

WAYS TO PRAY

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Introduction:

- There are many good ways to pray.
- None of the ways here is better or more spiritually advanced than another.
- Give them all an honest try and keep what works for you.

1. *Saying our prayers.*

- Praying the Scriptures (Psalms, turning stories, commands, into prayers).
- Praying prayers written by others.

Example:

Lord Open Our Lips

Leader: Lord, open my lips!

Class: And my mouth will shout out your praise.

Leader: God, come to my help!

Class: Lord, hurry to help me!

All: Glory to the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit

As it was in the beginning, it is now, and will be forever.

Amen!

Adapted from *The Prymer: The Prayer Book of the Medieval Era Adapted for Contemporary Use* (Paraclete Press, 2000).

2. *Speaking to God (Verbal Prayer).*

Paul gives us four descriptions of the types of words we use in prayer: “I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession, and thanksgiving be made for everyone” (1 Timothy 2:1). To these, other passages add confession (1 John 1:9) and lament (Psalm 102:1). “Prayers” is a general term, perhaps referring to those memorized or written prayers discussed above.

- Thanksgiving.
- Confession.
- Lament.
- Requests.
- Intercession.

Speaking to God with our bodies.

- Prayer postures—face down, kneeling, standing, lifting holy hands.
- Body prayers.

3. *Being with God (Contemplative Prayer).*

- Types of silence.
- Resting in God's presence. "Be still, and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:10).
- Centering prayer as a way into contemplation.

4. *Reminders of God's Presence.*

- Breath prayer. Related to the Hebrew and Greek words for Spirit.
- Jesus Prayer. "Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me."
- Prayer of examen. This is an examination of our day, looking for all the ways God has been present even in the many distractions and tasks. Usually done at the end of the day, the examen raises the question of whether our actions that day moved us closer or farther away from God.
- Journaling. Writing our thoughts and reflections on God can be a prayer. It is also a way of enhancing the other prayer practices we have discussed. One can write actual prayers, reflect on the experience of solitude, list those we want to lift up in intercession, discuss what we heard from God in Bible study, recount answered prayers, ponder beauties we witnessed—the list of possibilities for spiritual journaling goes on and on.

Conclusion:

Finding Your Own Voice in Prayer

As you consider the prayer practices discussed here alongside others you may discover, you will find some that more readily open your heart to God. Give all these ways of prayer an honest try, then choose what works for you. Again, pray as you can, not as you can't.

When you discover the prayer practices that best communicate your love for God, you will likely put them together in a devotional form that is unique to you. That form may change from year to year as you grow in your relationship to God.