-3 minutes (writing notes and pencils provided)

For anyone who'd like to write a prayer - to keep in your pocket this week

- a) God - centred on one side of note
- b) you/us - centred on other side of note

- combining reverence for God with practical human needs

CLOSING

- In friendships we talk and listen
- Prayer is the heart of our relationship with God

CHALLENGE

- 1 quiet moment daily - listen to God

- 1 honest prayer daily
 - God-centred - expressing trust
 - us-centred – God knows what we need but loves us to ask