

Let's Pray Like This

Introduction

Consider these questions together: How do you pray? How is a person supposed to pray? What does it look like to pray?

Did you know that folding your hands, bowing your head, and praying quietly is *not* the only, or necessarily the best, way to pray? There are as many different ways to pray as there are different kinds of people, or moods that those people might be in. In other words, each of us can – and should – find the kinds of praying that work best for each of us, that fit us, that feel the most natural for us. If different people learn in different ways; if they communicate in different ways; if they are better at different subjects or sports or music or art or computers or building things – then it makes sense that we can all pray in our own unique ways, too. We can pray by ourselves or in a group; loudly or quietly; creatively or predictably. God didn't make us all clones of each other, and there is no "one-size-fits-all" prayer, either.

The goals for this survey of prayer go like this:

- To try lots of different ways of praying.
- To find a style or styles of prayer that seem natural to you, and to use them.
- To learn that different people pray – and learn, and communicate – in different ways, and to have respect for those different ways.

Our expectations for you in this prayer survey go like this:

- To really and sincerely try each kind of prayer.
- To be respectful to others' prayer styles.
- To practice praying silently and also out loud in front of others.
- To find and *use* a style (or styles) of prayer that works naturally for you, to use it outside of church, and even to share the prayers you're learning with others, like your family and friends.

You know, pastors and other folks might sound a bit fancy, or formal, when they pray in church or in front of people. That's only because the prayer is written down that way in front of them, or because they've had lots and lots of practice praying fancy or formal prayers. You don't have to sound that way when you pray – in fact, you probably shouldn't sound like that. All praying really is, is talking with God. That's it. So be yourself. Sound like yourself. Still try to be respectful, but just be you. Just talk, and don't forget to look and listen for how God might be responding. It's not always how you might expect or want it – and you might even be part of the answer to your own prayer. But the more you talk with God – the more you pray – the better your relationship with God can get. Have fun and enjoy!

Let's try praying like this...

{#1 – Structured Prayer}

What's it like?

It's like praying with a set of instructions, or guidelines. It gives you a structure to follow so that you go through the same steps every time you pray, even if you pray about different stuff every time. Sometimes you say the same words every day at the same time.

What's it for?

It's for when you think you might forget to pray for something. It's for when you don't really know what to pray for – it gives you some categories. It's for when you just aren't really organized and need some structure to support you. It's for reminding you what things are central in your prayer life.

When could I use it?

Any time – you might need to have it written down to help you. Once you get the hang of the structure, it's always with you, day or night.

Where could I use it?

Any place – if you have your prayer on a card or bookmark, just make sure you have it with you. If it's in your brain, then you could use it anywhere from the breakroom to the bathroom, your backyard to your bedroom. You could use it by yourself or with others, with a fox, in a box, with a mouse, in a house...

How it works...

There are lots of different kinds of structured prayer. Here are some examples:

✘ Morning Prayer when you wake up and Evening Prayer before bed (check out the back of the sheet for Martin Luther's morning and evening prayers). You can also share table prayers, or "grace," before meals. Can you share some examples of morning, evening, or table prayers you know or have used?

✘ ACTS: Adoration (prayers that praise God for being, well...God); Confession (confessing your sins and shortcomings to God and asking for forgiveness); Thanksgiving (telling God "thanks" for all the blessings in your life); and Supplication (a fancy word that means you're asking God for something, either for you, or on behalf of someone else).

✘ TRIP: Thanks (tell God "thanks"); Regret (What are you sorry about, or need to confess); Intercession (another fancy word about asking God for things); and Purpose (asking God what your purpose this day should be).

✘ Five Finger Prayer (see picture on back)

✘ Monks and Nuns (and other people too) memorize passages of the Bible and repeat the same passages at the same times of day every day. Sometimes they speak them, and sometimes they sing them. They have up to 9 or even more every day.

✘ Make your own lists or your own structured prayer.

Try it!

Pick one or two of these structured prayers and give them a shot, either alone or with a partner.

What did you think?

Martin Luther's morning prayer: I give thanks to you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ your dear Son, that you have protected me through the night from all harm and danger and I ask that you would also protect me today from sin and every danger, so that my life and actions may please you. Into your hands I commend myself: my body, my soul, and all that is mine. Let your holy angel be with me, so that the wicked foe may have no power over me. Amen.

Martin Luther's evening prayer: I give thanks to you, my heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ your dear Son, that you have graciously protected me today, and I ask you to forgive me all my sins, where I have done wrong, and graciously to protect me tonight. For into your hands I commend myself: my body, my soul, and all that is mine. Let your holy angel be with me, so that the wicked foe may have no power over me. Amen.



Family & Friends are those around you (thumb pointing back)

Leaders and teachers are those who point the way

Government and authority figures (the tallest finger)

Those who are weak or sick (the ring finger is the weakest finger)

Myself last (the pinkie finger is the smallest finger)

Learning goal: That you can talk about anything at all with God, but that some things are more central and appropriate than others. The ACTS, TRIP, and 5-finger examples give some good central categories.

Tell a Little Bit About Yourself

For each set of columns below, please choose either the left-hand or right-hand side for each pair. Choose the phrase that you feel best describes you. Please add up your totals at the indicated places.

What gives you energy?	
People and Things ___	Thoughts and ideas ___
Try, then consider ___	Consider, then try ___
Action ___	Reflection ___
Breadth, different subjects ___	Depth on subject ___
Outer energy ___	Inner energy ___
Interruptions are stimulating ___	Interruptions are distracting ___
Focus outside ___	Focus inside ___
Say what they are thinking ___	Keep thoughts to themselves ___
Discuss to process ideas ___	Introspect to process ideas ___
Offer suggestions freely ___	Hold suggestions until clear ___
Total: ___	Total: ___

Which resonates most with you?	
Five senses ___	Sixth sense ___
Common sense ___	Insight ___
Accuracy ___	Creativity ___
Past Experience ___	Inspiration ___
Real world ___	Unseen world ___
Current reality ___	Future potential ___
Immediacy, concreteness ___	Anticipation ___
Master, then apply skills ___	Learn new skills, then innovate ___
Simplicity, clarity ___	Complexity ___
What experiences offer people ___	What possibilities offer people ___
Total: ___	Total: ___

Which fits your decision-making style?	
Easily sort ideas about data and things ___	Easily sort ideas about people ___
Acknowledge differences ___	Acknowledge common ground ___
Critique ___	Appreciate ___
Logical, analytical ___	Harmonious, personal ___
Reasons ___	Values ___
Head knowledge ___	Heart knowledge ___
Fair but firm ___	Empathize, make exceptions ___
Analyze ___	Sympathize ___
Contents of message ___	Impact of message ___
Convince through impartiality ___	Convince through personal meaning ___
Total: ___	Total: ___

Which do you prefer?	
Planned events ___	Serendipitous events ___
Work before play ___	Work and play coexist ___
Stress reduced by planning ahead ___	Stress reduced by identifying contingencies ___
Enjoy making the decision ___	Enjoy gathering information ___
Goal-oriented ___	Discovery-oriented ___
Tasks in order ___	Several tasks at random ___
Settle and decided ___	Open to late-breaking information ___
Choose one option, then explore ___	Explore many options, then choose ___
Select the best experience ___	Experience as much as possible ___
Settled, orderly ___	In the moment ___
Total: ___	Total: ___

For the first set of questions, if your right-hand total is greater, write “E” below. If your left-hand total is greater, write “I” below.

For the second set of questions, if your right-hand total is greater, write “S” below. If your left-hand total is greater, write “N” below.

For the third set of questions, if your right-hand total is greater, write “T” below. If your left-hand total is greater, write “F” below.

For the fourth set of questions, if your right-hand total is greater, write “J” below. If your left-hand total is greater, write “P” below.

E or I

S or N

T or F

J or P

Now, put all your letters together: _____. This is your “Type.”