



Praying Hands by Albrecht Durer

Prayer Journal

What is prayer?

God desires a vital and personal relationship with each of us. We grow in this relationship through prayer. Just as each relationship between two people is unique, so is each relationship between a person and God. Consequently, there is not a given formula for prayer. It is more important *that* a person prays than *how* a person prays.

We encourage each person to discover how God speaks most clearly to him or her. In this journal are a couple of suggestions for getting started. If you are finding a particular way of prayer leading you to intimacy with God, continue to pray that way until God leads you in a new direction.

Finally, it is good for us to remember that prayer is God's gift to us:

"If you knew the gift of God!" (John 4:10) The wonder of prayer is revealed beside the well where we come seeking water: There, Christ comes to meet every human being. It is he who first seeks us and asks us for a drink. Jesus thirsts; his asking arises from the depths of God's desire for us. Whether we realize it or not, prayer is the encounter of God's thirst with ours. God thirsts that we may thirst for him. (St. Augustine, CCC 2560)

How to Begin:

Always begin by recalling that you're in the Presence of God: It's easy to launch into prayer without realizing that we are talking to God! If we aren't mindful, instead of spending time with the one who loves us we instead find ourselves "worrying on our knees."

Take a moment to recall that God is always with you and that he desires this time with you even more than you do. Ask him to help and guide you as you pray.

Journaling:

Journaling is a great way to conclude your prayer time. It can help to process what took place during your conversation with God. It also can be very helpful to look back at your notes in times of discouragement or discernment. Often God is doing a work in you that takes days, months, perhaps even years. Journaling can help you learn to recognize the subtle ways God is carrying out his good purpose in you. (See Romans 8:28)



Christ in Gethsemane by Heinrich Hofmann, 1890

How to Pray

Suggestions for Prayer:

A-R-R-R: Acknowledge – Relate – Receive – Respond

- **Acknowledge:** After you become aware of God's Presence, it's important to become aware of your own heart. Take some time to acknowledge your thoughts and feelings as you begin to pray. It's good to acknowledge your physical and emotional needs ("I'm tired; I'm hungry; I'm worried; I'm excited; I'm lonely;" etc.), but try to also acknowledge the spiritual stirrings within you ("I want to be free from this temptation to sin; I feel God is leading me to do this; I want more of what God wants to give me;" etc.) If there is a particular grace you are seeking, write it down. Perhaps it will be answered immediately. Perhaps you will see over time that God is putting a certain desire into your heart to prepare you for what he wants to give you.
- **Relate:** Once you have acknowledged the stirrings of your heart, relate them to God. It's easy to just think about these things and assume God knows them, but he wants you to share them with him. Tell him what is in your heart. Ask him about anything that's troubling you. Share your desires with him. He loves having a "heart-to-heart" with you!
- **Receive:** After sharing your heart with God, allow him to share his heart with you. This is a time to quiet your own heart and mind and listen to God who loves you. Perhaps he will speak through a reflection you read, or a scripture passage, or simply with a "still small voice" inside you. (See 1 Kings 19:12-13)
- **Respond:** To end your time of prayer, respond to God. Thank him for what you received; resolve to do what he asks of you; tell him how much you love him.

A-C-T-S: Adoration – Confession – Thanksgiving – Supplication

- **Adoration:** When we recognize how magnificent God is, our hearts naturally turn to adoration. Tell God how much you appreciate him. Express your love for him. Praise his power and majesty. Focus on his character and attributes.
- **Confession:** As we adore God, we become aware of our own frailty and sin. We realize that we have let others down, let ourselves down and, most importantly, we have let God down. During confession tell God about these things and ask for his forgiveness and restoration. When we confess our sins we experience God's cleansing which helps to remove any barriers to our communication with him.
- **Thanksgiving:** Thank God for the blessings he provides daily, including those not even requested. Thank him for his love, his faithfulness, his patience, his protection, and his provision. Thank him for what he's doing in your life and for the people in your life. Thank Jesus for dying on the cross for you. Thank the Holy Spirit for always being your conscience, your counselor, and that "still small voice" that guides you.
- **Supplication:** Share with God your concerns for others and yourself, no matter how insignificant you may consider them. Tell God exactly what you or someone else needs. Ask God confidently for whatever you need and then trust that he will answer as he believes best.

3 Questions for Praying with Scripture:

- What am I seeing?
- What am I thinking, feeling, and desiring about what I'm seeing?
- What happens when I bring these thoughts, feelings, and desires to Jesus?



Creation of Adam by Michelangelo, Sistine Chapel

Who?

Psalm 139 begins, "Lord, you have searched me and you know me..."

But do I know me? How well do I know who I am at the heart of my existence? Who am I?

Am I willing to allow God to show me the truth of who I am in the depths of my being? If so, I need not be afraid. The One who has searched me and knows me is already there, waiting for me.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God; all things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it. ...The true light that enlightens every man was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world knew him not. He came to his own home, and his own people received him not. But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God; who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:1-5, 9-13)

But now thus says the LORD,
he who created you, O Jacob,
he who formed you, O Israel:
“Fear not, for I have redeemed you;
I have called you by name, you are mine.
When you pass through the waters I will be with you;
and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;
when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,
and the flame shall not consume you.
For I am the LORD your God,
the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.
I give Egypt as your ransom,
Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you.
Because you are precious in my eyes,
and honored, and I love you... (Isaiah 43:1-4a)

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Jean-Léon Gérôme

What?

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

In the painting above, we see people walking down the hill. But do we see what they are leaving behind?

When I look at Jesus on the cross, what do I see? Is it simply an historical event of torture and death or is it the profound expression of God’s love for me? God is inviting us to look beyond the shadows to see the deeper reality of his work of salvation. Do I know that God loves me so much that he would rather die an excruciating death than live without me? What do I believe?



Peter's Denial by Carl Bloch

When?

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." (Hebrews 13:8)

How am I called to spend my time with God? Are there memories in my past where he wants to bring healing? Am I willing to trust him with my future? How can I be more intentional about living with him in the present moment?

- Notice how the flowers grow. They do not toil or spin. But I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of them. If God so clothes the grass in the field that grows today and is thrown into the oven tomorrow, will he not much more provide for you, O you of little faith? As for you, do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not worry anymore. All the nations of the world seek for these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, seek his kingdom, and these other things will be given you besides. Do not be afraid any longer, little flock, for your Father is pleased to give you the kingdom. (Luke 12:27-32)
- Peter said to him, “Master, why can’t I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you.” Jesus answered, “Will you lay down your life for me? Amen, amen, I say to you, the cock will not crow before you deny me three times.” (John 13:37-38)

... He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love me?” Peter was distressed that he had said to him a third time, “Do you love me?” and he said to him, “Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my sheep. (John 21:17)

- But you, Israel, my servant,
Jacob, whom I have chosen,
the offspring of Abraham, my friend;
you whom I took from the ends of the earth,
and called from its farthest corners,
saying to you, “You are my servant,
I have chosen you and not cast you off”;
fear not, for I am with you,
be not dismayed, for I am your God;
I will strengthen you, I will help you,
I will uphold you with my victorious right hand. (Isaiah 41:8-10)



Road to Emmaus by Robert Zund

Where?

“This is good and pleasing to God our savior, who wills everyone to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth.” (1 Timothy 2:3-4)

Do I know that God wants me to be saved and to come to knowledge of the truth? Do I know that he wants to spend eternity with me?

Jesus says, “if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back again and take you to myself, so that where I am you also may be.” (John 14:3) Am I living my life with my eyes fixed on my eternal destination?

Am I willing to follow wherever Jesus wants to lead me?

Remain in me, as I remain in you. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit on its own unless it remains on the vine, so neither can you unless you remain in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. Whoever remains in me and I in him will bear much fruit, because without me you can do nothing. (John 15:4-5)

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Paul Preaching in Athens – Raphael

Why?

God has created me to do Him some definite service. He has committed some work to me which He has not committed to another. I have my mission. I may never know it in this life, but I shall be told it in the next. I am a link in a chain, a bond of connection between persons. He has not created me for naught. I shall do good; I shall do His work. ~ St. John Henry Newman

I pray that I may be willing to say with St. Paul, “I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me; insofar as I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God who has loved me and given himself up for me.” (Galatians 2:19b-20)

- Then Jesus approached and said to them, “All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:18-20)
- But you will receive power when the holy Spirit comes upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, throughout Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. (Acts 1:8)
- I give thanks to my God at every remembrance of you, praying always with joy in my every prayer for all of you, because of your partnership for the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Christ Jesus. (Philippians 1:3-6)
- At that time Jesus said in reply, “I give praise to you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for although you have hidden these things from the wise and the learned you have revealed them to the childlike. Yes, Father, such has been your gracious will. All things have been handed over to me by my Father. No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son wishes to reveal him.

“Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am meek and humble of heart; and you will find rest for yourselves. For my yoke is easy, and my burden light.”
(Matthew 11:25-30)



The Good Shepherd - Moran

How?

"FATHER, . . . this is eternal life, that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent." (John 17:3)

*Dear Jesus, help me to spread Your fragrance wherever I go.
Flood my soul with Your spirit and life.
Penetrate and possess my whole being so utterly, that my life may
only be a radiance of Yours.
Shine through me, and be so in me that every soul I come in contact
with may feel Your presence in my soul.
Let them look up and see no longer me, but only Jesus!*

~ from *Radiating Christ*, by St. John Henry Newman

- For this reason I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that he may grant you in accord with the riches of his glory to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner self, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the holy ones what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to accomplish far more than all we ask or imagine, by the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Eph 3:14-21)
- If I speak in human and angelic tongues but do not have love, I am a resounding gong or a clashing cymbal. And if I have the gift of prophecy and comprehend all mysteries and all knowledge; if I have all faith so as to move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing. If I give away everything I own, and if I hand my body over so that I may boast but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, it is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never fails. If there are prophecies, they will be brought to nothing; if tongues, they will cease; if knowledge, it will be brought to nothing. For we know partially and we prophesy partially, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. When I was a child, I used to talk as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I put aside childish things. At present we see indistinctly, as in a mirror, but then face to face. At present I know partially; then I shall know fully, as I am fully known. So faith, hope, love remain, these three; but the greatest of these is love. (1 Corinthians 13)

Father, increase my faith, hope, and love. Always increase my desire for you.

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