

**DEPEND ON
JESUS**

**SIMPLY
START**

PRAYING

Blacktown Anglican Church
www.bac.org.au
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Start Here

Prayer is both the easiest and the hardest thing you could ever do.

It's easy because you can do it anywhere, anytime. And yet, most Christians will tell you that prayer is a struggle for them. It's a spiritual battle, and one we often feel like we're never winning.

Simply Start Praying is an opportunity to kick start your prayer life.

You may have never prayed before. Or perhaps never found a good, consistent habit. Maybe you struggle knowing exactly what to pray, or how to pray.

Simply Start Praying will help grow your prayer life in three ways:

1



REFLECT

2



REMIND

3



RESOURCE

1. Reflect on the Bible's teaching on prayer
2. Remind yourself to pray through the Prayer Mate app (see page 35)
3. Resource your prayer life with pre-set prayers and informed updates





1

What is prayer?

To put it simply, prayer is talking to God.

In some ways, it is not all that different to a deep conversation with a friend. You feel closer to the person and know them better afterwards. Of course, you can't actually see God in the same way. So how exactly does that work?

Prayer is a reply to a conversation that God has started. Prayer is our way of responding to God in relationship. God speaks to us through the Bible, and we respond back to God through prayer.

It is really quite amazing that the God who created the entire universe would listen to us personally speak to him.



*This is the confidence we have in approaching God:
that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.*

1 John 5:14



God invites us to speak to him because God desires to be in relationship with us. And prayer is part of how we express that relationship.

Of course, there are many more questions to answer about prayer. And we'll get to those.

For now, let us continue the conversation that God has invited us into.

Dear God, thank you that you invite us to talk to you. Thank you that you promise to listen to us. Amen.



2

Why should we pray?

Many times throughout the Bible, God commands his people to pray.

Of course, even if we greatly value obedience to God, that's not an especially compelling reason to pray. Thankfully, there are much better reasons.

First off, God's commands for us to pray is not for his sake, but for ours. There is a joy and delight we experience only through prayer. God commands it because it is good for us.

Secondly, prayer is our response to God. If we want to truly know God, and all that he has for us in Jesus, prayer is an opportunity for us to grow deeper in fellowship with God.



Rejoice always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18



Thirdly, prayer helps us to see our place in creation. As we come to God in prayer, we are reminded that he is our sovereign creator. We are not in control of everything that happens in our lives, but prayer reminds us that we know the One who is.

And so we pray. Not because we should—but because we can.

Dear God, thank you that we can pray. Thank you that you are in control. Amen.



3

What should we pray for?

There are no restrictions on what we can talk to God about. The book of Psalms is full of songs and prayers expressing virtually every human emotion, and a great variety of experiences. It shows us that nothing is off limits.

We find examples of prayers all through the Bible—in the Psalms; in the New Testament letters; and we even hear Jesus himself pray numbers of times in the four Gospels. These can be great models for us to pray directly, or to shape into our own words.

Of course, because prayer is a response to a conversation that God started, we can pray in response to any part of the Bible.



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

Philippians 4:6



We can give thanks to God as we learn of his grace toward us. We might lament as we recognise our sinfulness. We could praise God as we are reminded of his power. We can pray for his help in living the way he calls us to. Perhaps we ask for strength in the midst of suffering.

Sometimes we simply need to pour out our hearts and minds to God. And because God is a loving Father, he welcomes those kinds of prayers, too.

Through the Bible we understand God's desires and plans for the world, so that we can pray in response to what God is doing.

Lord God, thank you that you love us as our heavenly Father. Help us to bring all things to you in prayer. Amen.



4

How long should we pray for?

We are invited to pray for as long or as little as we like.

We don't need to pray lengthy prayers in order for God to hear us (Matthew 6:7). Sometimes a very brief prayer is appropriate. You might pray a quick prayer as you head in to a doctor's office. Or perhaps you could pray briefly while in the midst of a conversation with a non-Christian friend, that God will give you words of wisdom when the topic of faith suddenly arises.

There is nothing necessary or more spiritual about praying long prayers. And if we do that for the wrong reason, it can hinder rather than help our faith in Jesus.



And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.

Matthew 6:7



On the other hand, prayer is a wonderful gift that we are invited to use as frequently and for as long as we like. There is no limit to God's ear toward us. We may find that setting aside a significant length of time that we dedicate to prayer allows us the freedom to bring to God all that is on our heart. Extended times of prayer may enable us to pray well beyond our usual topics or requests. There is great value in enjoying a longer time of prayerful communion with God.

We should not feel burdened to pray for any particular length of time, while also not neglecting what a wonderful gift God has given to us in prayer.

Lord God, thank you that you hear our prayers, no matter their length. Grow us to enjoy this gift all the more. Amen.



5

How should we address God in prayer?

The most common way to address God is 'Father'. It is the primary way God speaks of himself to his people throughout the Bible. In the Old Testament, he is the father, creator and redeemer (Isaiah 63:16, 64:8); he is a father to the fatherless (Psalm 68:5). Jesus teaches his disciples to pray by beginning 'Our Father', and he uses this title in many other places. As the Son, it is natural for Jesus to use the language of 'Father' to address God.

However, there are many other names the Bible uses to address God. And we can use any of these to address God in prayer. We may wish to use particular names or titles when speaking to God about particular topics.



*You, O Lord, are our Father,
our Redeemer from of old is your name.*

Isaiah 63:16



Some examples include: God Most High (Genesis 14:18); Our Shield (Psalm 59:11); Sovereign Lord (2 Samuel 7:18); Holy One (Psalm 71:22); God of Heaven (Nehemiah 1:5); Great and Awesome God (Nehemiah 1:5); My Strength (Psalm 59:9); My Loving God (Ps. 59:9); God Who Avenges (Psalm 94:1); Judge of the Earth (Psalm 94:2); Abba, Father (Mark 14:36); God of Peace (1 Thessalonians 5:23); God the Blessed and Only Ruler (1 Timothy 6:15); God of all Grace (1 Peter 5:10); Creator (Isaiah 42:5); Redeemer (Psalm 19:14).

Any of these can be used very appropriately to address God in prayer

Heavenly Father, we praise you for all that you are. Help us to grow in our knowledge of you. Amen.



6

Can we pray to Jesus?

Overwhelmingly, prayer in the Bible is addressed to God the Father. Of course, much of this is because prior to the New Testament, God had not revealed himself as a trinity—Father, Son and Spirit.

The first account in the Bible of someone praying to Jesus is in Acts 7:59-60. Stephen is explaining to the gathering of Jewish leaders how Jesus was the promised Messiah whom they killed. The crowd reacts in anger by stoning Stephen to death. In that moment, Stephen prays directly to Jesus. There are several other brief references of prayers directed toward Jesus, such as in Acts 9:6; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 16:22; 2 Corinthians 12:8 Hebrews 7:25; and Revelation 22:20.



While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Then he fell on his knees and cried out, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” Acts 7:59-60



Prayer is appropriately directed toward Jesus when it relates to the work of Jesus in particular. For example, we can: thank Jesus for dying on the cross for our sin; praise Jesus for his obedience to his Father; express our desire for Jesus to return; pray that his kingship would be recognised over all the Earth.

The New Testament uses a number of titles for Jesus, that may also guide how we pray to him. Some examples include: Master (Luke 17:13); Son of Man (Luke 19:10); The Resurrection and the Life (John 11:25); Teacher (John 13:13); Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6); Bread of Life (John 6:35); True Vine (John 15:1); Our high priest (Heb. 5:10).

Lord Jesus, thank you for saving us through your sacrifice on the cross. Help us to follow you all the days of our life. Amen.





Can we pray to the Holy Spirit?

The Holy Spirit's primary role in the Bible is to point people toward Jesus. There are no prayers in the Bible that are addressed to the Holy Spirit. This should give us caution, but it does not necessarily prohibit addressing the Holy Spirit in our prayers.

All Christian prayer is ultimately trinitarian prayer—that is, all three members of the trinity are involved in making prayer possible. The primary method of prayer the Bible teaches is to pray to the Father, through the Son, in the power of the Holy Spirit. This model in the New Testament is worthy of shaping in our own prayer lives.



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 through wordless groans. Romans 8:26



The Holy Spirit has an important role in interceding for us (Ephesians 6:18, Romans 8:26). John's Gospel uses a word for the Spirit which is variously translated as Advocate, Comforter or Counsellor. All three terms capture different aspects of the word in the original Greek language. The Spirit is also called the Spirit of Truth (John 16:13); Spirit of Holiness (Romans 1:4); Spirit of Life (Romans 8:2); Eternal Spirit (Hebrews 9:14).

It is not inappropriate to pray to the Holy Spirit, with respect to his role in our lives. But we should recognise that the Spirit's primary work is to point us to Jesus. And our prayers should be directly primarily to the Father and the Son.

Holy Spirit, guide us in the path of right living, and strengthen us to follow Jesus. Amen.



8

Can we pray to Mary or other saints?

Some church traditions suggest that praying to Mary or other saints is similar to asking a friend to pray for you. In such practice, prayers directed to Mary are asking her to intercede with God on our behalf. However, this uses the language of prayer beyond what the Bible teaches us. In the Bible, prayer is only ever directed towards God.

The Bible is clear that Jesus is our mediator—the one through whom we have access to God (1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 9:15). Similarly, the Holy Spirit is said to intercede on our behalf (Romans 8:26-27).



*This is the confidence we have in approaching God:
that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us.*

1 John 5:14



If we have been forgiven of our sin by the death of Jesus in our place, then the Holy Spirit lives within us. And if the Holy Spirit is living within us, we have direct, personal access to God as our Heavenly Father. Therefore, all of our prayers can—and should—be directed to God. He loves to hear us pray to him. (1 Peter 3:12).

There is no need, nor any biblical example, asking those who have died to intercede for us. In fact, to do so would deny the very nature of what God has achieved for us through Jesus.

Heavenly Father, thank you that we can always pray to you and that you love to hear our prayers. Amen.





Why pray if God already knows what will happen?

Often, God uses our prayers as the means to bring about his plans. Our prayers are part of the way God invites us to be included in his work. Jesus frequently takes time to pray.

There are many examples in the Bible where things happen only because someone prayed for it, including: Moses prayed for food and water for the Israelites (Exodus 15:22-27); Hannah prayed for a child (1 Samuel 1); Elijah prayed for the widows son (1 Kings 17:17-24); Hezekiah prayed for his sickness (2 Kings 20:1-6); the disciples prayed for a replacement for Judas (Acts 1:24); Peter and John prayed for people to receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:15-17).



And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up.

James 5:15



Frequently, the Bible encourages us to bring all things to God in prayer. For example, we are to pray for our daily bread (Matthew 5:9-13); sickness (James 5:14); for all people (1 Timothy 2:1); for a Christian living in sin (1 John 5:16).

The Apostle Paul begins most of his letters with a prayer for the people he is writing to. He also asks people to pray for his safety (Romans 15:31); for courage to speak (Ephesians 6:19); for people to receive the message of Jesus (Colossians 4:3).

We pray because God is powerful and in control. In fact, if God didn't know what was going to happen, he wouldn't have the power to answer our prayers.

Dear God, thank you that you have the power to answer our prayers. Amen.



Should I pray out loud?

We trust that God is all-powerful and all-knowing. This means that praying aloud is not the only way you can pray. God can hear our thoughts as we pray quietly to him in our hearts. He can hear the words we write in a prayer journal. You may find it helpful, for example, to write your prayers and then pray them aloud.

Throughout the Bible, we see all kinds of examples of prayer: prayers said together in the Psalms; Daniel praying with strict routine by his window (Daniel 6:10); Hannah praying at the temple (1 Samuel 1:10); Paul praying in his letters (e.g. Philippians 1:9-11).



*But when you pray, go into your room, close the door
and pray to your Father, who is unseen.*

Matthew 6:6



In a group setting, it helps to pray out loud, so that others can join with you in prayer. It is often a great encouragement to hear others pray. It reminds us that we are not alone as we bring our praise and requests before God.

Much of how we learn prayer is simply by hearing others pray. The more we pray aloud together, the more we will grow one another in our prayers.

Jesus reminds us that praying aloud should not be done to impress others (Matthew 6:5). It is, however, a wonderful expression in the life of a healthy Christian community (Acts 2:42).

Father, thank you that you hear our prayers. Help us to grow our dependence on you. Amen.



11

Why do we say 'Amen'?

Amen is an ancient Hebrew word used in different ways in the Bible.

In some places, it begins a statement to provide powerful emphasis. Jesus often says 'Amen, Amen, I say to you...'. Most English translations will translate this to 'Truly, I say to you...' or 'I tell you the truth...'. (e.g. Matthew 8:10).

Sometimes it is used as an attribute of God, translated as 'faithful' or 'trustworthy' (e.g. Deuteronomy 7:9).

The most common usage is at the end of a prayer (e.g. 1 Timothy 1:17) or letter (e.g. Romans 16:27). Revelation ends the Bible with this same affirmation (Revelation 22:20-21).



The grace of the Lord Jesus be with God's people. Amen.

Revelation 22:21



We can see that, while it has a variety of uses, it's meaning is fairly clear. Saying 'Amen' is a way of affirming or agreeing with someone. At the end of a prayer, it functions as a way of saying 'let it be so'. We join together in saying 'Amen' with others at the end of a prayer to express our unity and agreement in what has been prayed for.

Lord, thank you that you are in control of all things. Help our prayers reflect your faithfulness and truth. Amen.



12

Do my prayers always need to be positive?

God invites us to come to him in prayer, no matter what we are feeling. The book of Psalms (as well as Lamentations) provides many examples of people crying out in prayer to God. Known as the Psalms of Lament, they are examples of praying through all kinds of pain (Psalm 22), suffering (Psalm 59), persecution (Psalm 64), guilt (Psalm 51), frustration (Psalm 4) and anger (Psalm 13).

There is no need to wait until you are feeling calm or positive. We are invited to bring every emotion to God in prayer. Often it can be the best way to adjust our frame of mind.



*Hear me, Lord, and answer me,
for I am poor and needy.*

Psalm 86:1



The prayers of the Psalms also model something helpful for our own prayers. Virtually every Psalm of Lament begins by expressing some kind of frustration toward God and perhaps a demand for God to act. But they also all feature a turning point in the Psalm where they express their trust in God's faithfulness and love, despite their circumstances (Psalm 88 is the one exception to this).

In this way, the Psalms teach us to come to God, whatever we are feeling, and to express that feeling honestly—after all, he already knows. But we are to then allow God's Word and promises to speak back to us, and remember God's love shown to us, ultimately through Jesus himself.

Dear God, thank you that we can speak to you no matter how we feel. Help us to bring all things to you in prayer. Amen.



Why doesn't God always answer prayer?

Sometimes it can feel like God isn't hearing us. Perhaps we don't see any results from praying and asking God for help.

Praying to God is not a simple transaction. It's not as if we give God a list of things we want him to do, and then wait for him to do them.

Sometimes God answers 'yes' to our prayers. We ask for a good thing, at the right time, and God delights to say yes to those prayers (Matthew 7:11).

Other times, God simply says 'no' to our prayers. We are often a lot slower to accept this answer. We might simply be asking for the wrong thing, and we need to trust God knows what is best.



And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it. John 14:13-14



Sometimes God, in his kindness, says 'no' to our prayers because they are selfish prayers or will cause harm (James 4:3). Or they are not according to his will (John 5:14-15).

Then there are times where we ask for a good thing, but God in his infinite wisdom knows that the time is not right. And so his answer to these prayers is 'not yet'. This can be as frustrating as hearing 'no'. And it is not always as clear as to whether God's answer is 'no' or 'not yet'. Being patient is hard work. But if God is indeed all-knowing and all-powerful, then we should trust he will answer our prayers not as we might like, but in a way that is best.

Dear God, thank you that you answer our prayers. Help me to be patient when I await your answer to my prayers. Amen.



Do I need to use spiritual words when I pray?

There is no single way to pray. There are no words that make our prayers better. No words that make God more likely to hear our prayers.

Jesus critiqued those who prayed long prayers (Matthew 6:7). Likely the recipients of this critique were trying to impress others with their impressive vocabulary as well (Matthew 6:5).

Sometimes we hear people pray using lots of Christians words or jargon. There's nothing necessarily wrong with that if it's done with a right attitude (and not to impress people). But it is notable that the Lord's Prayer that Jesus taught us to pray is quite simple in its use of words (Matthew 6:9-13).



And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.

Matthew 6:7



There is that word 'hallowed' in there, but that mostly remains in our modern translations because it's a well known part of the prayer, and it's difficult to translate with simpler words.

We can talk to God like we might talk to a friend. We don't need special words or a special voice to pray.

Dear God, thank you that you hear my words, no matter how simple. Amen.



Do I need to use formal words when I pray?

The Aramaic word *Abba* is used a number of times in the Bible with reference to how we can address God. It's a word that conveys a deeply intimate relationship, and at the same time has a sense of respect to an authority.

Jesus uses *Abba* when praying to God in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:36). It highlights both the closeness Jesus has to his heavenly Father, and his desire to obey his father by going to the cross.

It's not specifically an informal word used to address God, but it does help emphasise a natural closeness and familiarity that we also ought to joyfully experience in our prayers.



Because you are his sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, "Abba, Father."

Galatians 4:6



Of course, using formal words doesn't make our prayers any better. And they might sound strange if it's completely foreign to how you would usually talk.

At the same time, it may be that as we come to pray, we feel a sense of awe at the fact that God is listening to us. And that might lead us to express not only our closeness to God, but also the appropriate respect he is worthy to receive.

When we pray, we should remember that God is both our loving father and our mighty God.

Heavenly Father, thank you that you have made me your child. Help me to honor you in my prayers. Amen.



Do I need to close my eyes when praying?

There is no special way to pray. You don't need to close your eyes, bow your head, or kneel. But these can sometimes be helpful postures to adopt to help us stay focussed in our prayers.

Closing your eyes to pray can be a useful way to avoid being distracted by what is around you. But sometimes it might help to keep them open. You could be giving thanks to God in prayer for his creation as you stare at the colourful flowers in the garden, or gaze on a beautiful sunset.



After Jesus said this, he looked toward heaven and prayed

John 17:1



Kneeling or bowing your head might help you remember the respect and honour God deserves as you pray. Lying down to pray might cause you to fall asleep and find it difficult to remain focussed.

There is no single way our bodies should be for us to pray. In fact, you might like to vary the way you pray from time to time to help you remember this truth.

Father, thank you that we can come to you always in prayer. Help me to enjoy this wonderful gift. Amen.



What are some methods for praying?

There are many different ways you can shape your prayers. The Lord's Prayer is a great model for how we can pray (Matthew 6:9-13). You might like to adapt it and put it in your own words.

Some people like to use acronyms to assist the topics they cover in their prayers. These can be helpful in ensuring we include prayer for things we might otherwise forget. They can also assist in shaping a thoughtful order of our prayers. Some examples include:

A-C-T-S

Adoration (praising God for who he is); Confession (admitting our sin and seeking God's forgiveness); Thanksgiving (being thankful for God's good gifts); Supplication (making requests to God for other matters).

P-R-A-Y

Praise (God's character); Repent (of sin); Ask (for others); Yourself (personal needs).

T-S-P

Thanks (for God's goodness to us); Sorry (for what we have done); Please (help with these requests).

H-E-A-R-T

Honour (God with praise); Examine (your own life and need for forgiveness); Ask (for your help and needs); Requests (for others); Thank (God for his goodness).

Lord, thank you for those who help us to pray. Please grow the breadth and depth of my prayer life. Amen.



Why is it good to ask others to pray for me?

Prayer is not made more powerful because more people are praying for the same request. So why is it good to ask others to pray with us or for us?

Paul often asks the recipients of his letters to pray for him. He asks them to pray for his safety (Romans 15:31), his speaking opportunities (Ephesians 6:19), his clarity (Colossians 4:4), his work (2 Thessalonians 3:1-2), and for prayer with no specific instruction (1 Thessalonians 5:25).

In Galatians 6:2, Paul reminds us that carrying each others burdens is part of the experience of following Jesus. Which means that joining with brothers and sisters in Christ by praying with them and for them is how we are made to live.



I urge you, brothers and sisters, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me. Romans 15:30



We shouldn't hesitate to ask others to pray for us. It's a good gift to be asked to pray for someone. And joining together in prayer in this way allows us to know one another more deeply, and grow as a community of God's people.

Of course, you might not make every prayer request a public one. It may be appropriate at times to share a personal or delicate situation with only a few trusted people whom you are confident will pray wisely for you.

Asking many people to pray for you won't give you more favourable answers to your prayers. But it will strengthen your relationships with others, and that is also a wonderful gift from God.

Lord, thank you for the gift of praying for one another. Help me to grow in humility to ask for prayer from others. Amen.



How can the Bible help me pray?

Firstly, the Bible is the primary way through which we know God. In the Bible we see God's character, his desires, and his plans and purposes for the world. Growing in knowing God through the Bible allows us to pray in ways that are true and right. We can praise God for his character that is on display in the pages of the Bible. We can pray for God's plans and purposes to be fulfilled, and ensure our own requests are in line with God's plans.

Secondly, the Bible itself is full of prayers of others. There is the prayerful song of praise by Miriam (Exodus 15), Hannah's joyful prayer (1 Samuel 2:1-10), Daniel's confession (Daniel 9:4-19), Jonah's repentance (Jonah 2:2-9), the



*And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more
in knowledge and depth of insight*

Philippians 1:9



many prayers of Paul at the beginning of his letters, and of course the Lord's prayer (Matthew 6:9-13). All these prayers can be used as a guide and adapted for our particular context.

Thirdly, as you go about your normal Bible reading, it is a wise habit to respond to what you read in prayer. As you are convicted of sin, reminded to be thankful for a particular gift, or stirred in your heart to see God's purposes fulfilled—these are all worthy of our prayers.

The Bible is a rich resource for our prayer life as it guides us into praying according to God's will, plans and purposes.

God, thank you for the gift of the Bible. Help me to be prayerful as I read and listen to you speak. Amen.



Can I pray while I walk or drive?

In the Old Testament, Israel was instructed to teach their children to love God and obey him even in the activities of everyday life. When they walk, sit at home, lie down and get up (Deuteronomy 6:7, 11:19). Of course, these weren't the only times they were to teach their children. They were examples of how to do it in the ordinary, every day rhythms of life.

The same principle can be applied to Paul's instruction to 'pray continually' (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Paul didn't mean that we pray every minute of every day. Rather, he is urging us to keep praying through all the various activities and rhythms of life.



Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Deuteronomy 11:19



One helpful way to grow in your consistency in praying is to pray during another ordinary habit of your life. For example, you might spend time praying every day you drive to work (just don't close your eyes!). Or perhaps while you walk around the block. You might pray for your neighbour every time you pass their house. Or people you know who are in need as you eat your breakfast.

We can pray in virtually any and every situation of life, and we should make the most of that opportunity. Find the times or activities that you think will allow you to spend time in prayer without being too distracted, and enjoy the benefit of a God who hears us no matter where we are.

Dear God, thank you that we can pray to you anywhere we are. Help me to find times that allow me to grow my persistence in prayerfulness. Amen.



Should I pray for something more than once?

Jesus teaches us that our prayers are not more likely to be heard because we've used many words, or repeated our requests to God (Matthew 6: 7). It's not as if God didn't hear us properly the first time. Of course, God knows what we will ask even before we ask him. So should we only pray our requests once, and leave it to God?

Jesus teaches a parable about a persistent widow (Luke 18:1-8) as an encouragement to his disciples to continually pray and not give up. The point of the parable is not that we should annoy God until he gives in and answers our prayers. Rather, we can pray and repeat any requests that are on our mind.



Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up.

Luke 18:1



The reason we can—and should—continually bring our requests before God is because he loves to listen and answer our prayers. When certain circumstances weigh heavily on our mind, regularly bringing those same requests to God helps us to remember to trust in God's timing and provision. If a particular issue remains in our hearts and minds, it is very appropriate to continue to bring it to God in prayer. In the act of repeatedly praying for it, we are training ourselves to depend deeply on God. And God always loves to hear us talk to him.

Dear God, thank you that I can continually come to you in prayer, even about the same requests. Help me to trust in your goodness and timing. Amen.



Should I always confess my sins when I pray?

Confessing our sins is a powerful and humbling act. No-one likes to admit their weaknesses. And often our sins—the ways we have disobeyed God’s commands—are especially uncomfortable to admit at times.

Of course, God already knows them. There are no secret that we keep from him. So why confess to him if he already knows?

Confessing our sins in prayer reminds us that we come before God as humble sinners in need of forgiveness. It puts us in a position where we admit we need God’s mercy. He is God and we are not.



Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. James 5:16



The great news is that god has already shown us mercy and forgiveness in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. And so confession is not said with a desperate hope that we might be forgiven. We can confess with confidence that God has promised to forgive us (1 John 1:8-9).

Confessing our sins is a great habit to include in your prayers. There’s no requirement to include a confession every time you pray. But it’s a worthy rhythm to include in our prayers because it ultimately reminds us of all that God has done—and continues to do—for us in making us his children.

Father, sorry that I continue to live in ways that do not please you. Thank you that you have forgiven all of my sins—past, present and future. Amen.



Why do Christians pray before a meal?

When Jesus fed the 5000, we are told he first gave thanks before breaking the bread and sharing with the people (Matthew 14:19). This practice is also recorded in the following chapter, when he feeds the 4000 (Matthew 15:46), and later by the Apostle Paul (Acts 27:35).

The practice of giving thanks to God before eating can be traced back to Deuteronomy 8:10. There was a recognition of God's generous grace to his people that was worthy of praise and thanks. Hence, the historical tradition of 'saying grace' before a meal. It is a pray of thankfulness for God's gracious provision.



When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them.

Luke 24:30



There is no explicit command to pray before a meal. Rather, Christians are people who love to pray, to praise God and give him thanks. Meal times are typically when we gather together, as family or friends, and eat together. As such, it provides an opportune time to pray together. It is a worthy habit to follow as part of a pattern of prayerfulness. Of course, you might like to keep it brief to ensure the meal doesn't go cold!

Gracious God, we thank you for all you provide for us. Grow our hearts in thankfulness to you. Amen.



Why do we say communal prayers in church?

Being a Christian is not only about your personal relationship with God. It also includes your relationship with the people of God—the church. One of the regular activities of the early church when they gathered was to pray together (Acts 2:42).

There are many kinds of prayers that are said by the whole congregation in churches today. They can include prayers of confession, thanksgiving, or even praying the words of the Psalms together.



They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

Acts 2:42



Jesus taught the importance of personal prayer in secret (Matthew 6:6). But he was concerned with people trying to impress others with their prayers, and certainly wasn't forbidding praying aloud. Elsewhere, we are told to confess our sins and pray for one another (James 5:16).

Praying aloud together can be a way of expressing our unity together in Jesus. We are together praying the same words for the same outcome. And it's a great way to allow everyone to participate together in a church service.

Lord, thank you for the gift of praying together. Help me to encourage others in doing so. Amen.



Is it okay to use pre-written prayers?

It perhaps seems a little inauthentic to pray the prayers of others, instead of finding our own words. But it doesn't need to be. The Bible is full of prayers that can guide, instruct and encourage us in what we pray for. Sometimes they will bring to light a topic for prayer that we may not otherwise consider.

But prayers in the Bible are more than good inspiration. Sometimes they give us words when we don't know what to pray ourselves. The book of Psalms is an excellent example of a collection of prayers that were used by God's people in all kinds of ways, including as prayers—both individually and when God's people gathered together.



Instead, be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord. Ephesians 5:18-19



We shouldn't forget the greatest example in the Bible. Jesus himself taught us how to pray in the Lord's prayer—an excellent prayer worth remembering and praying.

There is a potential danger in using prayers written by others. We could recite them without understanding them. Or perhaps feel we've done our duty whilst neglecting to engage with God ourselves. But these dangers could apply even if we use our own words to pray.

We should feel free to adapt or use word-for-word the prayers of others, whether from the Bible, or other great resources like the Anglican Prayer Book.

Lord, thank you that you teach us to pray. Help us learn to grow in our prayers through the benefit of the words of others. Amen.



What if I don't feel like praying?

There are some days you just don't feel like praying. It's very normal. It's a sad part of living in a world where everything is not how it should be—especially our hearts.

Often those are the days that we most need to pray. If you wait until you do feel like praying, you could find yourself waiting a very long time!

The book of Psalms is filled with examples of people coming to God in prayer through all kinds of feelings and emotions. They show us people being very authentic and honest about their sadness, frustration, anger and loneliness. There is probably a Psalm that captures just how you feel on any given day.



Let us then approach God's throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Hebrews 4:16



The collection of Psalms reminds us that sometimes we just need to start talking to God—even if we don't feel like it. In fact, a great way to start a prayer would be to simply acknowledge to God that this is how you feel. Admit that prayer is a struggle at this moment, and ask God to help you through it.

Sometimes we struggle to find the right words to pray because of how we feel. It may help to use a psalm or other prayer from the Bible, the Lord's Prayer, or another pre-written prayer that guides us.

Just like starting a new exercise routine, starting out in prayer can be difficult. But the more you do it, the easier you will find it.

Lord, please help me in times when I don't feel like praying. Help me to bring these feelings to you. Amen.



Should we always pray 'in Jesus name'?

Prayer is a gift we have access to through Jesus.

Jesus invites us to pray in his name (John 14:13). He wasn't asking us to use this particular phrase at the end of each of our prayers. Rather, he was teaching us that prayer is made possible through the work of Jesus.

Primarily, the New Testament teaches that we pray to the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit. To pray in Jesus name is to recognise that we have wonderful confidence that God hears us when we pray, for Jesus has opened the way for us to direct relationship with God himself.



You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it.

John 14:14



Jesus goes on to promise to answer those prayers which are 'in his name' (John 14:14). This is a lesson in guiding not only how we approach prayer, but also the content of our prayers. To pray in the name of Jesus is to pray according to his plans, purposes and will. It helps us to pray not for our own selfish desires. The promise to answer those prayers is, ultimately, the promise that his will be done.

Concluding your prayers with 'in Jesus name' doesn't make them heard by God any more than other prayers. But it may be a helpful reminder that guides the intentions of our prayers.

Dear God, thank you that we can freely speak to you because of Jesus. Help us to pray according to your will. Amen.



Should we say the Lord's prayer every day?

In Matthew 6, Jesus critiques the lengthy, public prayers by those who love to be seen by others. He then offers an alternative way of praying, teaching his disciples what has come to be known as The Lord's Prayer.

The Lord's Prayer is notable for its brief length, its wide range of topics, and its God-centred orientation.

When Jesus taught his disciples that this is how they should pray, these are the words he gave. And they are wonderful words to use as a prayer. It is more than appropriate that Christians throughout history have memorised and prayed these words, just as Jesus taught.



Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Matthew 6:9-10



Of course, Jesus did not teach that this was the only way to pray. We could think of The Lord's Prayer as a model of prayer for us to follow—a guide in how to shape our own prayers. We may well learn from Jesus' prayer that we neglect certain topics in our own prayers. And so it provide a helpful corrective.

While it is not necessary to use it frequently, or even at all, The Lord's Prayer is a wonderful gift to us that we would be foolish to ignore. It's an excellent prayer to recite and pray, and has sustained Christians for more than 2000 years with good reason.

Lord Jesus, thank you for teaching us to pray. Heavenly Father, help us to pray in ways that honour you. Amen.



Does prayer change God's mind?

Prayer is a powerful gift (James 5:16). But there are some difficult elements to prayer that are hard for us to fully understand.

If God's mind were changed as a result of our prayers, then we would lack the confidence to trust that God is infinitely wise. If we could tell God exactly what to do through our prayers, then he wouldn't be a God worth trusting. He would be more like a genie granting our wishes.

On the other hand, if God's mind is not changed by our prayers, then why do we bother to pray at all? It would seem to make no difference whether we prayed or not.



You do not have because you do not ask God.

James 4:2



God doesn't change his mind because he doesn't need to. He doesn't make mistakes. But that doesn't mean that prayer is unable to bring about change.

God is deeply at work in our hearts by his Holy Spirit as we pray. The fact that we, at a particular moment, are choosing to pray; that we are reorienting our hearts and considering what we should pray for; and that we are seeking to pray according to God's will—these all have a part in changing us.

Sometimes God's plans are directly linked to the prayers of his people. As we pray and seek his will, he intends to fulfil his purposes by responding to these exact prayers from his people.

Father, thank you that you are infinitely wise and never make a mistake. Help me to trust you and grow in praying according to your will. Amen.



Does God hear the prayers of unbelievers?

In John 9:31, a blind man healed by Jesus makes a statement declaring what the people of the time believed: God doesn't listen to sinners. In the context, he's talking particularly about Jesus ability to heal must have come from God, and therefore Jesus cannot be a sinner.

The man was right about Jesus. But the presumption of both the man and the religious leaders wasn't quite on the mark.

Firstly, if God didn't hear the prayers of unbelievers, then it would be impossible for anyone to ask for forgiveness to begin with. God wouldn't hear it. Secondly, we know God is all-powerful and all-knowing. This means that



*We know that God does not listen to sinners.
He listens to the godly person who does his will.
John 9:31*



God would certainly hear the prayers of any person, believer or not. There is nothing stopping an unbelievers voice reaching the ears of God.

Instead, it means that God is especially attentive to the prayers of his people. He comes near to us and loves to hear us talk with him.

There are many examples in the Bible of God hearing—and even answering—the prayers of unbelievers. For example: Hagar (Genesis 21:14-19); the people of Nineveh (Jonah 3:5-10); Ahab (1 Kings 21:17-29); the Greek woman (Mark 7:24-30).

Anyone who prays can be assured that God hears our prayers.

Heavenly Father, thank you that you always hear our prayers. Help me have the confidence to pray. Amen.





PRAYERMATE

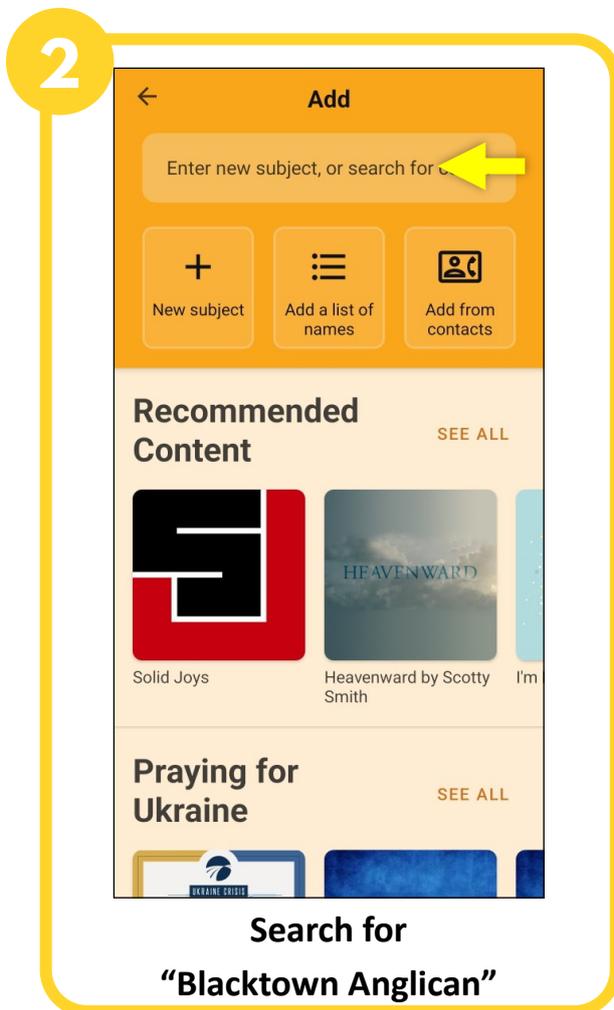
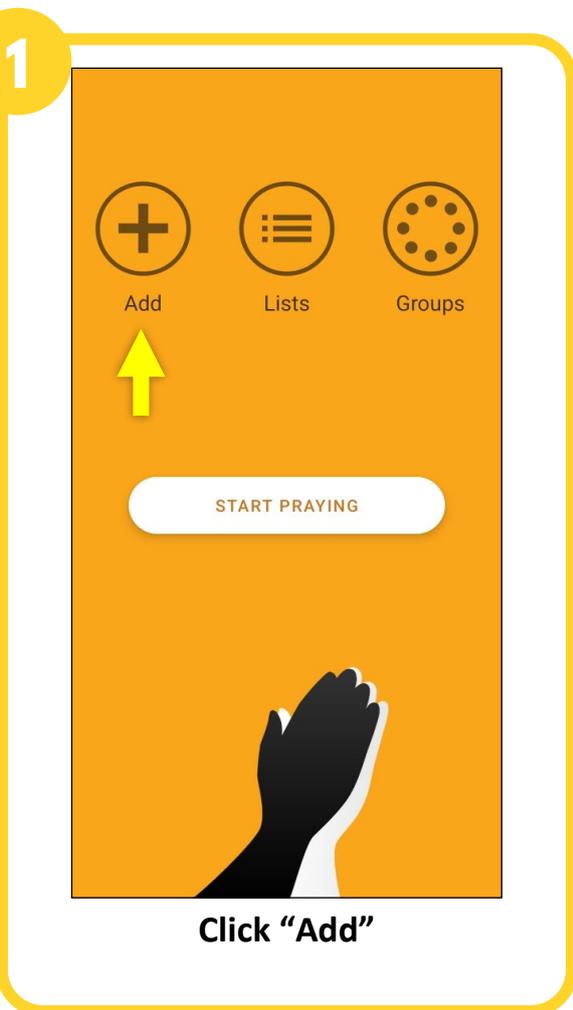
A HOW-TO GUIDE

Set Up

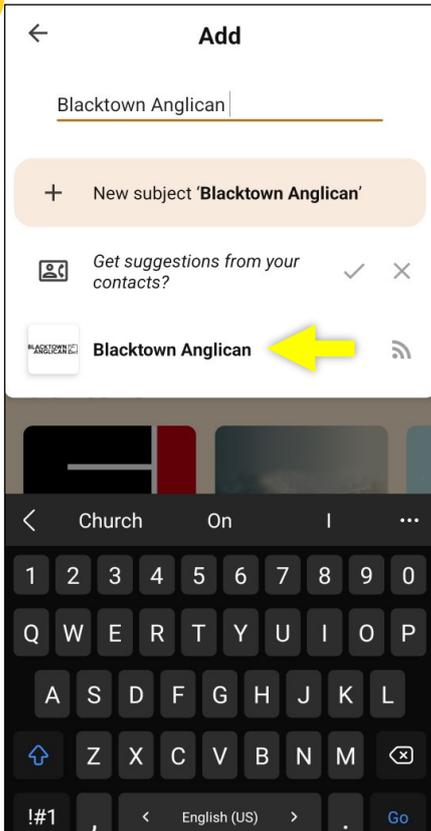
PrayerMate is a free app for iOS and Android designed to help you pray for the people and causes you care about. It allows you to create your own prayer lists, and subscribe to the online prayer diaries of many organisations.



1. Download the PrayerMate app off the Apple App Store or Google Play Store.
2. Follow the steps below to set up and subscribe to our prayer list.



3



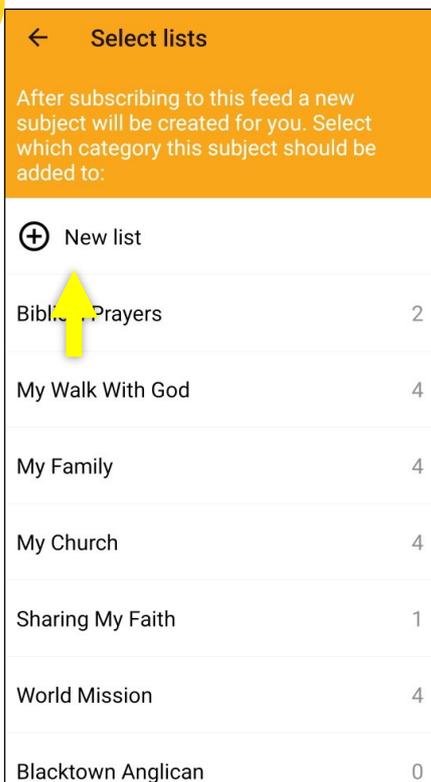
Click on the Prayer Feed.

4



Click "Subscribe to feed"

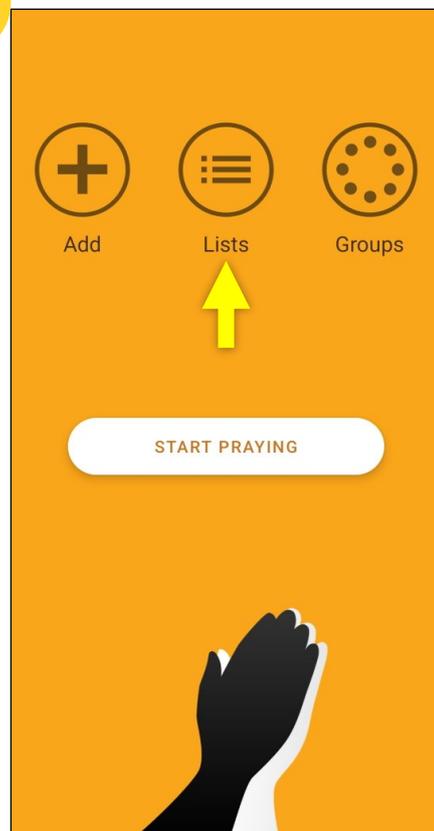
5



Click "New List".

You may like to name it
"Blacktown Anglican"

6



Go back to the Home Screen.

Click on "Lists"

7



Here you can add people or categories to each list.

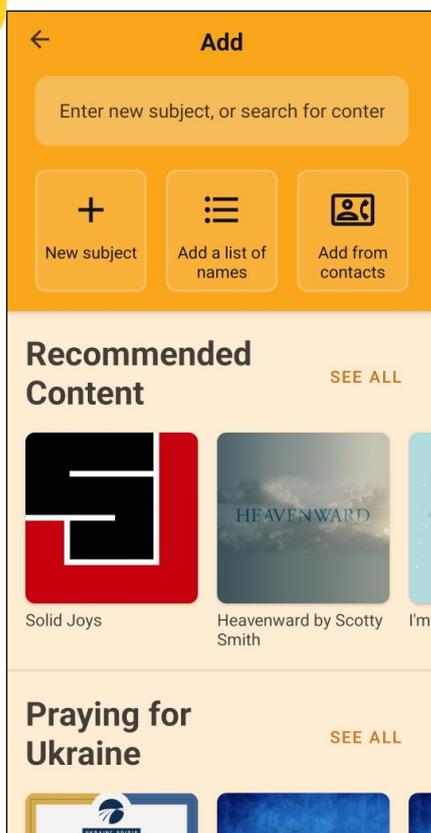
You might like to start by adding your family members to the “My Family” list.

You can also add some items to your “My Church” list, such as members of your community group, leaders and staff, ministries you are involved in.

In “Sharing My Faith”, you could add names of people to pray for who don’t yet know Jesus.

Add any items you would like reminders to pray for. You can update your lists at any time.

8



You may wish to subscribe to other feeds as well by clicking “Add” on the home screen.

Some recommended ones include:

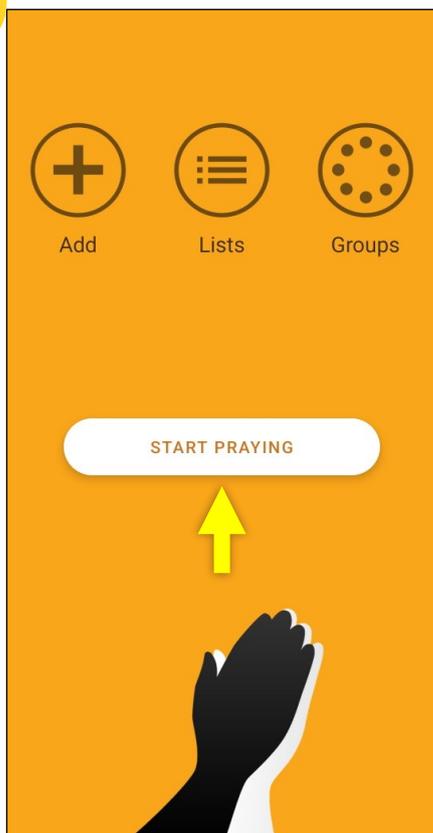
- CMS
- Operation World
- Open Doors Australia
- Anglican Aid
- Anglicare
- Bush Church Aid

Praying

Using PrayerMate to guide your prayers is very simply.

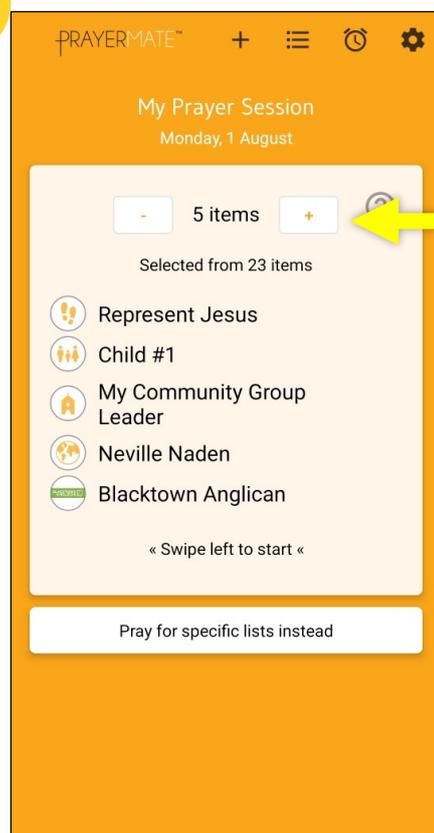
Once you have set up the app (subscribed to any prayer feeds, and added your own lists or names), PrayerMate will generate a list of items for you to pray each day from all your prayer points. You can adjust the number you see each day.

1



Click "Start Praying"

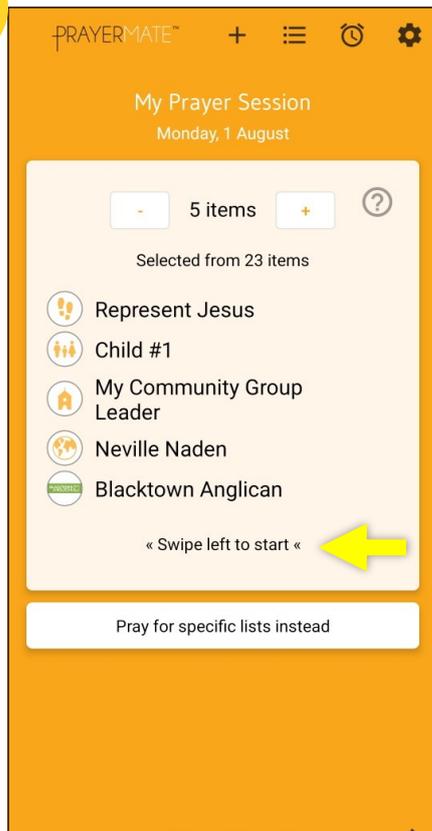
2



Adjust the number of items as desired.

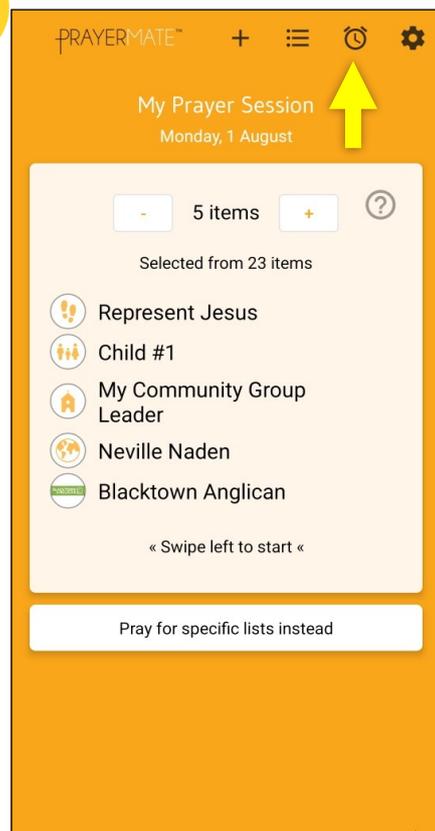


3



Swipe left for your first prayer point

4



Set a reminder for the next time you want to pray.

Tips

- Create a list for your Community Group, and add each member's name to the list. You can then add prayer points for each person straight into the app when you're sharing in your group. It will help you remember to pray, and to follow up how God has answered those prayers.
- You can mark a list to appear every day by clicking on the settings for that list.
- You can set the frequency that an item appears within a list by clicking on the settings for that list item.
- If you're having trouble using PrayerMate, you can find further tutorials on YouTube.



Sharing

PrayerMate allows you to post your own prayer requests to our private church group, allowing our whole church to pray for specific needs.

1. Scan the QR code below to join the group.
2. A new list will be added to your prayer lists, called “Prayer Requests”.
3. You can add any personal prayer requests by clicking on your name, and adding a “Black Card”. These request will be sent to everyone in the group, allowing them to pray for you.

Individual Community Groups may wish to create their own private group to track and share prayer points together. Community Group leaders can speak to a staff member to set this up.



