

Where to pray?

Prayer can happen anytime, anywhere. Have you ever had a cell phone conversation cut off because you lost your signal? That will never happen with prayer, because God's Spirit is everywhere and even lives inside of you! 2 Chronicles 16:9 says, "For the eyes of the LORD move to and fro throughout the earth, the He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His..." So wherever you are—whether it's the grocery store, your room, or your job—God always hears you. (Ephesians 6:18)

Jesus knew this better than anyone else. He said, "Father, thank you for hearing me. I know you always hear me" (John 11:42). As a Christian, you have the same assurance as Jesus to know that God hears your every prayer. This is a great source of comfort, as God is never more than a prayer away. He is ready to hear you at all times, but sometimes to hear clearly from Him, you have to go somewhere without distraction. Have you ever tried to have an important conversation with a friend in a very loud restaurant? Not easy. Just the same, often we need to find a quiet place to pray and connect with God. Listen to what Jesus did: "It was very early in the morning, while it was still dark. Jesus got up, left the house, and went away to a secluded place and was praying there" (Mark 1:35). Do you have a special place you can meet with God?

How to pray?

Is there a right way to pray? Jesus' disciples were wondering this when they said, "Lord, teach us how to pray" (Luke 11:1). Upon being asked, Jesus gave His disciples—us—a model prayer. It goes like this: "Our Father who is in heaven.... (Matthew 6:9-13). Why this prayer? Jesus didn't mean that this would be the only words you could pray. Otherwise He wouldn't have prayed other things in his prayers.

Faith is the substance of prayer. You can add in all the ingredients of the Lord's Prayer, but if you don't have faith in God, they won't do much good. Jesus said, "Have faith in God. Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it will be granted him" (Mark 11:22-23). How do you have faith in God? Basically, you just believe what God says in the Bible is true. Say you told your child, "I want you to help you get good grades." He would know that if he needed help studying, he could come to you for help. It's just like that with God: Whatever He has promised in the Bible you can trust He will do. Why don't you take some time today and pray through the Lord's Prayer and believe that God will give you what you ask for in Jesus' name. (Romans 8:26)

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What is prayer?

Prayer is the ability to communicate with your Heavenly Father and hear back from Him! Some think of it as a duty. Others think of it as a quick fix or last resort. Prayer is none of these things. It is actually the greatest privilege of a Christian. The whole Bible is filled with the command to pray: "Pray in the morning", "Pray when you are sick", "Pray when you need help", "Pray for peace." Why are we told to pray so much? It is because God wants to answer our requests. Jesus said, "And all things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive" (Matthew 21:22). What a promise!

Call Out to God

Think about your relationship with your best friend: you talk to him, listen to what he has to say, and enjoy spending time together. This is the essence of prayer, building a relationship with your Heavenly Father. He loves you very much, wants to hear what is on your mind and give you direction. God says, "Call to Me and I will answer you, and I will tell you great and

mighty things, which you do not know” (Jeremiah 33:3). Your job is to call out and talk to Him, and He promises to answer—what a wonderful guarantee! Your prayers do not have to be anything fancy. In fact, God prefers honesty over babbling on and on. Just start today by telling God what is on your mind and asking Him to speak to you. You will be amazed at His response. (1 John 5:14-15)

What is the point of prayer?

Why take time out of your day to talk with God who you can't see or necessarily hear out loud? The main reason we pray is because it's what God wants. Why does God want you to call out to Him? Think of the relationship between a father and son. A good father wants his son to come to him with his feelings and needs; it is his desire to provide for his son and let him know he can be trusted. This is even more true of God! Listen to what Jesus said about praying to God: "Or what man is there among you who, when his son asks for a loaf, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, he will not give him a snake, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give what is good to those who ask Him! (Matthew 7:9-11).

Prayer Pleases God

Have you ever had a friend who wants to hear

about your problems? Probably not. But it makes God happy when you talk to Him about your thoughts and needs, because it shows Him that you trust Him. The Bible says, “And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a re-warder of those who seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6). Faith just means that you believe God is who He says He is in the Bible. For example, you can ask God what to do in a certain situation and believe He will guide you because James 1:5 says, “But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him.” Why don't you take some time today to tell God a pressing need or thought that has been weighing you down? Relying on your Heavenly Father will both please Him and build your faith as you see Him respond to your request. (James 5:13)

When to pray?

Have you ever needed something really badly from the store and found it closed? It used to be that many stores were closed on Sundays. If you needed something, you would just have to wait until Monday to get it. God is not like that. His ears are always open to hear what you have to say. The Bible says, "He will not allow your foot to slip; He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep." (Psalm 121:3-4). You

can know that you can come to God at any time and have His full attention. And your prayers don't have to be especially long. You can shoot up an "arrow" prayer to God anytime: "God I need your peace," or "Please comfort me right now." He loves you that much. (Isaiah 65:24)

You Can Talk to God Anytime!

But how much should you pray? Should you pray every hour on the hour or just once a week? The Bible does not give a specific amount to pray. Instead, it tells us to pray continually.

Paul said, “Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything, give thanks, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus” (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). Does this mean you can't ever sleep? No, no: Think of prayer like water. Health experts tell us to drink water continually. This doesn't mean you have to drink water at all moments of the day; the point is to stay hydrated by frequently drinking water. It's the same with prayer. You can keep spiritually hydrated by communicating with God throughout the day, telling Him your needs, asking him for guidance, and thanking Him for all of His many blessings. You can talk to Him at work, while you drive in the car, even when you are talking with other people! Practice close communication with God today and see the difference that it makes. (Psalm 55:17)