

What is prayer and how do I pray?

Quite simply, prayer is the act of talking to God. Sound intimidating? Keep in mind that God loves you and wants to hear what you have to say. You don't have to try to sound spiritual or recite Bible passages to God. You can talk to God like you're talking to a friend.

It's a good idea to set aside time each day to pray when you won't be distracted. Start with just five minutes. As you feel comfortable, you can always increase the amount of time.

So, what should you pray for? You can pray to give God thanks for your family, a meal you are about to enjoy or your health. You can ask God to forgive you for moments that you didn't honor him through your words or actions. You can ask God for His guidance when facing challenges at work or school. You can pray for people in your life who are sick or facing a crisis. You can pray for your spouse, your kids and your parents. You can ask God to form your heart and your character to better represent Jesus.

The Bible encourages us to pray continually, which doesn't mean we're on our knees all day. It is simply a recognition that God is present and available to listen to and lead us throughout our day. You can talk to God in ordinary moments like when you're exercising, in the shower, or even while driving — just don't close your eyes!

You can also pray with others, like in a small group. Don't feel pressured to pray aloud. It's OK to just listen. As we listen to others pray, it can be an encouraging and instructive experience.

As you pray, you can also listen for God to speak to you. You likely won't hear any audible voices, but God whispers His love and guidance to us in our hearts and minds.

If you're still unsure or uncomfortable, the book of Psalms, right in the middle of the Bible, is a collection of all types of prayers — prayers of praise, requests and frustration. This is a great way to learn how to pray and can also function as a form of prayer — praying the Psalms.

Are you ready? Just begin. God longs to hear from you.