

What is the purpose of prayer?

- *Prayer is communication with a Father who loves us*
- *Prayer is the discovery of our rightful place, which creates in us a wonderful sense of homecoming and belonging*
- *Prayer is the relief of bringing our concerns and worries to the God who can deal with them.*
- *Prayer is the privilege of being involved in God's story of redemption—expecting and waiting for God to change events and change us*
- *Prayer is a paradox; it is both a place of safety, where we are most accepted and loved, and a place of risk, where God pushes us out of our comfort zone into new things*
- *Prayer is sometimes a lonely, desolate place, where God hears the deepest and most distressing cries of the human heart*
- *Prayer is a creative adventure; there are no formulas or guarantees of “success”!*

Prayer Wall

"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me."

--John 17:20-21

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.

--Ephesians 6:18

I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone— for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.

--1 Timothy 2:1-2

This is the Youth Strike Prayer wall. It is the place where you can write your prayer requests and have others who enter this chapel to lift in your behalf. You do not need to write your name after your request; God knows who you are and what it's for.

Please return often to see what others have written and lift up prayers on their behalf so that God can take care of their concerns, bless them, and comfort them.

Tied in Knots

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

--Matthew 6:25-34 (NIV)

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

--Philippians 4:6-7 (NIV)

Worrying can take up so much energy and time. Often we go over our concerns in our minds again and again, exploring all the “what ifs,” imagining the worst-case scenarios, becoming tense and regretful, and focusing only on ourselves. But Jesus said, “*Do not worry*” and Paul wrote, “*Do not be anxious.*” God knows our needs and will take care of them. We need to let go of our worries and learn to trust him.

Pick up a piece of string that is on the table and think about the things that you are worrying you about. For each worry, tie a knot in your piece of string and pray, telling God about each concern and asking him to help you trust him with it.

Take the string that you have tied into knots and lay it over the cross, symbolizing letting God take control over your worries and say a prayer to thank God for taking over the things that tie you in knots.

Praying Without Words

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will.

--Romans 8:26-27

Sometimes it can be difficult to find the words to pray when faced with pain we don't understand—a death of a loved one, family problems, abuse, or any other kind of suffering. We know that we want to see God intervene and bring healing, reconciliation, and peace, but it can be hard to find the right words.

Sometimes we might feel we're running out of words if we've already prayed many times about the same thing. We know we need to be persistent in prayer, but we don't want to keep repeating the same phrases.

Think about the painful issues you want to bring to God. Draw on the sheet on the wall the situation that you want to pray for. You don't need to draw an exact representation, but shapes or colors that best express your feelings. Be aware of God's presence within you as you are honest about how you feel. If it's helpful, repeat the phrase below in your mind as you lift this prayer to God.

Lord, you know the deepest desires of my heart. Hear my prayer, even when I have no words to pray.

After you are finished, think about God's characteristics, especially his power to heal and reconcile and leave knowing that God will take away what ever pain that you have. Thank God for hearing the cries of your hearts that words cannot express.

Light in the Darkness

When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life."

--John 8:12

As long as it is day, we must do the work of him who sent me. Night is coming, when no one can work. While I am in the world, I am the light of the world."

--John 9:4-5

When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me. I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.

--John 12:45-46

Light and darkness cannot exist in the same place. However, light is far stronger. You cannot bring darkness into a room where there is light, but you can introduce light to a dark room and see the room transformed. Jesus, as the light of the world, is able to transform even the darkest place.

Think about situations where there is darkness because Jesus is not known. These situations can be friends or family who do not have a relationship with Jesus or places where God's ways aren't followed in your life.

Pick up one of the votive candles, turning it on, and hold it in the palm of your hand. Pray for the person or situation you thought of earlier. With your eyes closed, think about the darkness that you can "see" and then open them again, thinking about what you see in your hand.

Pray asking God how you can show the light of the world, either by inviting your friend or family member to church with you or helping take away the dark areas in your own life.

Burdens

Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle, and you will find rest for your souls."

--Matthew 11:28-29

Pile your troubles on GOD's shoulders—he'll carry your load, he'll help you out. He'll never let good people topple into ruin.

--Psalm 55:22 (The Message)

Don't fret or worry. Instead of worrying, pray. Let petitions and praises shape your worries into prayers, letting God know your concerns. Before you know it, a sense of God's wholeness, everything coming together for good, will come and settle you down. It's wonderful what happens when Christ displaces worry at the center of your life.

--1 Peter 5:7 (The Message)

Talking about problems can help put things into perspective and take a load off a person's mind. Praying about them is even more effective because it involves God, who can give real peace and bring about lasting change. Sometimes it is only when we start to pray about issues that we realize just how much of a burden they have been to us.

Place the backpack on both of your shoulders for a few minutes, is it heavy? The weights in the backpack represent the burdens that we carry around with us in our every day life. This can be school life, home life, friends, jobs, etc. Think about the things that are weighing you down at the moment. Jesus wants us to give over our burdens to him for him to carry so that we may have peace and rest.

Take the backpack off, feel the difference? Giving our burdens over to Jesus is literally like taking the weight off of your shoulders. Will you do that today?

Pray to ask God to relieve you of the things that are weighing you down, placing them in his hands so that you may feel the weight come off your shoulders and feel the relief of knowing that he's willing to carry them for you.

Nails

But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

--Isaiah 53:5-6

When you were dead in your sins and in the uncircumcision of your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross. And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross.

--Colossians 2:13-15

God's grace and forgiveness are freely given, but they are not cheap. Our redemption was paid for by Jesus on the cross. We can come to God at any time and as often as we like to confess our sin and ask for forgiveness, and we will receive it. But sometimes it is good to dwell on what it cost Jesus to set us free from sin.

But that's not always easy, is it? Guilt can be like chewing gum on the sole of your shoes—it's hard to get rid of, and it leaves a sticky reminder with every step that you take.

Our own thoughts can often accuse us, drowning out God's words of forgiveness...

"How can God love you when you've done that again?"

"If people only knew what you were really like..."

But Jesus died to forgive you, to set you free, to silence those thoughts.

Spend time some time thinking about what you want to say sorry to God for. You don't need to dig around in your past—ask God to show you where you need forgiveness. When you're ready, take the hammer and hit each nail, asking for his forgiveness. Take your time.

However small, however long ago, however big your sin, God will FORGIVE and will if you only confess.

Come, You Who Are Thirsty

Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this:

--Psalm 37:4-5

Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and your soul will delight in the richest of fare.

--Isaiah 55:2

Look at the ads—they're probably very familiar. They try to tell you what you need to be happy, popular, and successful.

Have the right car, listen to the right music, wear the right clothes, use the right deodorant, and you'll belong...you'll fit in. Their messages can be hard to resist. How do they make you feel?

Breathe deeply—God is here.

Think about what you really need. What does your soul cry out for? Beyond possessions and appearance...what do you hope to find in life? Love? Acceptance? Friends? Forgiveness? Hope? Purpose?

Listen to God's invitation to you.

Drink in these words. What does God offer you?

Thank God that he can satisfy your deepest needs.

The psalm says, "*Delight yourself in the Lord and he will give you the desires of your heart.*"

Will you delight in God?

Will you choose to walk in God's ways?

Stay here and pray. Tell God what you need, how you feel, how you want to follow him.

If you want to, write your name on one of the footprints on the table and tape it over the ads to show that you choose to walk in God's ways, in spite of all these other voices telling you what you need. Let your desire to follow God and receive from him stand out among these other messages.

Words

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

--Ephesians 4:29

Words can cement a friendship or crush someone's spirit. Words can sort out misunderstandings or ruin someone's day.

How do you use your words?

What effect have words had on you?

Stand in front of the blocks. Think about the words you have said to others this last week. Have you put anyone down or been unkind? Remove a block from the tower for each negative thing you have said. How can you make things right? Do you need to say sorry or resolve to respond differently?

Then think about how you have used words positively. Have you encouraged anyone? Made anyone laugh? Comforted anyone? Add a block to the tower for each positive thing you have said. Overall, have you added to the tower or diminished it? How do you feel about that?

And what have other people said to you this week? What effect have those words had? Have they crushed you or built you up? Again, remove a block for each time words have put you down. Add a block for each time words have built you up. Overall, have you been added to or diminished by words this week? How do you feel about that?

Words can cut deep, but their wounds need not to be permanent.

Do you need to forgive anyone for what they have said to you? Do you need to ask forgiveness for where your words have hurt others?

Spend some time talking to God about this.

God Is...

Who is God?

What is God like?

Write an aspect of God's character or something you want to praise him for and come back later to see what others have written.