

# To Help you Pray.

**Here are a few suggestions to help you to focus whilst you are praying.**

These prayer pointers are offered to you as 'easy to use' ways into prayer. You will probably have other suggestions to add – whatever works for you! The following points are intended to be for anyone to use or adapt. All you need for any of these is yourself, and your Bible. No electronic gadgetry of any kind! No

degree in theology needed!! Just print out this sheet, then forget your computer. Just you, a Bible, and God.



## 1. Thy Kingdom Come

Let's start with the most topical prayer pointer. Thy Kingdom Come is now in its 4<sup>th</sup> year. It was originally inspired by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and like most of the best ideas, is very simple, yet very effective. Think of 5 people who you know who are not yet Christians. Pray for them to become Christians. Continue to keep them in your prayers.

Here is a prayer that you may like to use:

*Lord God, we have seen Your love in the coming of Jesus Christ into the world. Thank you for the gift of life that you offer to all who believe in you. I pray for five of my friends.... NNNN, NNNN, NNNN, NNNN and NNNN. Touch them with your Holy Spirit and bring them into the community of faith. Help me to be a faithful and effective witness, as I seek to share faith with them. Amen*

## 2. Pray the Lord's Prayer

Take the Lord's Prayer in 5 sections. Take each section slowly and use it as a focus for the 5 'P's. As you pray, bring to mind ways that you can: Praise God; reflect upon His Power; ask for your daily Provision; ask God for Pardon, confessing your sins to Him; and pray for God's Protection, using Ephesians 6:10-20 (or your own words).

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name.

**PRAISE**

Your Kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven

**POWER**

Give us today  
our daily bread.

**PROVISION**

Forgive us our sins,  
as we forgive those  
who sin against us.

**PARDON**

Lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.

**PROTECTION**

## 3. P. R. A. Y.

Straight from the Prayer Course – this is similar to number 2 (above) but offers another simple format for focussing upon the different aspects of prayer.

P     Pause  
R     Rejoice  
A     Ask  
Y     Yield

Take each section slowly, and focus upon God. You may find it helpful to focus on a specific Bible verse for each section. The more you pray, so the greater resource bank of verses/ideas you will build up.

As you **Pause**, come into God's presence; take a few minutes to slow down from the pressures of daily life; take time to think about all that God has done for you, and thank Him.

**Rejoice** by worshipping God. Read a psalm of praise; listen to a hymn or worship song; use your own words to 'rejoice in the Lord'.

As Jesus taught us, **Ask** God for the things that you need to live for Him, and make intercession for the needs of others.

**Yield** yourself to God. Even Jesus prayed, 'Not my will but your will be done.' In prayer, we are praying for the coming of God's Kingdom. Ask that God will use you to further His purposes.

## 4. The Five Finger Prayer

A helpful aid for Intercession. Use the five fingers on your hand as a simple reminder of who you should be praying for. As you work through your fingers, beginning with your thumb, which is the closest finger to your heart, pray for these different groups of people.

Thumb:	The closest finger to your body. Think of the people who are closest to you – your family and friends; those you love.
First Finger:	Your pointing finger – people who are there to point the way for you: teachers; church leaders; youth leaders; doctors; NHS staff; Key Workers - those who help us and serve us and show us how to live.
Middle Finger:	Your longest finger – people in authority – leaders, governments, nations etc.
Fourth Finger:	Your weakest finger – those who need help: people who are unwell, or anxious, or in any particular need of prayer.
Little Finger:	Yourself!

## 5. Questions

*Use these questions to think about what you would like to say to God*

- What are you most thankful for today?
- What are you least thankful for today?
- When did you show love today?
- When weren't you kind today?
- What would you like to say to God about today?

**Talk to God about your answers to these questions.**

## 6. Pray with the Bible

Prayer and Bible reading go together. Don't neglect your regular Bible reading. Make it a focus for your prayers.

The Bible provides a wealth of material to guide our prayers, helping us to express our feelings and to enrich our personal prayer life. Using the Bible can also provide a focus and a framework for us in our personal prayer lives. But how do we use the Bible prayerfully?

### **As you read, ask yourself these questions:**

- Is there anything in this passage that speaks to me, immediately?
- What do you think God might be saying in this passage?
- What do you think the passage meant to the original readers?
- What can you apply from that to your own life?
- Is there a key verse, or key message that jumps out to you?

### **6a. Praying the Psalms**

The Book of Psalms is really a book of prayers. From praise and giving thanks, to asking for forgiveness, overcoming temptation, dealing with discouragement, facing fear, finding guidance, seeking wisdom or gaining courage. No matter how we may feel, in the Psalms we will find words to express every human emotion and they teach about how God wants us to communicate with him.

It is reassuring to know that the psalmist had the same feelings that we do, and wasn't afraid of expressing those feelings to God!

When words are difficult to find, try using a Psalm as a form of prayer. Make the words of the psalmist your own prayer, and apply them to your own situation.

Here are a few examples of where to look for help in the Psalms. When you feel:

- Afraid **3, 91**
- Alone **27**
- Envious **73**
- Like giving up **34, 43**
- Sad **13**
- Weak **40, 121, 142**
- Worried **37**
- Tempted **141**
- Unimportant **139**
- Like praising God **96, 100, 145**

Psalm references which we can use. For example:

- Comfort **23**
- Forgiveness **32, 51, 103**
- Guidance **19, 25**

- Hope 13, 27
- Peace 3
- Courage 11, 42
- Confidence 46
- Protection 91, 121
- Rest 23
- Wisdom 16, 111

## 6b. Using the prayers of people in the Bible.

Beyond the Psalms, the Bible has many other great prayers we can appropriate for our own circumstances. Sometimes these prayers are specific to a particular character in an immediate situation, but other prayers can be used by anyone to express particular feelings.

Many prayers, such as the Magnificat, the Song of Simeon or the Lord's Prayer, have become part of the church's liturgy. Yet they also help us to voice and express our own joys, desires and struggles.

Mary's Magnificat can become our own song of praise, hope and trust. There are times in our own lives when like Mary we recognise that, 'the Mighty One has done great things for me' (**Luke 1: 49**).

- **Psalm 51** (David seeks forgiveness and restoration)
- **Jonah 2** (Jonah's prayer)
- **Matthew 6: 9-13** (The Lord's Prayer)
- **Luke 1: 46-55** (Mary's prayer)
- **Luke 1: 68-79** (Zechariah's prayer)
- **John 17: 9-21** (Jesus prays for the disciples and the church)
- **Ephesians 1: 3-14** (Paul gives thanks for spiritual riches in Christ)

## 6c Using the Epistles

The New Testament also includes some beautiful expressions of praise to God's name and character. They are sometimes known as 'doxologies' - songs and affirmations to be included in the church's worship. People knew them well in the first century, and used them as a way of remembering the greatness and the character of God. We can also use them in prayer to praise God for who he is and lift our hearts in prayer and worship. For example:

- **Ephesians 1: 19-23**
- **Philippians 2: 9-11**
- **Colossians 1: 13-20**
- **I Timothy 1: 17**
- **I Timothy 6: 15-16**
- **Hebrews 1: 3**
- **Revelation 1: 8, 1: 13-18**

## **6d Take a verse from the Bible**

There are countless Bible passages through which God will speak to you. As you read, pick out the verses that speak specifically to you. Focus on them; think about them; savour them; give God time to speak to you through them. In the words of Psalm 46:10, "Be still and know that I am God."

## **7. One Line Prayers**

Simple prayers which can be repeated over and over again are little aspirations whispered throughout the day to help us keep the mind God-focussed, here are just a few:

"Lord, in Your Mercy hear my prayer"  
"I give you my heart God, use it as You will"  
"In You O Lord do I place my trust"  
"My God, I love You"  
"Lord I believe, help my unbelief!"  
"My Lord and my God"  
"O God have mercy on me a sinner"  
"Jesus meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto Thine"  
"Blessed be Jesus, true God and true Man"  
"Aleluia Lord"  
"Amen Lord"

By getting into the habit of whispering these little prayers during the day we start to open a channel directly to God. This in turn frees us to be able to have the real conversations, the proper chats, the serious discussions. But remember the old saying - we have 2 ears and only 1 mouth! In silence, relax and listen too. Let the Holy Spirit speak to you in your heart.

## **8. The Jesus Prayer**

A very simple 'one line' prayer that's easy to remember. This is a prayer that you can take with you everywhere you go, and use anytime:

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

Many people find it profoundly spiritual to repeat this prayer constantly. It keeps the mind focussed upon Christ.

## 9. Write a prayer

Be creative and write your prayers down. Here are a few suggestions:

- Keep a prayer journal/diary. It doesn't need to be elaborate – just a simple notebook, and for your own eyes only. Jot down thoughts/verses/prayer requests/answers as you get them. Be honest – note your questions and concerns as well – come back to them later and ask God to help you.
- Write your own prayers in straight forward narrative.
- Write a poem to God/write your own psalm, expressing how you feel .

## 10. Use a liturgy

Sometimes, it can be helpful to use set forms of prayers. For many centuries Christians have worshipped God by using Daily Offices. These can provide a great sense of strength that is drawn from using tried and tested forms of prayer. These can be especially helpful at those times in life when we find prayer difficult. A sense of routine offers a great sense of surety and security. Find a book of prayers. Use prayers written by other people. Try a simple form of printed Morning or Evening Prayer. They are obtainable from many places, e.g. the Church of England, The Iona Community, and various other Christian communities and churches. Have a look in Christian bookshops, or type 'Christian Liturgy' into Google. There is a lot of material available.

## 11. To Help You Pray.....

*sit and be still, and offer your own prayers to God. You may find some of the following helpful.*

### **'Be still and know that I am God.' (Psalm 46:10)**

Allow the peace of your surroundings to support you as you sit quietly. Let the hurry and the worry of your life fall away from you. You are God's child. He knows you. He loves you. He cares for you. He is here with you now. He knows your thoughts and your needs. Speak to Him slowly and thoughtfully. Give yourself time for Him to bring things to mind.

### **Lord, thank you...**

for your presence with me, for the opportunity to pray;  
for the promise of peace;  
for the beauty of the world and the kindness of so many people;  
for all those whom I love, and who love me;  
for your love towards me;  
for the Cross of Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit;  
Help me to show my gratitude in word and in deed.

**Lord, I am sorry...**

for times when I have been hasty or unkind (especially to...)  
for times when I have acted selfishly, failed to forgive, forgotten your presence, or taken your love for granted. I am so grateful that you promise to forgive me when I turn back to you in simple trust.

## **12. Be creative**

Be open to discover different ways to pray. A regular, daily pattern of prayer, using a time of day that works for you is helpful. Have a place for prayer that is comfortable and conducive for prayer.

But be prepared to try a different pattern. E.g. On a warm day, pray outside, and appreciate God's creation; have a Prayer Walk – walk around the streets of your local community, praying as you go – allow God to tell you who and what to pray for. Pray with a friend or partner. It can be very helpful to pray with someone else. Find a 'hallowed place' to pray. This may be inside an ancient church, but it may just as easily be sitting on top of a hill looking over creation, under a tree in the park, or sitting beside the canal tow path.

## **13. To be continued**

You will have other suggestions. What helps you to pray? What suggestions can you give to others? This document is far from complete! Please contribute your suggestions....

And remember:

*Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)*