

# Way of Discipleship Small Groups

## Prayer 2: Things to help me pray



### Touching base (5 minutes)

Open in prayer as is helpful for your group.

If this is your first session take time to introduce yourselves and set any ground rules you want to for your time together.

If you met previously take the opportunity either as a group or in pairs to check in with each other about how your response from last time has gone.



### Opening question(s) (5 minutes)

What helps you pray when you don't feel like it?



### Understanding the information (20 minutes)

Share these thoughts in your own words or read them together:

Praying with others. God is a community, and always calls people together. Throughout the Bible people prayed together – the people of Israel often prayed together, the Psalms are prayers and songs mostly to be used by groups of people. Jesus often prayed in front of others – that's why we have some of His prayers written down, and why His disciples were prompted to ask, "Teach us to pray."



Most profoundly, when Jesus gave them His prayer, He began it with the words "Our Father". It's a prayer for a community. The early church met together to pray every day, they would often pray together at times of challenge. Praying with others is the best way of learning to pray – God does not intend that we should grow on our own.

Using our own words to be with God. Any "method" is only helpful as scaffolding to help you pray from the heart. No one else has your personality, your experience, and precisely your relationship with God.

Some people find writing their prayers a good way of being able to do this. Some people find firing off short and regular prayers throughout the day helpful. These are sometimes referred to as "arrow" prayers – short, one line prayers which just cry out to God. One writer says there are three prayers she needs, "Thank you. Sorry. And Help!"

Using other people's words to be with God. Because of the unique relationship God wants with us, some people find the idea of using other written prayers, even as "scaffolding", unhelpful.

But, perhaps particularly for Anglican Christians, written prayers have become a resource which forms our identity in significant ways.

**The Psalms.** Jesus prayed the psalms, most significantly using the words, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Psalm 22) on the cross. They are the most quoted book in the Gospels and Acts. The word probably means “a collection of songs.” They were written for particular situations, but can be used by anyone. They are the work of more than one person (including King David), and while they began as separate collections, they were put together as the 150 psalms in the Old Testament, divided into five sections.

There are many different kinds: Psalms in praise of God, about Him, to God from individuals, prayers in times of trouble for individuals or the whole nation. Psalms for people going up to worship on pilgrimage, psalms about how to live well before God, psalms about the King. They focussed on themes like God’s concern for the poor, God’s law and God’s grace, the difference between a righteous and a foolish life. They described God as creator, the way He delivered His people, how it felt to be in exile, and expressed hope for the future. They express every emotion from joy to despair and doubt, from love to hatred. In a lot of Anglican worship, the psalms continue to be prayed each week or each day.

**Liturgy** - prayers written by others - can be formal or informal, simple or complicated. At its best liturgy gives a framework for the Spirit; and the Spirit gives life to liturgy. It is not dependent on our various moods, can broaden our prayer vocabulary, can free us from the constant need to be making it up, can give us a good way of praying with the Bible, can help us memorize Scripture, can provide beautiful language and ideas, and can keep us praying in ordinary life.

**Jesus Prayer.** This is a very simple prayer which can be used repetitively to help us “pray at all times”, and to practise God’s presence.

**The Lord’s Prayer.** When His disciples asked Him to teach them to pray, Jesus gave them the attitude of prayer but He also gave them the words of prayer. The Lord’s Prayer is not a mantra to be prayed mechanically but a journey of prayer which helps us to approach God with love and reverence, and to pray all that needs to be prayed. As a daily way of praying it provides a perfect route, and there is a logic in how it starts and develops.

Discuss: How do you feel about using set words to pray? Why?

## Reading the Bible (15 minutes)

Read Psalm 63: 1-8 in which King David prays.

Discuss the Discovery Bible Study questions:  
What does this passage teach me about God?  
What does this passage teach me about people?  
How does this passage call me to obey God?  
What might I do in response to this this week?



## Seeing how it looks in real lives (10 minutes)

Watch the video at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8FGIqppLZt8>

What struck you as important in the video?



## Optional further material and questions

Share these thoughts or read them together:

Four other ways into praying.

**Icons and pictures.** The Greek word “eikon” means image. Every part of an icon has a specific meaning. They are often called “windows into Heaven”. The artist does not want the Christian to admire the icon as a beautiful piece of artwork, but to use it to be drawn into prayer, raising the mind and heart to God. This is why icons are not signed by the artist.

**Speaking in tongues.** The gift of tongues is a heavenly prayer language, given by the Holy Spirit, praying through us in words we cannot understand (though sometimes they can be interpreted as a message if used publicly). When you speak in tongues you surrender control of your prayer to God, praying with your spirit, instead of your mind. Not everyone has this gift (it is not a status symbol), but Paul desired that everyone should be able to have it.

**Singing** “...speak to each other with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; sing and make music to the Lord in your hearts...” Ephesians 5:19. Singing, or listening to songs, can unlock prayer whether on our own, or with others.

**At the end of the day: Using the Examen.** The idea of being with God as being attentive to God and responding to Him is expressed well in the simple practice called the examen, which can be used at the end of the day to recognise where God has been present, and been at work.

**Finding a daily pattern.** The fact is, like all practices, prayer needs us to be intentional, and a regular habit is part of “training, not trying.” By praying regularly, I become a praying person. With a daily routine, it’s important that prayer doesn’t become a transaction with God, but about connection with God. Nevertheless, Jesus taught His disciples to pray for their “daily bread” – anticipating that they would pray every day. Daniel prayed three times a day. In Psalm 119:164 the writer prays seven times a day. The early Christians met for prayer at the Temple regularly at “the hour of prayer” (Acts 3:1)

While some find the mornings difficult, making prayer the first part of the day enables us to have fewer distractions, sets our hearts and minds on God at the beginning, and is also psychologically good for us – the first thing you think about has an impact on the rest of the day.

Jesus often got up early in the morning to pray. A church in Australia encourages its members to #wintheday in prayer. In other words, before looking at any screens, phones, messages, news, emails to begin the day by praying.

Discuss: Which of these ideas could you try?

## Responding to God's leading (5 minutes)

Give people an opportunity to think about, "What might God be showing me and how might I respond?" They may like to write this down and/or share it with the group and/or share it with one other person. A friendly question is to ask each other, "Is there anything that would be helpful to ask you next time?"



## Group prayer (5 minutes)

Try the Jesus Prayer for five minutes, simply repeating quietly with your breathing:

Breathe in: Lord Jesus Christ

Breathe out: Have mercy on me.





## Prayer 2: Things to help me pray

**Praying with others.** God is a community, and always calls people together. Throughout the Bible people prayed together – the people of Israel often prayed together, the Psalms are prayers and songs mostly to be used by groups of people. Jesus often prayed in front of others – that's why we have some of His prayers written down, and why His disciples were prompted to ask, "Teach us to pray."

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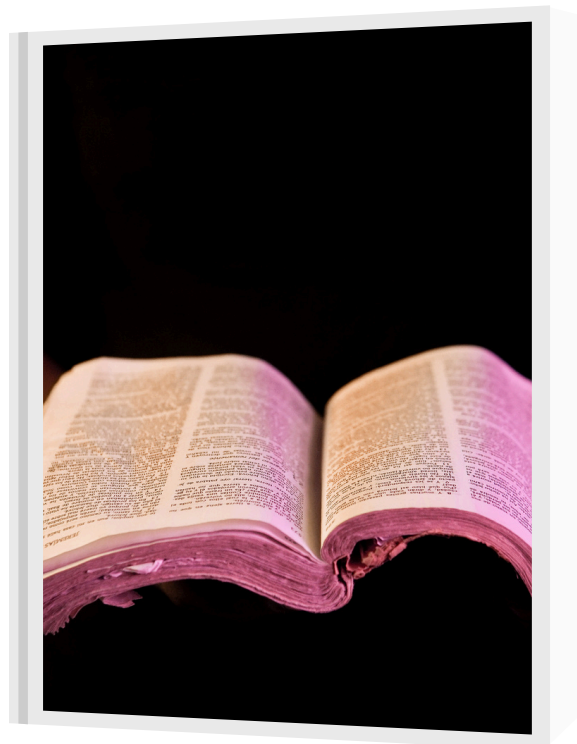
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# Prayer 1: What is prayer (and why is it difficult?)

## Additional notes:

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