

“Teach Us to Pray”  
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The central way that we are invited into a life-giving relationship with our holy, loving Heavenly Father is to hear from and talk to God, or pray. But how do we pray? I believe prayer is one of life’s great mysteries. Praying in a scriptural way allows us to live in the third dimension of life and experience the crisis of a face to face meeting with God, to engage with His constant presence, to allow Him the opportunity to redeem, restore and heal us. Praying, like reading the Bible, is a personal experience—“person-al,” one person to another. Each human is a person and the triune God is three persons in one. Praying requires routine and structure, but it is not mechanical—just as a body requires a bony skeleton, but it is not the skeleton that gives life to the body.

The family prayer, or the Lord’s Prayer, that our Lord Jesus taught us provides a *framework* for praying to the Father (Matthew 6:5-14; Luke 11:1-12; cf. Exodus 4:22). The Lord’s Prayer contains summary ideas found in the Psalms, the rich prayerbook of Israel, Jesus, and the early Church. Jesus taught us to pray, “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. And forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial, and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.” For commentary, see Tom Wright’s *The Lord and His Prayer* (Eerdmans, 2014).

There are three types of prayer I recommend to use as a trellis to allow our life of prayer to grow by the power of the Holy Spirit: spontaneous prayer, short intense vocal prayer, and ready-made prayers (see Anthony Bloom, *Beginning to Pray*, [Paulist, 1970]). All three are important to flourish in our constant contact with God. The use of each enables us to pray unceasingly as Paul instructs in 1 Thessalonians 5:17.

Spontaneous prayer gushes out of our souls when we become vividly aware of God or find ourselves in deathly danger. It is heartfelt, deeply personal and fully engaged with God. I cry out to God with thanksgiving and when danger and tragedy strike my family, the church, the nation, and the world: “Lord, help me/them; Lord, save me/them.” This kind of prayer assures us we are not alone and do not have to form our prayers perfectly but we have a Father who loves us and welcomes our cries for help.

Second, short, intense, vocal prayers arise from conviction. In our relationship with God, we can pray short simple prayers that express the deep truth about our relationship with God—our need of him, our love for him, our desire for him—which remain true even when we don’t feel it. The Jesus prayer, “Lord Jesus Christ, son of God, have mercy on me a sinner,” is a really good example of this. These kind of prayers become part of me and allow me to keep drawing close to God in whatever I am doing without needing to formulate my own prayer in each situation.

Third, ready-made prayers are “expressions of the saints’ deepest experience ... which the Holy Spirit coined within their lives and within their hearts” (Bloom, p. 56). I come from a Christian tradition (Anglican) which has birthed a Book of Common Prayer containing a rich treasure-trove of prayers that were conceived in the lives of others who have known God more deeply than us or connected with God in a particular way. This common prayer ([bcp2019.anglicanchurch.net](http://bcp2019.anglicanchurch.net)) offers every Christian a beautiful resource for prayer if we humble ourselves to connect our heart and soul with these words.

My fervent, abiding prayer for all God’s children on the plateau is that we devote ourselves to biblical prayer as a means of hearing from and talking to God so that we can receive and share the transforming love of Jesus Christ who is the only Way, the Truth, and the Life to our blessed, holy, loving triune God. As a former professor at Asbury Seminary, I experienced this reviving biblical prayer in my prior community in Wilmore, KY ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B\\_vfKckoTBY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B_vfKckoTBY)). If you are not a Christian or a Christian without a church home, we would love to welcome you at Christ Anglican Church as we grow as disciples of Jesus through restorative prayer.