

TALK TO GOD

Week 2 | Unceasing

Deeper Dive

As we define prayer during this series, let's take a deeper look at Jesus' response when His disciples ask Him how to pray. Jesus gave them an example of prayer in Matthew 6:9-15. These verses are the inspiration behind what we call "The Lord's Prayer".

If we use our prayer elements to label these verses, we can clearly see them in action:

*"Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,*

(Adoration)

*your kingdom come, your will be
done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.*

(Supplication & Petition)

*And forgive us our debts, as we
also have forgiven our debtors.*

(Confession)

*lead us not into temptation, but
deliver us from the evil one."*

(Intercession, Supplication & Petition)

Day 1 - "Elements" of Prayer

The most basic definition of prayer is "talking to God". Prayer is direct communication between our human souls and the Lord who created them. It is the primary way for us to spend time with God. Prayer can be out loud or silent, alone or in public, written down or spoken, short or long, formal or informal, conversational or rhythmic, eyes closed or open, kneeling in a church, or while cooking dinner or driving down the highway. There is no wrong way to pray.

While there isn't necessarily a right or wrong way to prayer, God does give us the elements needed in our prayer lives. Think of these "prayer elements" as the basic ingredients to the recipe for healthy and balanced communication with the Lord.

Elements (or ingredients) for a healthy prayer life:

- **Adoration** - Worship, respect, honor, awe, and glory for who God is as an outpouring of our love for Him. (Isaiah 25:1)
- **Lament** - When we cry out in our suffering, pain, grief, and sadness to God. These are raw honest moments where we express our painful emotions to God. (Psalm 6:3, Psalm 34:18, Jeremiah 9:1)
- **Confession** - Acknowledging our sin and brokenness, seeking God's forgiveness, and asking for help in overcoming the barriers of sin in our lives. (1 John 1:9, James 5:16)
- **Thanksgiving** - Gratitude for the blessings that God has given us, will give to us, or has promised to give us. (Philippians 4:6)
- **Supplication & Petition** - Requesting God's help or provision in our lives. This should align our will with His, and not be an effort for us to try and control the outcome. (1 John 5:14-15; Romans 11:33-36)
- **Intercession** - Prayers that are on behalf of others, & asking God to intervene in their life or their situation for their good. (1 Timothy 2:1)

As you read over these prayer elements, which one(s) do you use most? Which one(s) do you struggle with most? Is there an element that you don't use at all? How could you incorporate ALL the elements, including the one(s) that you struggle with into your prayer life?

Deeper Dive

Additional scripture to meditate on this week.

- **Romans 15:4** ~ For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope.
- **Colossians 3:16** ~ Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly, as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.
- **1 Timothy 2:1** ~ I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people.
- **Psalms 119:105** ~ Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.
- **Ephesians 5:9** ~ Speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord.
- **1 Corinthians 14:26** ~ What then shall we say, brothers and sisters? When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must be done so that the church may be built up. **14:40** ~ Everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.

Day 2 - Prayers in writing

Now that we have examined the “prayer elements”, or basic ingredients that we need in our healthy prayer life recipe, let’s take a look at the different methods for prayer. Again, as we talked about yesterday, there is no right or wrong method for prayer. However, it’s good for us to examine different methods as we seek to find ways to deepen and strengthen our relationship with the Lord through spending time with Him in prayer. Sometimes, trying something new in our prayer life, or stepping outside of our comfort zones, can be just what we need to take that next step of faith in our journey.

Depending on your faith tradition, you may have grown up using liturgical, or pre-written, prayers in your church. You may have even regularly used “call and response” style prayers, or read scripture aloud as a form of prayer. Some church traditions have various “creeds” that they use as prayers during church services. For some of us using a pre-written prayer helps guide and frame prayer in a way that helps us to hear from God. However, there may be some of us that feel pre-written liturgical prayer is rigid, or feels too unnatural. As with any of these prayer methods this week, if this method doesn’t speak to you, that is okay. God made each of us different, and just as we have different methods and ways that we communicate with our friends, we will all have different ways that we communicate with God.

Another method involving written prayers is writing down your own prayers. This can look like a prayer journal, writing daily letters to God, making a gratitude list, or a prayer request list that you pray over. You may even have a prayer wall in your house where you keep scripture and prayers pinned up to remember them throughout your day. Much of what we read in scripture is actually written prayer or conversation with the Lord. Often, this is a great way for us to go back and look at a record of prayer in our lives. This can be a powerful source of encouragement to see all the ways that God has answered our prayers in the past. Remember that just as we don’t have to use formal “prayer language” when we pray aloud, we also don’t have to use some formal written prayer language either. In fact, if you want to “doodle” or draw your prayers in a more creative way that’s okay too. God knows what’s on our hearts and He made us uniquely and creatively how we are. He wants us to come to Him and spend time with Him in prayer as the authentic and unique beings that He made us to be.

DAILY PRAYER ACTIVITY: As we examine various prayer methods this week, we will have a daily activity to incorporate trying out each method together. Today, choose one liturgical prayer (see deeper dive section) and choose one way to write or draw a prayer to the Lord.

- Was this hard for you, or was it life giving in your prayer time? Did anything surprise you about using written prayers today?
- Is there a way that you want to incorporate written prayer in your daily prayer routine going forward?

Deeper Dive

Additional scripture to meditate on this week.

- **1 Thessalonians 5:16-18** ~ Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.
- **Psalms 150:6** ~ Let everything that has breath praise the Lord
- **Colossians 4:2** ~ Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful
- **Job 33:4** ~ The Spirit of God has made me; the breath of the Almighty gives me life.
- **Romans 12:12** ~ Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer.
- **Philippians 4:6** ~ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.
- **2 Timothy 3:16** ~ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness
- **Genesis 2:7** ~ Then the LORD God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being

Day 3 - Breath prayers

When early Christians used breath prayers, they originally called them “Jesus Prayers”. Inspired by 1 Thessalonians 5:17, the purpose was to create a method to pray without ceasing and to maintain a continual connection with God throughout their day. Using the simple rhythm of breathing, these prayers are typically short repetitive phrases that align with inhaling and exhaling. The inhale and exhale phrase is usually repeated over and over while breathing slowly in and out. The phrases can contain scripture, simple truths about God’s promises or His goodness, and even a response or petition to Him. As we do this, it will naturally focus our minds & bodies on God’s presence.

Throughout scripture God’s breath is mentioned as the way in which He gives life to His creation. We are then called to use that breath to offer praise and glory back to God (Psalm 150:6). Using a prayer method based on breathing can be such a powerful tool to focus our thoughts and attention on the Lord throughout the day, even amidst our daily distractions.

Of course, not only is this good for us spiritually, God created our bodies to physically benefit from the deep slow breathing that we use in these types of prayers as well. Studies have shown it reduces heart rate, lowers blood pressure, increases oxygen flow, and lowers stress hormones. This is especially helpful in seasons of anxiety, pain, or depression. It’s a good reminder that when God asks us to do things, like pray continually, it is always for our greater good.

DAILY PRAYER ACTIVITY: Take time to try a breath prayer today. You can use these examples, or write your own. Focus on God’s presence while breathing slowly and meditatively on the words you are saying.

Inhale	Exhale	Scripture
The Lord is my Shepherd	I have everything I need	Psalms 23:1
Be still and know	You are God	Psalms 46:10
Do not fear	For I am with you	Isaiah 41:10
I can do all this through Him	Who gives me strength	Phil 4:13
When I pass through the waters	You will be with me	Isaiah 43:2
Jesus, Son of God	Have mercy on me	Mark 10:47
When I am afraid	I will trust in You	Psalms 56:3

- How did you feel after your time in prayer today? Think about how you felt in your mind, body and spirit.
- Is this a prayer method that you want to continue in your daily prayer routine? When could you see this method helping you the most? **3**

Deeper Dive

Read the verses below as they pertain to the prayer acrostics:

Praise or Adoration:

- **1 Chronicles 16:8-11** ~ Give praise to the Lord, proclaim his name; make known among the nations what he has done. Sing to him, sing praise to him; tell of all his wonderful acts. Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the Lord rejoice.

Repent, Expel or Confess:

- **Psalms 32:5** ~ I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the Lord." And you forgave the guilt of my sin.

Ask, Supplication or Request:

- **Matthew 7:11** ~ If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!

Yield:

- **James 4:7-10** ~ Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

Day 4 - Rhythmic prayers

What does it mean to use a "rhythmic prayer"? This is basically a simple prayer framework based on an acrostic. In our busy lives, it's easy for us to get distracted. Using a prayer acrostic is a very easy tool to use as guide for our prayer time with God. Again, as we have mentioned with all the prayer methods we are studying this week, there is no wrong way to pray. This is just another method for us to put in our prayer tool box. This method can particularly help those of us that struggle to include all of those "ingredients" or elements of prayer that we talked about on Day 1 of our study guide. These are a few commonly used acrostics for prayer that can help us to remember the elements we can often forget.

P	Praise	Praise God for who He is
R	Repent	Confess and repent of the sin in your life
A	Ask	Bring your needs and requests to God
Y	Yield	Surrendering to God's Will

A	Adoration	Praise God for who He is
C	Confession	Confess and repent of the sin in your life
T	Thanksgiving	Thanking God for the blessings in your life
S	Supplication	Bringing your needs and requests to God

P	Pause	Be still and notice God's presence
R	Receive	Open your heart to receive or listen to God
A	Adore	Praising God for who He is
Y	Yield	Surrendering to God's Will
E	Expel	Repenting and giving any sin over to God
R	Request	Bringing your needs and requests to God

DAILY PRAYER ACTIVITY: In your prayer time today, use one of these acrostic prayer examples as your framework, or write your own. Be sure that your acrostic includes the prayer element that you tend to skip over or forget most often.

- Was this a helpful tool in remembering to include the multiple elements of prayer? Did you notice an area of the prayer acrostic that you struggled with during this exercise?
- Is this a prayer method you plan to continue? Where could you see this being most helpful to you in your prayer life?
- TIP: If this worked well for you, you may want to write it down and have it visible somewhere as a daily reminder.

Deeper Dive

Additional scripture to meditate on this week.

- **Exodus 33:11** ~ The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as one speaks to a friend
- **Ephesians 6:18** ~ And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people.
- **Matthew 6:8** ~ And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.
- **Hebrews 4:16** ~ Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.
- **Psalms 18:6** ~ In my distress I called to the Lord; I cried to my God for help. From his temple he heard my voice; my cry came before him, into his ears.
- **Isaiah 64:8** ~ Yet you, Lord, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand.

Day 5 - Conversational prayer

Perhaps the easiest way for us to pray is just to converse with God. He is always near, He can always hear us, and He always wants to spend time with us. We can talk to God any time, any where, and in any way. Aloud or silently, alone or in a group, there is no special formula or method needed. Just as we have said all week long, there is no wrong way to pray. When we talk about conversational prayer, this is simply talking to God as you would a close friend or family member. As in any conversation, this should include talking AND listening to God. For many of us, conversational prayer is the most common method we use when we are alone with God.

What about using conversational prayer in a group setting? Did your "pray out loud" anxiety just creep up? In our modern church group setting, many times there will be one brave person giving a "prayer monologue" for the whole group. We tend to falsely feel that we need to pray perfectly or use formal religious language in order to pray out loud. This has led many of us to have a fear of praying aloud in a group setting. We don't want to do it "wrong". However, as we have learned all week, there is no wrong way to pray. This is where conversational prayer can really help us. Using this casual, Spirit-led format can truly open the door to experiencing a much more participatory group prayer time. In the early church setting this would have been much more common practice, just like in Acts 2. Here is an example of a conversational group prayer within the context of a church small group.

Joe: *We love you God*

Jim: *Thank you for your Word tonight, Lord*

Sarah: *Thank you for these friends that love Jesus*

Kimberly: *God help me with my anxiety this week*

Jim: *Jesus, be with Kimberly when she feels anxious this week*

Sarah: *Give Kimberly your strength in her weakness*

Joe: *God, I was harsh and angry with my family this week, forgive me*

Kimberly: *Lord, assure Joe of your forgiveness and grace*

Jim: *God, let your peace replace Joe's anger this week*

DAILY PRAYER ACTIVITY: Most of us have had plenty of conversational prayers with God in our own personal prayer time. However, many of us have never experienced conversational group prayer. Sometime this week, try this with your spouse, a close friend, your family, or with your small group. Remember that it's common to have long moments of silence as you are all listening to the Lord and processing what you are hearing. Just as in a normal conversation, you don't have to "fill the silence", let the Spirit guide you in those quiet moments.

- Which prayer method was the hardest, and/or easiest for you this week? Did any of them surprise you? How have the prayer activities this week impacted your daily prayer routine?