



# WHY AND HOW DO I PRAY?

The Alpha Course week 4

## 1. WHAT IS CHRISTIAN PRAYER?

Prayer is the most important activity of our lives.

'For through [Jesus] we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.'  
(*Ephesians 2.18*)

- To the Father
  - "... to your father" (*Matthew 6.6*)
  - "... in heaven" (v.9)
- Through the Son
  - "I have called you friends" (*John 15.15*)
- By the Spirit
  - "... the Spirit helps us" (*Romans 8.26*)

## 2. WHY PRAY?

- Prayer develops a relationship with God
- Rewards of prayer (*Matthew 6.6*)
  - Presence of God
  - Peace (*Philippians 4.6-7*)
  - Perspective
  - Power
- Results of prayer (*Matthew 7.7-11*)

## 3. DOES GOD ALWAYS ANSWER PRAYER?

**Yes** you receive what you prayed for, sometimes immediately

**No** sometimes there is an obvious reason why not; other times we may not understand straight away why the answer is no

**Wait** for the right timing

**"When I pray, coincidences happen,  
and when I don't, they don't."**

WILLIAM TEMPLE, THE FORMER ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY

## 4. HOW DO WE PRAY

**Thank you** count your blessings, not your problems

**Sorry** confess your sins (*John 13.6-10*)

**Please** "Give us today our daily bread." (*Matthew 6.11*):  
ask for anything you need.

## 5. WHEN SHOULD WE PRAY?

- Pray anywhere and anytime
  - (*Ephesians 6.18*)
- Alone (*Matthew 6.6*)
  - Develop a regular pattern
  - Best part of the day (*Mark 1.35*)
- With others
  - There's power in praying together
  - "Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven." (*Matthew 18.19*)

## THREE SIMPLE TIPS

- Keep it real
- Keep it simple
- Keep it going

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION IN GROUPS

1. Have you ever tried praying? How did you get on?
2. What do you think about the idea of God answering prayer?
3. In the talk, various reasons for praying are given. Which of these do you relate to and why?
4. Finish with a short prayer (if appropriate)



### THE LORD'S PRAYER – JESUS' BLUEPRINT?

This, then, is how you should 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 debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.  
 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'

*Matthew 6:9-13 (NIV)*

When Jesus' disciples asked him to teach them to pray, he taught them a memorable and poetic prayer that has become the most famous prayer in history - The Lord's Prayer. When we repeat these familiar lines, we echo the words of Christ himself, alongside billions of Christians throughout time, all over the world. But repeating familiar lines can easily become monotonous and even meaningless. So how can we best use Jesus' example to help us pray?

The Lord's Prayer can be used as a model. It is a condensed liturgical poem clearly intended for frequent repetition. It teaches us **what** to pray. And it can also be used as a map, guiding us as we express the things on our hearts. Each line can be applied and expanded in personal conversation with God. It teaches us **how** to pray.

'Our Father' shows we recognise who He is and prompts us to pray for our families. 'Hallowed be your name' is an invitation to worship. 'Let your Kingdom come' is an opportunity to request help for the particular people, places and situations on our hearts. 'Your will be done' is a declaration that we seek God's best ways not our own. 'Give us this day our daily bread' invites us to pray about our most practical needs. 'Forgive us our sins (or debts)' is a challenge to name the ways in which we have failed. 'Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one' asks for God's protection and guidance through life and all that it brings.

To this day I am still nursing myself on the Lord's Prayer like a child, and am still eating and drinking of it like an old man without getting bored of it.

*Martin Luther, 16<sup>th</sup> Century Reformer*

To cultivate a deeper prayer life all you have to do is say the Lord's Prayer, but take an hour to do it.

*Timothy Jones, Author 'The Art of Prayer'*



Watch this week's video at

<https://vimeo.com/250771919>

### QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What do you find difficult about prayer? What do you find easy? Why do you think prayer can often feel hard?
2. What does The Lord's Prayer teach us about praying? As you read it, which phrases resonate with you and why?
3. Prayer has been described as a conversation with God. How can we hear God speak to us as we pray? What stops us hearing?
4. Has your understanding of prayer changed following this week's Alpha? If so how, and what impact might this have on your life?

**Take some time to pray The Lord's Prayer, reflecting on each phrase. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you what to pray.**

### You might like to read...

**God on Mute** by Pete Greig

**The Art of Prayer** by Timothy Jones

**Too Busy Not to Pray** by Bill Hybels

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