

FROM THE BOTTOM OF MY HEART

10



THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven,
may your name be kept holy.
May your kingdom come soon.
May your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today the food we need,
and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven
those who sin against us.
And don't let us yield to temptation,
but rescue us from the evil-one.

¹For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever.
Amen.

Matthew 6:9-13 The New Living Translation

In some older Bibles, there is actually one more phrase in the *Lord's Prayer* that brings the prayer to a conclusion. It says -

***For yours is the kingdom, and the power
and the glory, forever. Amen.***

This conclusion to the prayer certainly expresses the emotions of many Bible writers at the end of their prayers. It is not a request to God. It is rather a heartfelt expression of worship that acknowledges God as the source of all good things and gives thanks to him.

Close friends affect us like that

Can you recite the *Lord's Prayer* from memory? Passages like the *Lord's Prayer*, when memorised, can be recalled at any time, and you can think and meditate on their deeper meaning as we have explored in this series.

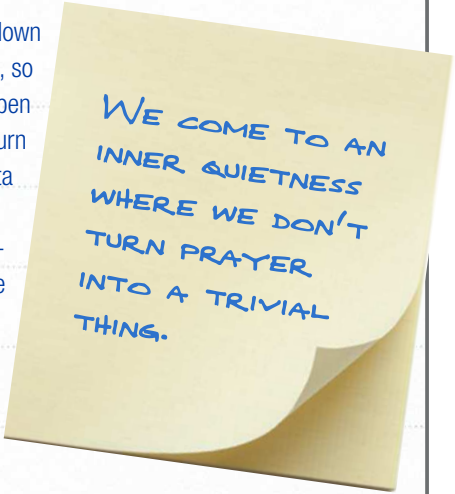
Jesus did not want us to just recite the words of this prayer in a formal way. He meant this as a framework for the basic areas we need to cover when we pray. He wanted us to flesh out situations in each area of our life, putting them in our own words. The *Lord's Prayer* is an example of how to pray when we are learning to communicate with our Creator. He has given us this structure to guide us into an intimate conversation with him.

Get involved -

Now, using your own words, write a personal prayer to God, following the themes of the Lord's Prayer, for example – his will, forgiveness, etc.

IT IS RATHER
A HEARTFELT
EXPRESSION
OF WORSHIP
THAT ACKNOWLEDGES
GOD AS THE SOURCE
OF ALL GOOD THINGS
AND GIVES
THANKS TO HIM.

Taking time to pray has a great effect upon us. It slows down our body, soul and spirit, and brings us into his presence, so we can come to the place where we are receptive and open to him. We come to an inner quietness where we don't turn prayer into a trivial thing. We no longer see God like Santa Clause - ready to take our orders. But instead, we come into a relationship with an all-loving, all-forgiving, and all-powerful Heavenly Father. Then, having become receptive to the one we are talking to, we are able to bring all our needs before him. We can have the assurance that he will always answer our requests. His answers won't always be what we expect, nor will they always come the way we anticipate. But he always answers for our best good.



WE COME TO AN
INNER QUIETNESS
WHERE WE DON'T
TURN PRAYER
INTO A TRIVIAL
THING.

It's no wonder people spontaneously utter expressions of admiration and thankfulness to God. Eugene Peterson, who has paraphrased the Bible into modern English, expresses the conclusion to the *Lord's Prayer* in his own words by saying -

***You're in charge! You can do anything you want!
You're ablaze in beauty! Yes. Yes. Yes.***

To address him like this is to end our time of prayer where we began - in the presence of God. However the ending is more enthusiastic.

Best friends love to talk

The Bible often describes God's relationship with us as being like a bridegroom with his bride. An intimate relationship is more than a one-way conversation. Going through the *Lord's Prayer* so far has only been a one-way conversation. Prayer is a two-way conversation that includes learning to listen to God talking back to us.

As we read the Bible God will speak to us. We have been listening to his word to us every time we have quoted and read a Bible verse in these booklets. Prayer is when we take God's word, listen to it, and then respond to him by talking to him about what he has said, how we understand it, and how it will affect us.

Few people have heard the audible voice of God. For those who have, it is usually in exceptional circumstances. God mainly speaks to us through the Bible. In pointing out the fundamental

difference between the Bible and every other form of writing, God says -

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy (what has been written in the Bible) never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Genesis 3:7 (2 Peter 1:20-21) (additional information supplied in brackets)

And speaking to a young man named Timothy, his mentor, Paul said -

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so the man (and woman) of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

2 Timothy 3:16,17 (additional information supplied in brackets)

Get involved -

As you've begun to read the Bible - maybe for the first time - what are the differences you've noticed in comparison to other literature?

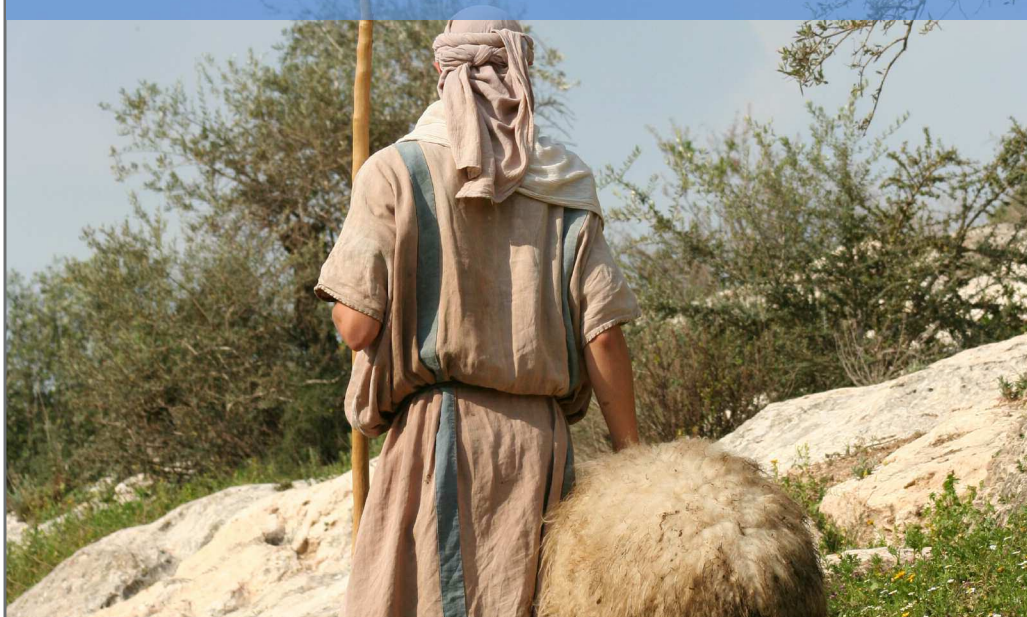


Because God speaks to us through his word - the Bible - one way we can actually pray is to have a conversation with God based on any part of the Bible. We can let him talk to us as we read a short passage, and after reflecting on what it means, begin to talk back to him by sharing the thoughts that come to mind. In this way we can pray to God for as long as we want. This gives us a clue as to how Jesus managed to pray all night on some occasions. (See Luke 6:12)

Sharing your heart with your best friend

Here's an example of reading a Bible passage and responding to it in prayer. Let's say you've read Psalm 23:1 -

The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need. Psalm 23:1 New Living Translation



God: *I am your LORD.*

You: *I've learned that the name you have called yourself means you're always here for me. Thank you for not abandoning me. Sometimes I get lonely, and it's good to know you are with me, even when I can't see you physically.*

God: *I am your shepherd.*

You: *Wow! I have my own personal shepherd! But does that mean I'm like a sheep? I must admit I follow the crowd sometimes and do senseless things like sheep. But it's good to know I have someone looking after me like shepherds care for their sheep. In times past they lived with their sheep and protected them from robbers and wild beasts. Will you do the same thing for me too please?*

God: *I will supply all your needs.*

You: *It's so encouraging to know that. I wouldn't expect you to give me a million dollars, because that's not what you promise. But to know that I will never be left without the basic needs is so reassuring. I thank you.*

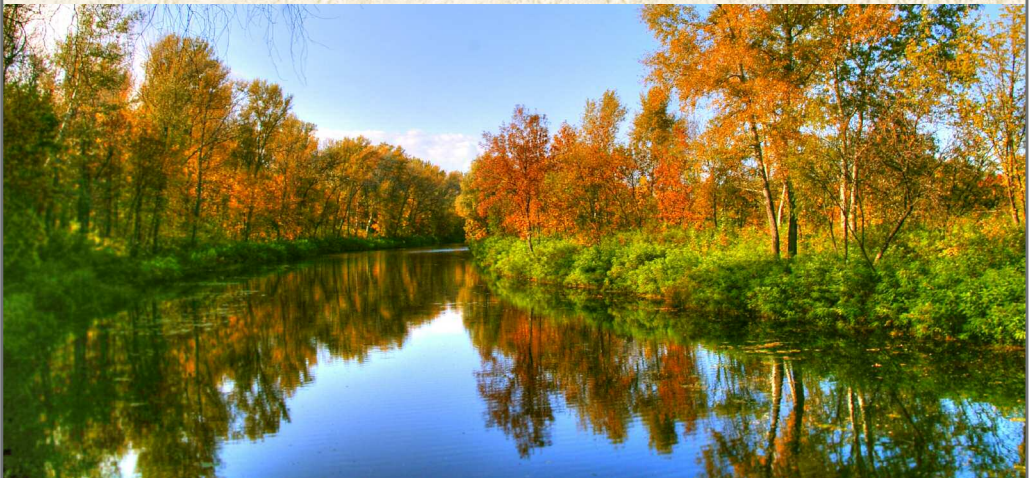
Get involved -

Pick your own short passage from the Bible and write down a conversation with God in a manner similar to the example on the previous page.

The love languages of God

There are also other ways in which God can speak to us as well as through the Bible. He can guide us with appropriate messages, sights, sounds and feelings in many ways -

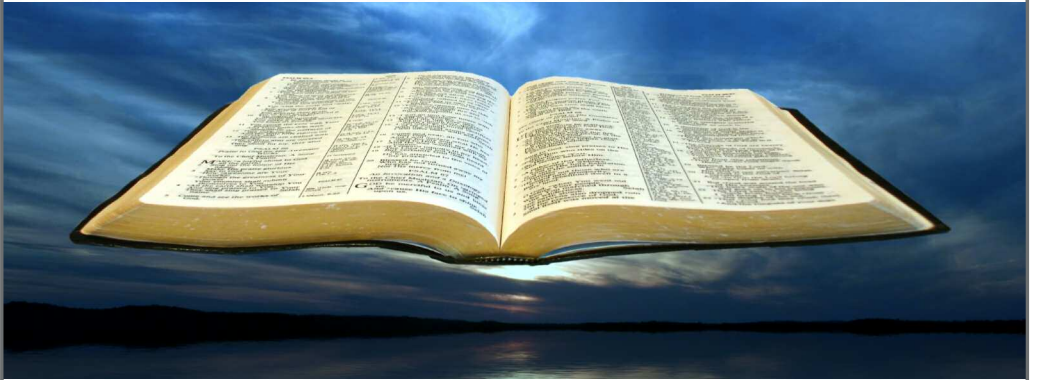
- Nature
- Music
- Art
- Friends
- Uplifting reading
- Children
- Dreams



Even in difficult times, God can take what seems like a disaster, and speak to us through it -

- Tragedy
- Pain and loss

All these experiences speak deeply to our human hearts, and in times of quietness and reflection God often uses them to encourage and empower our lives. But all of these messages reinforce, and never contradict, what God has written to us in his word - the Bible.



Get involved =

Apart from through the Bible, share one way in which you believe God has spoken to you.

As we read the Bible, we get to understand more about God, and he in turn educates our conscience. **He speaks to us through a conscience in tune with his word.** In the words of the Bible -

Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, This is the way, walk in it. Isaiah 30:21

This quiet voice may often sound like your own voice in your head. The way to discern its origin comes with experience. Generally, if the words come totally unexpectedly, without any earlier focus from something you may have been thinking about, and they register with a strong inner conviction, then they are often from God. However, subjective impressions can be unreliable. Any belief that God has spoken to us by them needs to be tested, because they may not be reliable. Our minds sometimes play tricks on us and add to the confusion. Remember, Satan can also drop thoughts into our minds.

Here is a list of ways we can test our thoughts and know if they're from God -

- Do your thoughts agree with the Bible? (See Isaiah 8:20)
- Do other spiritually mature followers of God agree with your thoughts when you share them? (See 1 Corinthians 14:29; 1 Thessalonians 5:19-22)
- Do circumstances that are providential in your life confirm the thoughts? (See Acts 16:6-10)
- Do the results of your thoughts work out in a way that impacts your life positively, or are they destructive in your life and the lives of others? (See Matthew 7:15-20)

Get involved -

In regard to the way you believe God spoke to you as previously shared, how has God shown you that it was from him?



The two shall become one

Through hearing what God has done for you in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus, God draws you to him and strongly impresses you through the Holy Spirit speaking to your inner being. (See John 16:7-15) Until that time, the Holy Spirit has been influencing your life from the outside. However, if you respond positively to the Holy Spirit's call, then he moves from being outside of you to being inside, by joining with your human spirit. (See John 14:16-17; Ephesians 1:13-14) It is just like a man and a woman who fall in love. Their spirits are joined, and in a sense they become one. So when we respond to God's Spirit, he speaks to our human spirit, and a deep level of intimacy between him and us begins. (See John 3:6; Romans 8:14-16; 1 Corinthians 2:6-16)

Here are some things that result from the union of God's Holy Spirit with us -

- You become increasingly aware that you're loved, valued and cherished beyond belief. (See Galatians 3:18,19)
- You develop a sense of awe, wonder and passion towards God. (See Psalm 8:1-9)
- Any abuse from the past begins to be healed. (See Philemon 8-16)
- Child-like faith, simplicity and spontaneity are re-discovered. (See Matthew 18:3)
- Self-esteem and a sense of personal identity blossom. (See Psalm 139:1-18)
- You realise that the kingdom of God is available to you right now, and you begin to experience it in your attitudes toward materialism. (See Matthew 6:25-34)
- Fear, guilt and shame disappear. (See 1 John 4:18)
- The assurance of eternal life becomes very important. (See 2 Timothy 4:6-8)
- You begin to experience a sense of real peace and joy. (See Philippians 3:1)
- You want to live as God asks, and obedience becomes a pleasure. (John 14:15)

Prayer – lifestyle or habit?

Healthy communication between spouses is a major indicator of a healthy marriage. The opposite is also true - communication breakdown between husband and wife is a major cause of marriage breakdown.

Our prayer life - our communication with God - also has a major effect on our spiritual and religious life. **When we neglect our time with God in reading his word and sharing with him in prayer, our connection with heaven soon breaks down.** The problem is always one sided - he is never far from any one of us. We get too busy or distracted with the things of life - and the really important person is neglected.

As it is with human communication, so it is with our communication with God. When it is a habit, it can become routine, repetitive, monotonous, and meaningless. That's the nature of habits. We don't say the same things over and over to our closest friends. Our communication with them is wrapped up with our lifestyle, our interests, our happiness and our sorrows, so it is varied. And so it is with our connection with God. Although we may have times for prayer during the day - for example, when we first wake up, before meals, and last thing before we go to sleep at night - what we share with him grows out of his word - the Bible - and what is happening in our lives. He is vitally interested and involved, if we will invite him in. God invites us to have a lifestyle of prayer. He invites us to -

Never stop praying. 1 Thessalonians 5:17 New Living Translation



Get involved -

If God has awakened in you a longing to become more connected to him, how will you now include prayer as part of your lifestyle?

A large, empty rectangular box with a dashed border, intended for a user to write their response to the question above.

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