

WHY PRAY?

“Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.”

Mark 1:35

Whether in need, desperation, fear, gratitude, suffering, joy, or confusion – people pray. Whether they believe in God or not, prayer continues to happen everywhere, all the time around the world. Throughout history people have prayed in various ways, styles, and to various gods and people. Following the pattern of history, it seems that we pray, because we need to.

As followers of Christ, we can begin to learn and grow in prayer. Jesus prayed continuously. When he faced trials, temptations, struggles and heart breaking circumstances, he prayed and we follow in His example. Early followers of Jesus we read about throughout the new Testament also prayed, following His teaching.

Prayer has a variety of purposes:

IT FUELS our relationship with Jesus.

IT FINDS out His will in heaven.

IT FURTHERS His Kingdom on earth.

The disciples of Jesus once asked Him ‘Lord, teach us how to pray.’ The key question to answer isn’t ‘why pray?’, as we all tend to pray at some point. The question is really ‘how do we pray?’.

Prayer is the most natural, necessary and powerful thing we can do.

HOW TO PRAY

In his book 'How To Pray?', Pete Grieg shares the best bit of advice he was given regarding prayer was to 'keep it simple, keep it real, keep it up.'

Keep it simple – praying is a completely natural thing to do, so let's not over complicate it through the words we use, style we do it in, seeking to not make it 'weird' or 'unnecessarily intense'.

Keep it real – God knows how we are doing before we pray, so we don't need to pretend. We don't need to pretend that everything is fine, or easy when we are praying in circumstances that are hard. Being honest with ourselves, God and others is the best way to come at prayer.

Keep it up – because our lives are tough and the spiritual battles we face are hard, prayer needs to be continuous, and our journey of faith requires perseverance and patience.

When asked by his disciples 'Lord, teach us how to pray', Jesus responded by providing us with a prayer that we now call 'the Lord's Prayer'. This is a helpful way to structure our prayers. Every Easter Sunday, an estimated 2 billion people pray or sing the Lord's Prayer, this is almost a third of the world's population. Praying this daily can be a great place to start in prayer.

*Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
as we also have forgiven our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from the evil one.
Matthew 6:9-13*

There are various ways, structures, tools and methods in prayer. During our Wildwood Church week of prayer, we're encouraging everybody to continue to pray on their own / with their families, but also to join with others to seek God and to help us grow together in our relationship with God.

P.R.A.Y. EVERYDAY

The acronym P.R.A.Y is one of many tools that can help us structure our prayers.

P – stands for PAUSE

“Be still and know that I am God.” Psalm 46:10

In order to start praying, we must stop what we are doing. We must be still, focus our attention away from distractions and our scattered senses, onto God’s eternal presence. Solitude and silence prepare your mind and heart to speak and hear from God clearly. Solitude and silence is a form of prayer itself.

R – stands for REJOICE

“Rejoice in the Lord. I will say it again, Rejoice!” Philippians 4:4

We have been created to worship God. It is hard-wired in us to glorify and lift up God above ourselves. This is about us thanking Him for WHO He is and WHAT He has done (and will continue to do!). By rejoicing, we put down our list of desires and ‘wishlists’ and lift our attention to God.

A – stands for ASK

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.” Philippians 4:6-7

When Jesus taught the Lord’s Prayer, He shared how we can ask him for our ‘daily bread’, and for His ‘kingdom come’, for ourselves (also known as ‘petition’), and for others (also known as ‘intercession’). Jesus once asked a blind beggar ‘what do you want me to do for you?’, and he asks us the same question today. He calls us to share our desires, hopes and dreams with Him.

Y – stands for YIELD

“Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God —this is your true and proper worship.” Romans 12:1

The final step of prayer is surrendering to God’s will. We do this through contemplative prayer, and listening to His word. To yield to God involves surrendering to God’s authority, with an acknowledgement that His ways are higher than our ways, and that our very lives are living sacrifices for Him.

Using the P.R.A.Y model regularly is just one way in which we can nurture a healthy life of prayer.