

How to pray

Prayer is a wonderful opportunity to spend time with God, but sometimes we don't know where or how to begin. For some, a more formal structure is helpful, such as Morning Prayer. For others a simple framework, such as the one below, works best. Whichever option you choose, intentionally set aside some time, 15 minutes to start with. Switch off the phone, or set it to silent. Maybe light a candle – remember to put it somewhere safe! And keep a pen and notebook to hand – it's amazing how many random or important thoughts pop into our heads the moment we start to pray! Write them and deal with the afterwards.

How do I pray?

It really doesn't matter how you pray. Very simply, prayer is sharing your thoughts with God, then being still and listening to him. This simple structure may help you.

1. Be Still

Sit still and relax. Maybe close your eyes, or focus on something beautiful in the church. Try to be attentive to yourself and God.

2. Give thanks

When you're ready, recall a moment from the recent past for which you are grateful. Remember how you felt. Notice these feelings, and reflect on all good things that come from God. Offer your thanks.

3. Let go

What's on your mind at the moment? Is there anything that is making you feel awkward or anxious? Raise these things to God. Ask God to give you peace. Ask God to make you aware of the presence of the Holy Spirit. Trust the Holy Spirit with the insights that are given to you. It may help you to do this as you breathe out and in. As you breathe out, breathe out your worries. As you breathe in, breathe in the Holy Spirit.

4. Talk with God

Let God know everything that comes to mind. If you get distracted or your thoughts wander, tell God about these as well! Although God knows our needs and desires, we do this to help us identify what we need to be aware of, let go or recognize.

5. Finish

As you draw your prayers to a close, pray the Lord's Prayer quietly to yourself. You can use the traditional or contemporary version:

Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive them that trespass
against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.

Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin
against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.