

How do I pray?



Around 2000 years ago Jesus' disciples asked the most important question of their lives. They asked Jesus how to pray.

"Lord, teach us to pray"

Most of us know that prayer is an important thing for Christians to do because it is the way that we connect with God. Yet many of us are completely baffled about how to start praying. We wonder whether we should sit, stand or kneel, what words we should use or what to pray about. The reality is that prayer is simply talking to God; the more you do it, the more natural it will become.

When we are starting out it is good to have a pattern to follow to help us while we are learning. Jesus gave his disciples a prayer to follow that many Christians around the world still use today. We call it the Lord's Prayer. There are a few different versions using old or modern language.

This is the modern version:

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,

your will be done,
on earth as 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.

Amen.

You can use this prayer exactly as it is as often as you like. You might hear this prayer in this exact format on a Sunday in a church service. But you don't have to pray these exact words. Instead you

can use this prayer as a pattern or a guide to help you to pray. I've put spaces in the prayer to help us to see the different sections of the prayer pattern that we can use.

A prayer pattern to follow

Jesus teaches us to call God "Father". That's a good way to start any prayer. So maybe you could begin your prayer saying "Heavenly Father..." or "Father God..."

The next part of the prayer is a sentence of praise. Hallowed be your name could equally be translated as "your name is Holy" or "you are special". So for the next building block of your prayer, you might want to praise God. It doesn't have to be anything fancy. Maybe something along the lines of "you are amazing...". You might even want to tell God why you think he is amazing or simply to say thank you for who he is and what he has done.

Next we work on getting our priorities straight. "Your Kingdom come, your will be done" is basically saying to God. "I want to want what you want, help me to line up my life and my priorities with yours." So you might want to say those exact words or something similar.

Now we get to the asking part. Jesus tells us to ask for the things that we want but notice that the asking only comes after we have asked God to help us to ask for the right things. "Give us today our daily bread" is basically asking God for the things that we need. There are all sorts of things that we need or want and it is okay to

ask God. This is the place where you might want to say "I'm worried about..." or "please help...". You can ask Him for or about anything, so don't be shy. You might find it easier just to talk plainly than worrying about fancy words.

Next comes the tricky part. We ask for God's forgiveness knowing that we all have a part to play in God's world being not as it should be. Sometimes it can be good to name specific thoughts, words or actions where you know that you have messed up and simply say "please forgive me". As part of this we also need to forgive others so you might also want to name situations where other people have hurt you in some way and say "please help me to forgive them".

The next part of the prayer links to the bit before. It is about asking God to help us not to do those things again which we have asked forgiveness for and asking God to protect us from the people or situations that might hurt us. You might want to pray something like this: "Please help me not to Please protect me from...."

The final bit of the prayer puts everything back in God's hands again. We acknowledge that God is God and we are people and that he knows what he is doing. Basically we end the prayer by telling God that we trust him. Perhaps you might simply want to end by saying "I trust you".

Give it a go

So why not give prayer a go. Find somewhere comfortable where you won't be disturbed, you can speak out loud, in your head or even write it down if that helps, just remember to be yourself.

Praying might feel weird at first but the more you pray, the easier it will become.