

Praying with All ages

I wonder how you would describe prayer to someone who had never been to church? So often our experience of prayer can be something which is wordy and unengaging, especially for children and young people. Yet, the heart of prayer is simply talking with our heavenly Father God.



“Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends.” (Revelation 3:20 NLT)

He is the creator of the stars and planets, of the plants, trees, and all the animals, including each of us. God is waiting for us to talk with him, to spend time with us, yet so often we avoid talking with God, because we find it awkward, or don't know which words to use.

If God is creative, then surely we can talk to God in creative ways, not just through quiet, spoken prayer. In this box, my hope is to provide a variety of creative ways to help people of all ages to engage with prayer. These boxes are not designed purely for children or young people, but for all ages from those aged 2 to those aged 132.

Enclosed is a pack of cards each containing a different idea for a way of engaging with prayer and faith. Some will require resources found within the box, while others may require things you may find at home, such as Lego, paper or mud.

“One day Jesus was praying in a certain place. When he finished, one of his disciples said to him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, just as John taught his disciples.’”

(Luke 11:1 NIV)

Every prayer idea is designed to encourage you and your family to pray in new and creative ways. They shouldn't be taken as a rigid framework, but hopefully will encourage you to continue exploring different ways of praying. May God bless you as you discover new ways of engaging with Him.

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“But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.” (Luke 15:20 NIV)

One way of engaging with the Bible is to imagine yourself in the story. An effective way of doing this is to recreate a story like the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) using toys like Lego or Playmobil. While you are recreating the story imagine yourself in the story and ask yourself these questions:

- What can you feel? Is it hot or cold? Can you feel sand in your toes?
- What can you smell? What is cooking? Is it a good or bad smell?
- What sounds can you hear? Are there people or animals around?
- What can you see around you?

Who are you in the story, how does it feel to be that person?

What emotions are you feeling? Pray for those who may be feeling like that today.

“But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life.” John 4:14 NLT

Jesus says that the good news he brings is like a bubbling stream full of life and energy. This is the hope that Jesus brings for all who put their trust in Him, but there are many people and situations who don't know the amazing hope of Jesus.

As you blow a stream of bubbles into the air, pick a bubble. Think of a person or place which needs to know the good news of Jesus. Perhaps someone who is ill, or somewhere that is affected by war. As the bubble floats in the air pray for God's hope to come to that person or place. When the bubble bursts, leave that prayer with God, and repeat with another place or person.

Bubble prayers can also be used for saying sorry to God, by thinking of something you need to say sorry for whilst the bubble is floating.

“Taste and see that the Lord is good” Psalm 34:8 NIV

The next time you eat a packet of sweets, try thinking of something different to pray for with each sweet. Below are two examples:

Haribo Starmix

- **Heart** – Give thanks for those you love, and those who love you.
- **Egg** – Give thanks for the food you have to eat, and pray for those who don't have enough food
- **Cola bottle** – Pray for those who are tired and need refreshing
- **Teddy bear** – pray for those who are sick or in hospital and need to know God's comfort and healing.
- **Ring** – Say sorry for the times you have not lived as God would like and thank him for his promise of forgiveness.

Skittles

- **Purple** – Pray for our royal family and all those who lead us.
- **Green** – Give thanks for God's creation and pray that we can care for it well.
- **Yellow** – Pray for those who need to know God's love.
- **Orange** – Pray for the local church, that they can share God's love and hope.
- **Red** – Pray for those who are suffering at this time.

“Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, ‘Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone’” (John 8:6-7 NIV)

In the story this quote comes from, a woman messed up, and was about to be hurt by the crowds. Jesus challenged the crowds to think whether any of them had ever made a mistake, and if so, how could they accuse the woman. Like the crowds, we all do things which hurt other people and which ultimately hurts God.

As an act of saying sorry to God, think of something which you have done wrong which may have hurt someone else. Perhaps you said something unkind to someone, or perhaps didn't help someone in need. Find some sand or loose soil and write what you have done in the soil. Alternatively use a chalk and write on a rock or paving slab.

Then hear these words of forgiveness from Jesus:

“Neither do I condemn you... Go now and leave your life of sin.” (John 8:11 NIV)

Rub out or wash away your writing or drawing as a way of accepting Jesus' forgiveness.

“But if we confess our sins to God, he can always be trusted to forgive us and take our sins away.” 1 John 1:9 CEV

We all say and do things that hurt others, which makes God upset. We need to regularly make time to say sorry to God.

With the help of a grown up, find some dissolvable vitamin tablets (available from local supermarkets or pharmacists). Take a single tablet and think of something you have done which has hurt someone else. Perhaps an unkind word spoken, or something you haven't done to help someone else. Drop your tablet into a glass of water as you say sorry to God.

Read again the words from the Bible quoted above. Watch how the tablet disappears, much like our sins when we confess them before God.

“Make allowance for each other’s faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.”

Colossians 3:13 NLT

All of us do things which hurt other people. Similarly, we have all been hurt by someone at some point in our lives; whether because of what someone has said or done, or because of what they have failed to say or do. All of this can create bitterness in our lives, and in our relationship with God. While it can be incredibly difficult and may take a long time, we are called to forgive others.

Eat a slice of lemon or something bitter like coffee beans. Think of someone who has hurt you, or who you need to forgive. Pray for that person, and for God’s strength to forgive them.

“Taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the one who takes refuge in him.” Psalm 34:8 NIV

Eat something sweet (like chocolate) as a reminder of God’s goodness.

“The Lord God banished them from the Garden of Eden” Genesis 3:23

“For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard.”

Romans 3:23 NLT

Prior to eating the apple, Adam and Eve had enjoyed being in God’s presence. However, after they ate the apple, they were sent away from the Garden. Like them, when we do things which hurt others, or when we refuse to live in the ways that God has called us to do, we can create barriers between us and God; a bit like building a wall.

Think of the things you have done which you may need to say sorry for. Using some construction bricks (such as Lego) or stacking tower bricks (like Jenga), slowly build a wall in front of you. As you place a brick down, ask for God’s forgiveness.

Then once the wall is complete, knock the wall down, thanking God for his forgiveness.

*The Lord is my shepherd; I have all that I need.
He lets me rest in green meadows (Psalm 23:1-2 NLT)*

In God we find our rest, for he knows all our needs, and provides us with everything we could ever need. That means when we come to bedtime, we can sleep peacefully, knowing that God is in control.

One way of reminding ourselves of this, is through a song written by Doug Horley, called “Wonderful Lord”. If you read stories or sing songs as part of your bedtime routine, why not think about listening to or singing this song together as a prayer before sleeping.

A recording of the song is available on YouTube via this link or by scanning the QR code:
www.youtube.com/watch?v=je66ti1DQRk



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

(Philippians 4:6 NIV)

“Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you.”

(1 Peter 5:7 NLT)

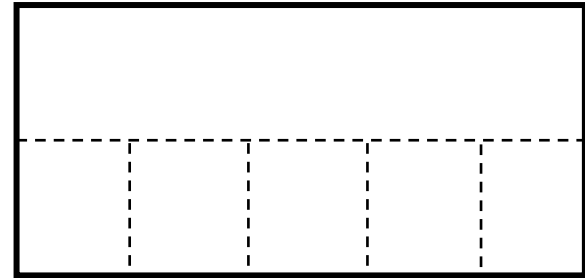
A central message of the Bible is that we can trust in God in all situations. This means we do not need to fear anything, but can bring all our concerns to God and trust that he will care for us. Both big concerns about the world, and also the smallest details of life.

Using strips of paper, write down on each piece one thing which is on your mind which you want to give to God. Wrap the strips of paper into rings and join them together to make a paper chain. Hang the chain somewhere prominent as a reminder of God’s faithfulness and add to it over the coming weeks. Why not date your prayers so you can look back and see how God has responded.

*“But I tell you, love your enemies. Pray for those who hurt you.”
(Matthew 5:44 ICB)*

When we pray to God, it is very easy to focus upon our needs and our concerns. The Bible reminds us to pray for other people and other situations too, including those who cause us pain. One way of praying for other people is to make a paperchain of people.

1. Take a sheet of A4 paper and fold it in half along the shorter edge, then cut along the fold to form two long strips.



2. Concertina fold the strip into 5 parts (every 6cm) and draw a person on the front (ensuring that the hands and feet go to the edge).
3. Cut out the person to form a paperchain of people.
4. On each person, write someone you are praying for.

One of the simplest ways of praying is the 5 finger prayer. For each finger pray for a different person. Try making it more creative by drawing round your hand and writing people's names on the outline.

The thumb is closest – pray for those close to you.

The pointing finger gives direction – pray for teachers and medical staff

The middle finger is the tallest – pray for leaders in government, church and society

The ring finger is the weakest – pray for the sick and poor, those in most need.

The smallest finger – pray for yourself and your needs.



In the Bible Jesus provides us with a framework for our prayers – also known as the Lord’s Prayer. Try slowly reading each line and think about what it may be calling us to pray.

Our Father in heaven – Praise God that the creator is also your loving father.

Hallowed be your name – Thank God for creation, family and friends.

Your kingdom come – Pray for God to end suffering including hunger and pain. Think of anyone you know who needs God at this time.

Your will be done on earth as in heaven – Ask for help to follow God’s will.

Give us today our daily bread – Thank God for his provision, and pray for your needs, and those of your family and friends at this time.

Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us – Ask for God’s forgiveness for the times you’ve not been the person he called you to be.

Save us from the time of trial - Ask for God’s help in the tough times.

And deliver us from evil - Pray for God’s protection against being led astray and hurt by others.

For a helpful video explaining the Lord's Prayer follow the QR code



“Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances”
1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 NIV

While we are encouraged to pray at all times, it is very easy to become distracted in our prayers. One way of avoiding this, is to use a fiddle toy as part of your prayers. Specifically, try using a pop it toy or a strip of bubble wrap to pray.

This could be to:

- Think of things which you want to say thank you to God for.
- Say sorry for times when you have hurt someone else, or not been the person God has called you to be.
- To pray for specific people or situations.

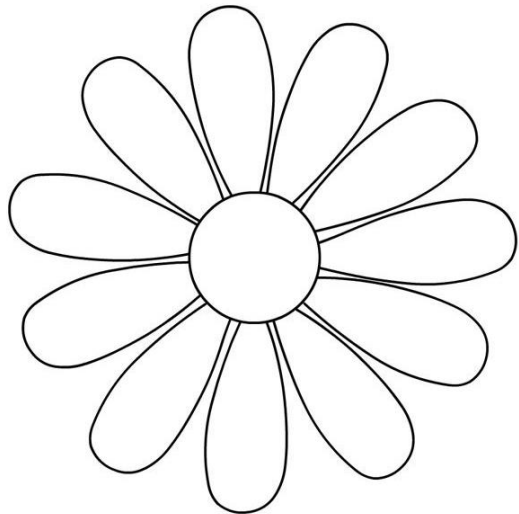
In each case, pop a bubble every time you pray for something.

Perhaps start with a small one and get bigger as your prayers develop. Or try using a rainbow coloured one and try different prayers for different sections (like the 5 finger prayers).

“Search for the Lord and for his strength; continually seek him.”

1 Chronicles 16:10-12

Have you ever watched how a flower grows? A flower will often face towards the sun to get the maximum sunlight it needs to grow. In the same way we need to be continually looking towards God for strength. One way of doing this is through talking to God and lifting to him everything on our heart.



Using a sheet of paper, draw an outline of a simple flower, like that shown below (a sample is provided in the box). Then cut out the outline.

Write the name of someone or something you want to offer to God in the centre. Then fold the petals over the name.

Place the flower in a bowl of water and watch the petals open as your prayer is offered to God.

“Are any of you suffering hardships? You should pray. Are any of you happy? You should sing praises.” James 5:13 NLT

Try using a pipe cleaner (provided in the box) to help guide you to pray at all times, whether life is going well, or whether it is tough.

1. Shape your pipe cleaner into something/someone you want to thank God for.
2. Scrunch up the pipe cleaner. Pray for those living in confusion or uncertainty; those caught up in war and violence. Pray for an end to pain and suffering.
3. Straighten your pipe cleaner and think of those who are lonely this day; those who are without hope or joy. Wrap your pipe cleaner around your finger and pray that God may meet them in their loneliness.
4. Shape your pipe cleaner into a heart. Think of someone who is ill or in need of God at this time. Pray for God’s healing and strength.
5. Loop the pipe cleaner around your wrist. Think about how God has been with you this week. Has he answered any of your prayers? Thank God for always being with us and caring for us.

“The Lord God formed a man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.”

Genesis 2:7 NIV

In the beginning of the first book of the Bible (Genesis), we read about how God created the world from nothing, and about how God formed humans from the dust of the ground. As you worship our creator God, why not try using playdough or another modelling material as part of your prayers.

1. Make something you want to say thank you for.
2. Make a model of something you need to say sorry for.
3. Make something or someone you want to offer to God in prayer.

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

I wonder whether you have ever had one of those moments when there are so many things to do, and not enough time to do them all? It is very easy to become too busy in life, with school or work, activities and home life, that time with God disappears.

God calls us to be still, to put aside all distractions and to spend time with him. One ancient practice to help us pray to God and read the Bible is called *Lectio Divina*, which involves pausing to open ourselves to hear God speaking, through listening and reflecting on the Bible. 24/7 Prayer have developed a mobile app-based version suitable for families of all ages called *Lectio for Families*.

For more information follow the QR code or find the app in your device's App Store.

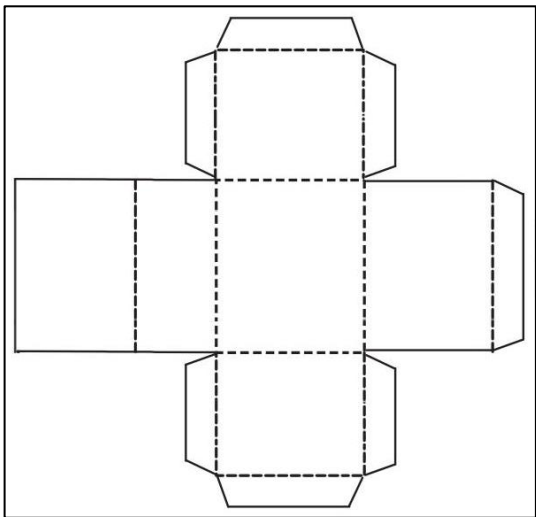


“He directed the people to sit down on the grass. Taking the five loaves and the two fish and looking up to heaven, he gave thanks and broke the loaves.” Matthew 14:19 NIV

In the story of Jesus feeding over 5000 people, before he gave the food to everyone, he stopped to give thanks for the bread and the fish. When our stomachs are hungry, and the food is on the table, it is very easy to want to rush to eat. Yet, if we forget to say thank you to God, we are forgetting that all of this is God’s provision for us, for which we need to thank him.

One way to help us say thank you is to produce a grace cube to use at mealtimes. Either print out a cuboid net from the internet (like that shown) or use the one provided. If making one from scratch add a prayer to each square.

Cut out the shape and glue or stick it together with tape. At each meal, role the cube and read the prayer.



*“The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.”*

Psalms 19:1 NIV

As the writer of the Psalms looked out on God’s creation, he declared that all of creation was shouting about God’s power and glory. They tell of how God is the creator of everything.

One way of praying to God is simply to go for a walk in creation. Rather than listening to music, or talking to God, just pause and be still. Listen to all the different sounds you can hear, whether it is cars driving past, birds singing in the trees or water rushing in a river. Think about how all of creation is part of the great orchestra of sounds all proclaiming how great is our God. Thank God for his creation, and that you can share in its beauty.

If you feel comfortable, why not try singing the chorus of the hymn ‘O Lord my God, when I in awesome wonder (Then sings my soul)’, as you join creation in praising God.

*“I will praise you, Lord, with all my heart;
I will tell of all the marvellous things you have done.”
Psalm 9:1 NLT*

As children of God, we are encouraged to thank God for how he has been at work in our lives; how he has been with us through the good times as well as the tough times. The Examine is an ancient prayer which encourages us to stop, reflect on our day, and to see God at work.

At the end of the day, try pausing for 5 minutes and asking these questions as a family:

1. Where have you been today and who have you met?
2. What was new and what was difficult?
3. What do you need to say sorry for?
4. What do you need to thank God for today?
5. Where do you think God has been at work?