



# How Do I Pray?

*Volume 2*

## Going Deeper into Prayer



**ReFrame**  
Prayer Ministry

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# Introduction



*How do I go deeper in prayer?*

Prayer is an essential element in nurturing a growing Christian faith. The apostle Paul teaches us to “Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful” ([Colossians 4:2](#)) and to “Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus” ([1 Thessalonians 5:16-18](#)). Through prayer, we communicate with our Savior and listen to his leading.

[Daniel, a hero of faith from the Old Testament](#), provides us with an inspiring model of a faithful commitment to regular prayer. Daniel was taken from his home and forced to live in a foreign country as a captive. His captors noticed his wisdom and skills, and pressed him into the service of the foreign king. However, his rapid rise in status sparked jealousy among the other servants of the court, so they set a trap. They persuaded the king to issue a decree that prohibited prayer to anyone except the king. Anyone who broke that law would receive a death sentence.

But Daniel was a man devoted to prayer and he continued to pray to God: “Now when Daniel learned that the decree had been published, he went home to his upstairs room where the windows opened toward Jerusalem. Three times a day he got down on his knees and prayed, giving thanks to his God, just as he had done before” ([Daniel 6:10](#)). Even when facing death, Daniel continued to be faithful in his prayers, “just as he had done before.” His habit of prayer was incredibly strong; he was willing to give up his life rather than give up his prayer life. And—as we read later in Daniel 6—God miraculously delivered Daniel from the attempted execution in the lions’ den.

While I’ve never been faced with a life-or-death decision in my prayer life like Daniel, his story encourages me to remain focused in my prayer time. This precious communion with God strengthens faith, builds dependence on him, and deepens love for others. But sometimes prayer can feel like a chore. Our attention spans can be short, distractions abound, discouragement sets in, exhaustion takes its toll, and establishing a regular prayer habit can be challenging. Maybe your prayer time even feels a bit dull. So how do you deepen your prayers?

To cultivate a more vibrant habit of prayer, one effective approach is to learn more about it. A few years back we published [How Do I Pray? Six Ways to Help You Reinvigorate Your Prayer Life](#). Many people have found it very helpful. This second installment offers additional prayer methods that may take a bit more focus and attention. We’ve also included guidance on how to pray for others. In my personal experience I have found that when I pray for others, my love and appreciation for them increases. It is comforting to know that I can take all my worries, fears, anxiety, and even anger to the Lord, knowing that he listens.

We hope that this book will equip you with the tools and insights needed to deepen your connection with God, enrich your faith journey, and increase your care for others.



**Emily Vanden Heuvel**  
Sr. Producer, ReFrame Prayer Ministry

# Going Deeper in Personal Prayer

## The Lord's Prayer

A favorite routine I have with my children is to pray with them at night. After a brief snuggle and a time to reflect on the day, I tuck my children in with prayer. This bedtime ritual is comforting to the kids, signaling that it is time for their minds and bodies to sleep.

The kids and I often recite a bedtime prayer together. One night my son asked, "Mom, why do we always say the same prayer?" I told him that when we memorize a prayer, we can say it without much effort—this is especially helpful when we don't exactly know what to pray.

He replied, "Like when you *just know* that two times five is ten, and you don't have to count your fingers—you just know it?"

"Exactly," I replied.

My son reminded me of the comfort that comes from saying familiar prayers. The Lord's Prayer is probably the prayer most Christians know the best. Reciting the Lord's Prayer gives me comfort and a sense of connection with God.

The Lord's Prayer is found in both [Luke 11:2-4](#) and [Matthew 6:9-13](#). In Matthew's gospel, we read:

*"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."*



When I use the Lord's Prayer as a guide, I find that Jesus' words can be a helpful guide especially when my heart is full of distractions and worry.

## Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name

The Lord's Prayer starts with worship. Rather than starting with our list of wants and needs, we begin with praise and worship of our Perfect Parent who knows us better than we know ourselves and has a perfect plan for us. How does God's hallowed name give you comfort and a sense of connection with him?

## Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven

God gives us confidence that his perfect wisdom is enacted even when life has been turned upside down. God renews us when the need to control everything leaves us worn out. God comforts us with his perfect plan when our hearts are aching. God conforms us “to the image of his Son,” Jesus, who prayed “not as I will, but as you will” even when he was facing certain death ([Romans 8:29](#), [Matthew 26:39](#)). We are keenly aware that we’re weak because so much is clearly out of our control. We believe in God’s power, submit to his plan, and trust that he is listening.

## Give us today our daily bread

Praying for our daily bread reminds me of the difference between wants and needs. I need God’s constant presence in my life. I need his grace and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. I need the Holy Spirit to convict me of my sin and help me grow in my faith. I need assurance that God has a plan and an eternal home for me. In what areas do you find it difficult to trust God? What fears and worries overwhelm you? When you pray for daily bread, trust that God hears your needs and your wants, and will help your heart be content with what he provides.

## Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors

The act of forgiving others who have caused us pain can feel impossible. Thankfully, Scripture gives us guidance. The most powerful example of forgiveness is from Jesus Christ himself. While dying on the cross, he shouts out, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34). In the midst of his agonizing death, Jesus forgives. I am so grateful that God shares his perfect and unconditional forgiveness of sin through Jesus Christ with us; he forgave us first, and now we are called to forgive others. Who in your life needs your forgiveness? Whose forgiveness do you need to seek out? What sins do you need to remember that Jesus has *already* forgiven?

## Lead us not into temptation and deliver us from the evil one

In these two petitions, we ask God for help because we are constantly tempted to neglect our duties, be unfaithful, and give in to sin. We also face evil, or more literally the evil one. Satan is known as the great liar ([Revelation 12:10](#)). We ask God to deliver us from the evil one who lies to convince us we are unloved and unforgiven. Temptation is always in front of us, but we don’t need to be afraid of it ([James 1:2-5](#)). What temptations do you face today? What lies do you continue to believe? Ask for God’s deliverance.

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

The New International Version (NIV) translation does not include this last phrase, but many Christians carry it over from the King James Version (KJV) as the traditional conclusion of Jesus’ Prayer. As the Lord’s Prayer begins with praise, we end it with praise. In his book, *Prayer*, Timothy Keller gives this helpful summary: “After descending into our needs, troubles, and limitations, we return to the trust of God’s complete sufficiency. Here our hearts can end with ‘tranquil repose’ in the remembrance that nothing can ever snatch away the kingdom, power, and glory from our heavenly, loving Father” (p. 117).

# Listening Prayer

Listening Prayer is simple: find a quiet place, read God's Word, sit silently, and listen. We often bring long lists of requests to God, which he invites us to do ([Philippians 4:6](#)), but he also wants us to spend time listening quietly in his presence. "But the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him" (Habakkuk 2:20). Listening Prayer helps us remember how God revealed himself through his Word, creation, and the Holy Spirit.

Though Listening Prayer is simple, it does take some practice. Many things demand our attention: work, family obligations, schooling, constant pings from our cell phones, and the never-ending distraction of social media. In the loud world we live in, it takes discipline to stop, listen to God's voice, and hear his leading. Here are some suggestions to help you get started:

1. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you let go of distractions and anxiety. ([1 Peter 5:7](#))
2. Wait in silence. ([James 1:5](#))
3. Read Scripture if your mind wanders. ([Psalm 100](#))
4. Write down ideas, pictures, and scriptures that come into your mind. ([Psalm 66:16](#))
5. Share the inspiration with a trusted friend or prayer partner. ([Psalm 96:2-4](#))

A great way to start Listening Prayer is by letting Scripture guide you. I suggest starting with the story of Jesus' birth in [Luke 2](#). After reading God's Word, imagine yourself as an observer to the events. Now read the passage again as a participant. Is there anything new that you noticed or any comfort you received?

After experiencing Listening Prayer, write down your thoughts. How might Listening Prayer impact the way you pray for the people on your heart today?

# Lectio Divina

## Order and informing prayer

*Lectio Divina*, a Latin term, literally means “divine reading” or “scripture prayer.” It dates back to the 6th century. When we use this practice, we reflect on God’s Word in order to steer and inform our prayers. MaryKate Morse, in her book *Guidebook to Prayer*, writes the following about *Lectio Divina*:

“The living Word, Jesus Christ, lives in us and continues to teach us and fill us with his grace and truth. Therefore, in prayer, we come to Jesus to see his mind. Study is important. Discussion with others is helpful. Scholars, teachers, and pastors guide us. The Lord is light in others and in history. However, we also need a prayer style for reflecting on truth in our lived experiences.”

## Climbing the prayer ladder

This prayer practice is not meant to replace Bible study; instead, use it as a tool to cultivate a deeper, reflective emphasis on pairing your prayer with God’s Word. Any passage of the Bible will work, but the Psalms are an accessible place to start. Selecting a shorter passage may be helpful because this practice asks you to read it through several times, helping you to focus intently on how God is speaking to you. The imagery of a ladder has been used to give structure to this prayer. Each rung offers a different focus on God’s Word and how it intersects with your life. As you “climb the rungs,” you may find journaling helpful.

**First Rung – Reading:** Slowly read the passage out loud twice. Listen for a word or phrase that strikes your heart or connects with a prayer concern.

**Second Rung – Reflecting:** Read the passage a third time; this time, silently meditate on the word or phrase that was meaningful.

**Third Rung – Responding:** Read the passage again. As you do, ask God to show you how you should respond to the phrase that connected with you.

**Fourth Rung – Receiving:** Read the passage one last time; as you read rest in the truth you received from God’s Word.

We pray that this practice of *Lectio Divina* will help you have deeper intimacy in your relationship with God. May you grow deeper in your love for God’s Word and for his people as you pray.

# Prayer of Examen

There are many ways to pray and enter into a conversation with God. The prayer of Examen uses prayer to slow down and savor God's presence. The Examen is a five step prayer model through which you quiet, reflect, review, repent, and look forward while spending time with God.

## Am I too busy?

How do you start and finish your day? Often, we are so focused on our tasks and stress we forget to spend time with God in prayer. At the end of a day, we might say, "This day went by so fast!" Or maybe, it's the other extreme: "I couldn't wait until this day was over!" What if at the end of your day, you reflected on the day behind you and intentionally wrote it out as a prayer in a journal? What might you have overlooked because you were too busy or too worried to notice? What parts of the day could you savor?

## Examen in Five Steps

This type of daily reflective prayer is called the prayer of Examen. There are traditionally five steps to the prayer:

- 1. Quiet your mind and prepare your heart.** Take a deep breath and remind yourself that you are in the presence of God. Put all distractions and anxiety at the feet of Jesus.
- 2. Reflect with gratitude.** Try to recall at least two things that happened today for which you are thankful.
- 3. Review your day.** Reflect on your day from start to finish, and ask these questions: "How have I seen or experienced God?"; "When did I love?"; "When did I experience love?"; and "Who needs prayer?"
- 4. Repent.** Pay attention to your emotions. Allow God's grace to come into your heart. What did you do today that broke God's law? To whom do you need to apologize? Whom do you need to forgive?
- 5. Look to tomorrow.** What are your needs for tomorrow? Where should you ask for God to lead you in the day to come?

## Savor God's presence

The more you practice the Examen, reflecting on each day, the easier it will be to spot God's beauty and power in your days. Instead of focusing on the day's tasks or stress, use this prayer practice to savor God's presence.



# Prayers of Direction: Up, In, and Out

As people with a commitment to prayer, we might ask ourselves this question: “How often should I pray?” The answer from the Bible may seem a bit daunting, but we are called to pray all the time:

- *Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer (Romans 12:12).*
- *Because [God] turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live (Psalm 116:2).*
- *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 (Ephesians 6:18).*
- *Pray continually, ... (1 Thessalonians 5:17).*

Prayer, at its core, speaks to our relationship with God, communicating with him our desires, confessions, praise, and laments. But praying can be hard work—it takes discipline and focus to pray continually, especially during seasons of doubt, loss, and suffering.

In their book, *Praying*, J.I. Packer and Carolyn Nystrom write about what it means to pray without ceasing:

*The whole of a Christian’s thought life should be bathed, or perhaps we should say housed, in prayer. When our hearts are changed at new birth, the thought life becomes permeated by thankful, joyful, trustful awareness of God. This awareness flows from a heart already given to Christ and inhabited by the Spirit...We thank God for the way he has enabled us to use our minds, and we thank him also for the link between heart and mind whereby gushes and gales of spiritual joy whirl us into spontaneous outbursts of worship. (p. 75)*

So how do we pray persistently? As Packer suggests, permeate your thoughts with the awareness of God’s presence. Prayer can be done anywhere and anytime. Pray silently. Pray with your eyes open. Pray without words; in fact, tears are a powerful prayer when pain and doubt is crushing. Songs can also be prayer—how has God’s beauty and grace overwhelmed you?

Praying like this takes practice, so I suggest that you organize your daily prayers in three directions: *up, in, and out.*

**Prayers directed up** are prayers of thanksgiving and praise to God. Make a reminder on your phone or put a note near your bed to praise God for a new day, the sunshine, or a good cup of coffee. Make a list of all the ways you have seen God work and praise him!

**Prayers directed in** are those prayers for ourselves. What do you need to confess? What worries are plaguing your thoughts? Share with God what is on your mind and heart; ask him to give you open eyes to see his work and an obedient heart to follow his lead. Spend time each day [reading the Word](#) and growing in your faith.

**Prayers directed out** are those [prayers given on behalf of others](#). Pray for your friends and family. Pray for those in your life who are hard to love. Say a silent prayer in the grocery store for the weary clerk. With eyes open, pray while driving. Pray for the impatient drivers around you, or pray for the first responders as you hear sirens.

Thinking about prayers in the directions of up, in, and out may help give you focus as you grow in your prayer life. It may also be helpful to **find a like-minded friend** so that you can [encourage](#) each other in prayer and obedience to God, who is always ready to listen to our prayers. You could also [join our Prayer Team](#) and pray with thousands of others around the world. May you have the strength to be persistent and the courage to be constant in your prayers.

# P.R.A.Y. (Pause, Rejoice, Ask, Listen)

Sometimes when I pray, I find it difficult to focus. I tend to have an abundance of energy, be easily distracted, and overly anxious. Life pulls me in lots of directions and I get lost in my thoughts when I should be channeling that mental energy into intentional prayer time. How do we quiet the noise in our minds and worry in our hearts so that we can pray? I am not very good at being still, yet the Bible encourages me to **be still** and know that he is God ([Psalm 46:10](#)). Recently, I learned a strategy that has helped me to *be still* in the presence of God. In his book, *How to Pray*, Pastor Pete Greig, shares the acronym P.R.A.Y., which we can use to guide our conversations with God. Pause. Rejoice. Ask. Yield.

## Pause

Pause for a moment or two, take a few deep breaths to quiet and relax yourself. Let this time of stillness stop the endless mental “to-do list” and create an awareness that God is with you, right now. After this pause, you don’t necessarily need to sit still: take a walk, go for a bike ride, draw a picture, or choose another activity that is relaxing for you. But let yourself savor the quiet presence of God.

## Rejoice

After quieting your heart and mind, let your awareness of God move you into a time of rejoicing and praise. Thank God for his gift of grace through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Praise God for the work of the Holy Spirit, who enables and intercedes for you. Make a list of God’s care and provision. Sometimes, I don’t feel like rejoicing, especially in seasons of waiting or loss, but in moments when my prayers are mostly tears, it helps to acknowledge that the Creator of the universe knows my name.

## Ask

In prayer, we can ask God for all sorts of things, but we do it knowing that *God knows what’s best for us*. “Praying in the name of Jesus,” Greig writes, “means wanting what God wants, aligning our wills with his will, our words with his Word, and our personal preferences with his eternal and universal purposes. It also speaks of family privilege. To ask in the name of Jesus is to approach the Father in the company of his own dear Son.” We approach with confidence knowing that God will listen.

## Yield

As we close our prayers, we yield our wants and desires to God. To yield is to trust. The word *Amen* means “This is true, so be it!” So when we say that little word at the conclusion of our prayers, we are yielding to God’s perfect timing, wisdom, and strength. Psalm 46—which tells us to be still—also speaks about *who God is* and why we can safely yield to him:



*God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging. (Psalm 46:1-3)*

Quieting your mind and heart to pray will take some practice, but giving God that focus honors him. P.R.A.Y. is a useful tool to help you pause and be still, to rejoice in God’s presence and grace, ask for what you need in Jesus’ name, and yield to God’s time and purpose.

# Prayer Stones: Ebenezers

Throughout our house, my husband and I have hung framed photographs from the various places we have visited over the years. All of these photos have one thing in common: they each feature a column of rocks. While a stack of rocks may make a pretty picture, there is deeper meaning behind these stacks of rocks. They are called Ebenezers.

What is an Ebenezer? *Ebenezer* is a Hebrew word that means “stone of help” ([1 Samuel 7:12](#)). The Israelites erected stones in specific locations after God gave them a miraculous victory over their enemies or provided for them in a spectacular way. The stone pile reminded them of their total dependence on God.

The Ebenezer pictures in our home not only remind us of the beautiful places we have visited, but also of God’s care for us. On our hikes, we look for small rocks, stones, and shells; as we put them into our pockets, we think of a specific way we have seen God’s love and faithfulness. When our pockets are full, we stop and stack up our collection. Each family member takes turns adding stones to our Ebenezer. We share how we’ve seen God’s grace:

- Beauty in creation
- Safe travels
- Physical health as we enjoy a hike
- Tasty food to eat
- Forgiveness through Jesus Christ
- The gift of good relationships

Building these “stones of help” has helped our family remember our total dependence on God and his goodness to us even in seasons of heartbreaking loss and defeat.

The photos of the Ebenezers have become part of my daily prayer time. Looking at them, I consider all the many ways God has helped me, forgiven my sins, and shown his love to me. They move me to prayer. I share with God my gratitude for his help and ask him to give me the strength to trust him when I feel defeated. I pray for him to show me the areas in my heart that I have not fully surrendered and to forgive me when I think I can do it without him.

Would a physical reminder of God’s presence and help encourage you? Take a walk and build you own Ebenezer. What stories of God’s grace would you tell as you stacked stones? How have you seen his goodness in victory? May you be encouraged to recount your dependence on Godas your stone of help.

# Going Deeper in Prayer for Others

## What is Intercessory Prayer?

By [Courtney Jacob](#)

Intercession is when we pray to God on behalf of someone else. The word “intercessor” has roots in Greek, meaning “to meet with, come between.” While there is no one right way to do intercessory prayer, there are certain tools that can help us along the way. Here are a few simple ideas that have proven to be useful in my own prayer journey.

### Pray Scripture

Find Bible passages that apply to a particular request and pray them over the person for whom you are interceding; insert their name as you read the passage. I’ve found that this stretches my prayer vocabulary and often helps me align my prayers more closely with God’s will.

### Pray in the power of Jesus’ name

In her book, *Your Journey to a Prayerful Life*, Barbara Schutt writes:

*We stand in the place of the Son as we go to the throne of God. Praying in Jesus’ name also means that we go to God on the basis of Christ’s merit. We go in his authority and purity, having none of this in ourselves. We ask in accord with Christ’s will when we pray in Jesus’ name. When we pray in Jesus’ name, the demons tremble with fear. So whenever we pray, let’s be sure to name the name of Jesus. It doesn’t matter if it is at the beginning, middle, or end. Awesome power rests in the name of Jesus. (p. 12)*

When we pray in the name of Jesus we acknowledge that we have no power, goodness, or qualities of our own that would be worthy for God to listen. We are utterly helpless and trust completely in Jesus Christ who is the only way.

## Pray regularly, with dedication

Again, there's no prescription here. I'm not going to say once a week, every day, or every hour. Experiment; find what works best for you in your schedule. But don't be discouraged, and don't give up. When we commit and dedicate ourselves to regular intercessory prayer we see lives, hearts, and circumstances change in accordance with God's grace and mercy.

## It is a love ministry

This list is by no means exhaustive, but I hope these tips are useful to you in your important work of prayer. If you'd like to reflect more on what intercession is and what it means to be an intercessor, I invite you to consider [this devotion on intercessory prayer](#) from Oswald Chambers.

Finally, I love this simple quote from Barbara Schutt's book: "Intercession is a love ministry" (p. 75). I think that's beautiful. Your intercession reflects your love for God and a heart after his own heart: a heart that loves his people. May God bless you as you seek to grow in your prayer life, and may others continue to be blessed through your prayerful intercession.

**Would you like to join our ReFrame Prayer Team?** Visit [prayer.reframeministries.org](http://prayer.reframeministries.org) to sign up or make your own prayer request.

# How to Pray for Someone Else

When did the gravity of praying for someone else really hit you? I was visiting a friend, a woman in her 40's, who just had open-heart surgery. As I sat near her bedside, I felt helpless. I couldn't take away her discomfort and I felt overwhelmed with worry for her recovery. But while I sat there, I decided to pray for her. Praying for someone else is called intercession—we are praying to God on behalf of another person. We can go to God with these intercessory prayers with confidence, knowing that God will hear us, because Jesus Christ first interceded for us ([Romans 8:31-39](#)). God expects us to pray for others and his Word gives us many examples of intercessory prayer:

- Elijah prayed for rain [1 Kings 18](#)
- Daniel prayed for his people's restoration [Daniel 9:17-19](#)
- Jeremiah reminded the people to pray for their neighbors [Jeremiah 29:7](#)
- Early Christians prayed for each other [James 5:14-16](#)
- Paul urged Timothy to pray for others, especially leaders [1 Timothy 2:1-2](#)
- Paul thanked other believers for their prayers [Philippians 1:19](#)


## God uses our prayers

When a person requests prayer for themselves or someone else, they're asking us to pray on their behalf for things like physical healing from injury or illness, or restoration in broken relationships, or the strength to persevere in faith in the midst of hardship. In some mysterious way, God uses our prayers to accomplish his will. Through our prayers, he shows his power in the world around us.

We see this powerful display of God's work through the prayers of faithful believers in [Acts 12](#). Peter had been arrested and was facing execution. "So Peter was kept in prison, but the church was earnestly praying to God for him" (Acts 12:5). An angel appeared and released Peter from his shackles right between two sleeping guards; then the angel led Peter out of the prison right under the noses of the other sentries standing guard. This is a beautiful picture of an answered prayer.

## Praying in Faith and Love

Intercessory prayer is an act of love and faith. We love others by praying for them and trust that God will answer. In her book, *A Guidebook to Prayer*, MaryKate Morse, encourages us to intercede:



*The scriptures tell us to pray for others. So we pray. We pray in faith. We are called to pray, but not take responsibility for answers. So pray fervently, with hope, with specific desires, and with confidence in a God who loves us and died for us and the Holy Spirit who intercedes for us. We pray urgently and freely for the needs of our friends, family, and this world. Intercessory prayer is a prayer of participation in God's will... Intercession is often not a one-time experience. Prayers and intercession are characterized by a persistence to seek God's will. Continue with prayer as often as it's practical or as the person desires or the need continues. (pp. 196-197)*

They say love is action. When we pray for someone who is desperate for healing, lost in addiction, or held captive by fear, we act in love on their behalf, trusting in faith that God will answer our prayers and meet their needs in his perfect timing.

## What should I say in my prayers?

So what is a good way to pray for someone else? How do we intercede for others? Even as we're moved to pray, we sometimes find it hard to know what to say. Below, I have written an example of an intercessory prayer that you can offer on behalf of a loved one. You can use it as a template to write your own prayer: just add the person's name and their specific concerns.

*Dear God,*

*Thank you for the gift of my loved one. I ask that they may know your will and be obedient to you. Give them clarity, acceptance, and understanding of your purpose for their life. May their faith continue to grow, may they trust in you, and may they know joy in the midst of difficulties and obstacles. I pray they may have a humble heart that seeks forgiveness and allows them to boldly accept your unconditional love. Please give them many opportunities to share your love with others and be a light in dark places. I pray that I can be a source of safety and encouragement for them. Give me the courage to trust that you will protect and lead them. I thank you for their love and care for me. Show me how to love them better. In the name of Jesus, I pray, Amen.*

I prayed a similar prayer like this one many times for my friend as she recovered from her heart surgery. Your prayers offered on someone else's behalf are meaningful and powerful. God listens to your prayers even if you don't have the words. So may you be encouraged to boldly intercede for others, knowing that the "prayers of a righteous person are powerful and effective" (James 5:16).



# Leading Prayers: How to Pray Out Loud

If you are reading this ebook, it's safe to assume that you know how important prayer is and find joy in it. Perhaps you've committed to praying for family, ministries, leaders, and neighbors. If your intercessory prayer time is anything like mine, you pray in a quiet, private place. But what about praying out loud at a family gathering, Bible study, informal church meeting, or maybe at someone's bedside? Here are some tips to help you for when you pray out loud with others:

## Speak loudly and clearly

Prayer can be deeply personal. It may feel more reverent to pray with your head bowed while speaking in a soft whisper. But lifting your head up and speaking in a louder voice will make sure that everyone can hear you, so they may pray along with you. Remember that God loves to hear your voice ("Shout for joy to the Lord," [Psalm 100](#)), even if you have to shout.

## Write out prayer topics and requests in advance

More often than not, we're invited to pray aloud spontaneously, but on some occasions the invitation to pray may come before the event. You might find it helpful to write down important topics for prayer, so you don't forget them. Jotting down specific requests before praying and glancing at them while you pray will keep your prayer focused and help you avoid tangents.

## Begin by addressing God the Father

The prayer that Jesus taught us begins with the salutation, "Our Father" ([Matthew 6:9](#)). When you're leading a group in prayer, begin by orienting everyone toward God, stepping into a posture of humility, faith, and adoration before saying or asking for anything more. Some ideas for ways to address God as you begin your prayer include: God, Father God, Heavenly Father, Creator God, Perfect Parent, Loving Savior, and Gentle Shepherd.

## End in the name of Jesus Christ

Conclude your prayer with a phrase like: "In the name of Jesus, I pray, Amen." This reminds us that when Jesus died on the cross and was resurrected, he made it so that we can pray with confidence, knowing that God is with us and listens ([Hebrews 10:19-21](#)). We pray in Jesus' name to show our submission and dependence on him, and to invoke his authority for whatever we are praying. "And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it" (John 14:13-14).

## Praying out loud is not a performance

Be at ease; prayer is not a performance. When leading a group in prayer, we don't need to use complicated Christian jargon, share impressive theological concepts, or go on and on for a very long time. None of these will make God pay any more attention to our prayer than he has already promised to do for a short, simple prayer. While it's not necessarily wrong to use Christian jargon or fancy theological terms in prayer, the people praying with us may find it distracting. Besides, we're not praying to impress people, and we don't need to impress God.

While we are not performing, we do need to have our listeners in mind. By avoiding repeated phrases or filler words ("um" or "just") or making noises with our mouths that we don't normally make when talking, we help others pray along with us without distraction.

## Use a prayer pattern

The acronym ACTS can be very helpful as you craft your spoken prayer:

**Adoration:** Creator God, we praise you for a new day, and we praise you for showing us your beauty and power in nature.

**Confession:** We confess when we are selfish, rude, and too busy to acknowledge your work in our lives. Help us forgive each other as you have forgiven us.

**Thanksgiving:** Thank you, God, for this group. Thank you that we can gather together. Thank you for each person here and how we learn more about your love as we spend time together.

**Supplication** (asking God for what we need): God, we ask that you bless our time together, we ask that you help us understand as we study your Word. Lead and guide our ministry. We ask that you care for our loved ones in a special way.

## Praying is a privilege

I hope these suggestions are helpful and that you will be encouraged the next time you pray out loud before a gathering. Praying on behalf of a group is an honor and a privilege, and God loves to hear his people pray. Remember this wonderful promise from Jesus: "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. For where two or three gather in my name, there I am with them" (Matthew 18:19-20). May you feel confident as you lead in prayer and know that God is listening.

# Praying for the Circumstances of Others

## Praying for the Persecuted Church

By [Brian Clark](#)

Calling yourself a Christian often comes at a cost. People may act differently around you, label you a hypocrite, or even exclude you. But in some parts of the world, people are physically injured, abandoned, or even killed for their Christian faith. This level of harm is called *persecution*.

How can we pray specifically for people facing persecution?

ReFrame Ministries has the privilege and challenge of working alongside believers in some of the dangerous places where persecution occurs. We reached out to our ministry partners who interact with persecuted Christians on a daily basis, asking them how we can pray.

### Pray for safety and strength for persecuted believers

Guiding verses: 2 Thessalonians 3:2-3



*“Pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil people, for not everyone has faith. But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen you and protect you from the evil one.”*

We’ve heard from seekers and believers who have been physically attacked, locked up in their homes, and abandoned by their families because of their faith. These situations are hard to imagine, and oftentimes we shy away from talking about them. But, as Christians, we should be lifting up these brothers and sisters in prayer.

### Pray against anti-religious laws

Guiding verse: Amos 5:24



*“But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream.”*

Persecution can also be less overt. It sometimes comes from local officials who make it difficult for churches and individual believers who are involved with evangelistic outreach. Websites have been taken down and Christian magazines and publications have different rules for distribution than secular publications or even those from a different religious perspectives.

Pray that people can find God’s Word when they need it. Pray that the Bible won’t be seen as a threat, but as a story of salvation for all people.

# Pray for meaningful Christian community

Guiding verse: Galatians 6:2



*“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”*

Because of persecution, some Christians never talk with anyone about their faith in Jesus. Instead, they pray, worship, and believe in secret. Pray for these isolated believers. Pray that they might be able to find one person with whom they can find Christian community. Pray that they can have their questions answered about what it means to be a Christian, and pray that they’ll stand strong in their faith.

## Pray for the workers

Guiding verse: Matthew 5:11



*“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.”*

Despite the many forms of persecution, Christians around the world risk their lives to share the good news. Pastors form underground churches. Missionaries leave their homes to work in difficult places. Activists work to change anti-religious laws. All of these people risk their lives to share Christ. Pray for continued safety, creative solutions for sharing God’s Word, and encouragement.

## A prayer from Brazil

In closing, you can pray this prayer written by one of ReFrame’s international ministry leaders in Brazil.

*God, you are all-powerful and all-knowing. We ask you to give strength to those who are imprisoned or tortured in your name. We pray for those who face being harmed—or even killed—for you. Oh, give them the power to die for Christ if they need to. Give them your peace, even in the midst of war. Give them your smile as they face the enemy’s scowl. Give them the grace to be Christ’s witness until the end, so that their death will not be a tragedy but a powerful instrument to break hardened hearts. All this we pray in the name of Jesus, who conquered death and is alive forever and ever. Amen.*



# Prayers for Teachers, Students, and School

Using Scripture as a guide, you can pray over your church's education programs, the school in your neighborhood, and the students or teachers in your own family. I invite you to use the examples of intercessory prayer I share as templates to write your own prayers and add names of people or specific schools or classes.

## Prayer for teachers, educators, and administrators

Based on [Galatians 5:22-23](#)

*Dear God, I pray for teachers, educators, and school administrators as they begin the new school year. Thank you for the men and women who have dedicated their careers to teaching and leading. I pray that the classroom and school buildings can be a place where love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control flourish. I pray for teachers who have to manage and engage online learners. May they all have the energy, creativity, and an abundance of compassion. Protect their mental and physical health as they work hard to create safe places of learning.*



## Prayer students and learners

Based on [2 Timothy 1:7](#)

*Lord, I pray for students and learners. Give them minds that are eager to learn. Give them courage to ask good questions, confidence to take risks, and the discipline to focus and study. I pray for quality friendships and safety in and out of the classroom. I pray for the kids who struggle with anxiety and fear; may they feel your perfect love surround them, and give them the courage to get through each day. I pray that learning is engaging, valuable, and exciting. Give the students focus and direction as they prepare for what lies ahead.*



## Prayer for parents

Based on [Proverbs 22:6](#)

*Perfect Parent, I pray for the parents and caregivers of the students. May they have clear minds to juggle busy schedules of work, home, and school. Release them from fear and anxiety as they send kids off to learn, and give them grace and wisdom. I pray a special blessing upon the parents and caregivers who have students with special needs; give them guidance as they advocate for their children. And I pray that their homes are safe places of love and acceptance so that the children may know their worth and value.*



May these prayers help guide you as you intercede for the students and schools in your church and community; it is a powerful gift of love.

# Prayers for Those Who Are Grieving

Through tears of grief and sorrow, Lee (name changed for confidentiality) phoned me and shared that her cousin's infant son had just died. This unexpected death traumatized Lee because she also had an infant son. Lee was feeling lots of emotions. She was heartbroken for her cousin, scared for the life of her own son, and feeling anxious about talking with her cousin. Lee asked me to pray because she didn't have the strength. We prayed and cried over the phone, and when I said, "Amen," Lee thanked me. The pain of the loss was still sharp, but she received God's comfort and felt a little braver to reach out to her cousin.

## Comfort to the pain

Sometimes it can be hard to know what to say when someone who is grieving asks you to pray. Your first instinct may be to try to cheer the person up, but I suggest that you instead lead with empathy: reflect and name the emotions that the person shared with you. Empathy is a gift to those who are grieving because rather than trying to fix their sadness, we join them in their sadness. Christian community is about sharing not just the joys and triumphs but also the pain and sorrow.

## Helping to carry the weight of grief

When we pray for someone who is grieving, we help them carry that heavy and often isolating weight of grief. Scripture tells us that as God comforts us in our pain, and when we pray, we offer that same comfort to someone else: "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God" ([2 Corinthians 1:3-4](#)). God can use our our past pains to provide comfort for those currently in need.

## Psalm 23 as a guide

One of the best ways to comfort others is by using words from Scripture. [Psalm 23](#), a familiar and beloved psalm for times of grief and loss, is well suited for guiding those prayers. Remember, too, that God is not disrespected when we share strong emotions. Here's how I used Psalm 23 in my prayer for Lee:

*Psalm 23*

*The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.*

*He makes me lie down in green pastures,  
he leads me beside quiet waters,  
he refreshes my soul.*

*He guides me along the right paths  
for his name's sake.*



*Gentle shepherd, you have provided, nurtured, cared for, and refreshed Lee. May she feel your comforting presence in the midst of this loss. Remind her that you are leading her, and may she have the strength to cling to your guidance in the face of this sudden loss.*



*Even though I walk  
through the darkest valley,  
I will fear no evil,  
for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff,  
they comfort me.*



*God of compassion, remind Lee that while she may still walk through the valley, she does not walk it alone. You are with her in this loss and despair. What great comfort it is to know that you are with us in this devastating space! Death is still an enemy, but it does not have the final word. Remind Lee of the salvation promises because of your Son, Jesus.*



*You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies.  
You anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.*



*Our life on earth is precious and unpredictable, and the loss of this little life doesn't seem to make any sense to us. Fear, shame, and hopelessness are enemies and have no place in your presence. You listen with love when we bring our doubt, anger, and confusion to you. Give Lee the courage to cry out and give her heart to you. May she see and feel your comfort and peace when anxious and fearful thoughts enter her mind and heart as she cares for her son. Give her so much confidence and strength that it*





*Surely your goodness and love will follow me  
all the days of my life,  
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.*

*Father of love, where would we be without your goodness and love? You are with us in this heartbreaking tragedy. Every tear we shed is precious to you ([Psalm 56:8](#)). Remind Lee of your promise to never leave or forsake her or her family. We pray for an extra measure of peace and comfort for her cousin, and may they all know the sweet truth that life on this earth is not the end. We hold onto the promise that we will forever be with you in paradise. Hear our cries, Lord. In the name of Jesus, we pray, Amen.*



May this example spur some ideas for you the next time you are asked to pray for someone who is grieving. When I prayed with Lee I thanked God for being present in all of the messy and ugly feelings of pain, loss, confusion, anger, and guilt.



# Prayers for the Sick, Wounded, and Injured

One of the most common prayer requests is for healing for a loved one who is battling sickness or has been injured or is recovering from surgery. One of my most vivid firsthand experiences of the power of prayer happened years ago when my son became very sick as an infant.

My baby boy had been born healthy and thriving, but at just five months old, he contracted pneumonia. Though not a severe case, it required hospitalization for almost two weeks and led to recurrent lung infections with many visits to the emergency room. As we searched for treatments, other seemingly unrelated health issues developed, impacting his body and development. My son wasn't facing any immediate life-threatening conditions, but he was stuck in that strange cycle of chronic illness. For a distressingly long time during his first three years of life, we didn't go more than five days between doctor appointments, therapy interventions, tests, or treatments.

## Prayers of others carry us through

When I reflect on the challenging beginning he had faced, I remember how the prayers of others carried us through. Those prayers brought great comfort when I was too overwhelmed and worried to even know what to say. Thankfully, my son has since overcome those health obstacles and is thriving. He recently graduated from high school and is excited for college on the horizon. I firmly believe that the prayers of those who supported us played a crucial role in God giving us the hope and stamina we needed to get through those challenging years. I praise God for the people who prayed for us in that long season of darkness and uncertainty.

## Patient faith

When we pray for people who are sick or in recovery, we offer a powerful gift of grace. Sometimes we might feel frustrated because we prayed for healing that didn't come. We may even feel that somehow we prayed the wrong way. (If you want to read more about unanswered prayer, [click here](#).) Rather than demanding immediate answers or solutions, God calls us to have patient faith. As MaryKate Morse writes in *Guidebook to Prayer*: "We do not see the scope of the universe or the outcome of time. Only God is sovereign and watches over all throughout time, and only God is trustworthy for eternity. Therefore we pray in faith that God will be God" (p. 196). We pray in faith and hope, knowing that God hears and answers. When we pray for the sick or for someone in a desperate situation, we surrender circumstances that are beyond our control to God's goodness and care. We don't actually need to have the answers or a promise of complete healing; instead, we can trust God that our offered prayers bring powerful comfort that only the Holy Spirit can provide.

So pray with confidence and know that your words bring peace and hope to weary bodies and tired minds. Sometimes, though, it's difficult to know what to say, so I have a suggestion on how a prayer for the sick might be structured. You may use this as a template to make your own prayer:

## Begin by addressing God and acknowledging that he is listening.

"Father God, we come to you at this moment of great need. We know that you are here, that you listen to our every word, that you love us, and that you are in control."

## Pray as specifically as you can for the physical, spiritual, and emotional needs.

"God, please care for \_\_\_\_\_ (name). They are in need of your healing touch. They are struggling with \_\_\_\_\_ and they need \_\_\_\_\_. Help them trust in your power and your plan."

## Sometimes the needs are unclear or incomplete. In those situations, my prayers often sound like this:

"Father God, I am unsure and unaware of the needs of this person but you know them. Please meet them in their need. Remind them that you are present with them and that you are good and powerful. Give them strength and courage to face each difficulty and battle. Surround them with people who will care for and tend to their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs."

## Pray God's Word

When you're struggling with how to pray, use [God's Word](#). There are many references in the Bible that encourage us to pray to God for healing and comfort for those who are sick. Three great examples:

### Psalm 103:2-3



*Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits—who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases.*

### Isaiah 41:10



*So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*

### James 5:13-16



*Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.*

Know that the prayers of a righteous person are powerful and effective. Praying for the sick is a beautiful gift of grace and mercy. May you be encouraged and have confidence to pray for those who are struggling. Your faithful prayers bring God's light to dark moments, his hope in the face of desperation, and healing to the deep wounds.

# More Resources

Looking for more resources to renew your prayer life?

## Books:

**How to Pray: A Simple Guide for Normal People** by Pete Greig, NavPress, 2019.

**Praying: Finding Our Way Through Duty to Delight** by J.I. Packer and Carolyn Nystrom, IVP, 2009.

**A Guidebook to Prayer: 24 Ways to Walk with God** by MaryKate Morse, IVP, 2013.

## From ReFrame Ministries:

**Today** a devotional with daily Scripture readings, reflections, and prayer.

**The Lord's Prayer: Jesus Teaches Us How to Pray** a Bible teaching podcast from *Groundwork*.

**Faith Practices for Families: Prayer** an ebook from *Kids Corner*, *Family Fire*, and the ReFrame Prayer Ministry. Explore the why, when, and how to pray with your family.

**"How to Pray When You're Frustrated with God"** a blog by Courtney Jacob, Senior Producer of *Groundwork*.

**Prayers of Comfort for a Grieving Heart** a 31-Day prayer guide for seasons of grief.

**Prayers of Compassion for Someone in Grief** a 31-Day guide to prayer.



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Content by: Emily Vanden Heuvel with contributions by Courtney Jacob and Brian Clark

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