

PRAYER WEEK

**2nd – 8th August
2026**

Prayer Week

Introduction

Prayer is such a fundamental part of the Christian life. It is one of the simplest and yet most important expressions of the way we follow Jesus.

Prayer is, in part, our response to our knowledge of God. If we know that God is loving and cares for us, we will want to express that relationship in communicating with him and seeking his care. If we know that God is powerful, we will ask and plead with him to do big and powerful things that we are unable to do ourselves.

Prayer Week is an opportunity for us to renew our focus and dependence on God above all things. It is a time to lift our eyes, hearts and minds to God, his work and mission in the world, and where we find a place in this as his people. A moment to reset our habits, to engage in new practices, or recover old ones. Each year we set aside this week for us to focus on exactly this as a church family.

There is a classic phrase in history that states: “What the church prays is what the church believes”. The sentiment is that prayer reveals the things we truly believe in, the things we believe God is truly capable of and the things he cares about.

Our expression of prayer is often a very good witness to the depth of our faith. We can read many books or memorise many Bible verses, but it is our prayer life—both personal and corporate—that best displays where our heart is with God and his plans and purposes.

My prayer for you this week is that, regardless of your experience so far this year, you might enjoy a chance to reset and refresh your prayer life. To draw near to God and all that he invites us to enjoy.

Luke Thomson

Senior Minister

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Daily Devotion #1

Psalm 9

Each day we will read through some of the prayers of Jesus, reflecting on how it might shape our own prayer life.

Bible

Read John 17:1-5

Think

1. What is most striking about this prayer?
2. What is the aim of Jesus' prayer?
3. How could this prayer shape your own prayer life?

"If I feel myself disinclined to pray,
then is the time when I need to pray more than ever."

Charles Spurgeon

Pray

1. Confess your sin and acknowledge your need for forgiveness.
2. Thank God for his mercy and forgiveness in your life.
3. For brothers and sisters in Christ across our whole church family.
4. For Christians who are persecuted and mistreated for their faith around the world.

In each devotion, we've included a written prayer to help us learn to pray from other Christians across history. You may like to pray these prayers directly, or use them as inspiration for your own prayer each day.

Learning to Pray

A prayer for Monday

Dear Lord Jesus

Another Monday has come and my heart, mind and will is filled with joy, excitement, anxiety and worry. I am exhausted. I come to stop and pause and reflect on the truth of who you are.

Jesus you are the head of the Church, including the local church you have placed me in to serve and lead in. You are the one who truly knows what is best for the Church and in light of that I surrender to you my personal will and agenda again.

Jesus I thank-you that my salvation is not based on my work at the church, but simply based on your work. I desperately need to be reminded now that 'it is finished' you have paid the prize, oh what reliving and joyous news it is to my soul. In light of that I surrender to you this ministry again.

Jesus I thank you my identity is not based on my title, my skill set, who likes me, how good the worship was, how many people came, how good my sermon was but simply in you. You define my identity, thank-goodness for that. Once again I repent of what I have found security in and rest in who I am in you. Oh sweet joy it is to rest in that. Thank-you for your grace.

Jesus I come before your throne and I bow in my heart and I pray for not just my church but all the Christ exalting ones in our city, that you will be pleased with our witness of your name in this city. I pray for my brothers and sisters serving you as pastors and leaders I pray refresh their souls in you, help them to rest their identity in you and grant them the grace and power to run the race not in their own strength but in yours and through your power and strength sustain them till their final breath.

Jesus I pray that you will empower me each day and each moment to live a life that brings you glory, not just on Sunday and I live life that brings you joy and that you Jesus alone are remembered and glorified in all that I do.

In your might and glorious name. Amen

A prayer of Shebu John.

<https://au.thegospelcoalition.org/article/a-prayer-for-monday/>

Daily Devotion #2

Psalm 9

Bible

Read John 17:6-19

Think

1. What kinds of things does Jesus want for his disciples?
2. What does Jesus value most for his disciples?
3. How could this prayer shape your own prayer life?

“God will either give us what we ask
or give us what we would have asked if we knew everything he knows.”

Timothy Keller

Pray

1. Praise God for being strong, powerful and in control of all creation.
2. Thank God for the ability to know him personally, and for the way he speaks to us through the Bible.
3. For those who are in physical, spiritual, mental or emotional need.
4. For those who lead our church (including staff, ministry leaders, Community Group leaders, etc.)

Learning to Pray

A prayer for spiritual maturity

Look upon us, O Lord,
and let all the darkness of our souls
vanish before the beams of thy brightness.
Fill us with holy love,
and open to us the treasures of thy wisdom.
All our desire is known unto thee,
therefore perfect what thou hast begun,
and what thy Spirit has awakened us to ask in prayer.
We seek thy face,
turn thy face unto us and show us thy glory.
Then shall our longing be satisfied,
and our peace shall be perfect.

A prayer of Saint Augustine (354-430AD).

Daily Devotion #3

Psalm 9

Bible

Read John 17:20-26

Think

1. How does it feel to know that Jesus has prayed this for you?
2. What does Jesus consider most important in praying for you?
3. How could this shape your own prayer life?

“The key to praying with power is to become the kind of persons who do not use God for our ends but are utterly devoted to being used for His ends.”

John Piper

Pray

1. Praise God for his goodness and kindness.
2. Thank God for those who personally support and encourage you in following Jesus.
3. For Christians to have the opportunity to display their faith publicly and bear witness to Jesus to the wider world.
4. For those who seek to bring the good news of Jesus to remote areas around Australia.

Learning to Pray

A prayer for personal growth

Gracious and holy Father,
give me wisdom to perceive you,
intelligence to fathom you,
patience to wait for you,
eyes to behold you,
a heart to meditate upon you,
and a life to proclaim you,
through the power of the Spirit of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

A prayer of Benedict (480-547AD).

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevin-wax/give-me-a-life-to-proclaim-you/>

Daily Devotion #4

Psalm 9

Bible

Read Matthew 11:25-26

Think

1. How are the truths of God revealed to little children?
2. Where are we tempted to be confident and wise in our own eyes?
3. How could this prayer shape your own prayer life?

“If we are to pray aright, perhaps it is quite necessary that we pray contrary to our own heart. Not what we want to pray is important, but what God wants us to pray. The richness of the Word of God ought to determine our prayer, not the poverty of our heart.”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Pray

1. Praise God for his wisdom in all things.
2. Thank God for the confidence we can have that God will fulfill his promises for the future.
3. For our church family to grow in our hearts desire to bear witness to the grace of God in Blacktown.
4. For those who seek to bring the good news of Jesus to difficult and dangerous places across the world.

Learning to Pray

A prayer before bed

O Lord God—who has given man the night for rest, as you have created the day in which he may employ himself in labor—grant, I pray, that my body may so rest during this night that my mind cease not to be awake to you, nor my heart faint or be overcome with torpor, preventing it from adhering steadfastly to the love of you.

While laying aside my cares to relax and relieve my mind, may I not, in the meanwhile, forget you, nor may the remembrance of your goodness and grace, which ought always to be deeply engraven on my mind, escape my memory.

In like manner, also, as the body rests may my conscience enjoy rest.

Grant, moreover, that in taking sleep I may not give indulgence to the flesh, but only allow myself as much as the weakness of this natural state requires, to my being enabled thereafter to be more alert in your service.

Be pleased to keep me so chaste and unpolluted, not less in mind than in body, and safe from all dangers, that my sleep itself may turn to the glory of your name.

But since this day has not passed away without my having in many ways offended you through my proneness to evil, in like manner as all things are now covered by the darkness of the night, so let everything that is sinful in me lie buried in your mercy.

Hear me, O God, Father and Preserver, through Jesus Christ your Son.

Amen.

A prayer of John Calvin (1509-1564AD).

Daily Devotion #5

Psalm 9

Bible

Read Luke 22:39-46

Think

1. What is Jesus' temptation?
2. How does Jesus' prayer acknowledge both his own will and God's will?
3. How could this prayer shape your own prayer life?

“Effective prayer is the fruit of a relationship with God,
not a technique for acquiring blessings.”

Don Carson

Pray

1. Praise God for the beauty of creation.
2. Thank God for the depth and richness of his love.
3. For the city of Blacktown and its people, that they might come to know Jesus as Saviour and King.
4. For those suffering the effects and implications of war and fighting around the world.

Learning to Pray

A prayer for people

May God the Father,
and the eternal High Priest Jesus Christ,
build us up in faith and truth and love,
and grant us our portion among the saints
with all those who believe on our Lord Jesus Christ.
We pray for all saints,
for kings and rulers,
for the enemies of the cross of Christ,
and for ourselves we pray that our fruit may abound
and we may be made perfect in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

A prayer of Polycarp (69-155AD)

Daily Devotion #6

Psalm 9

Bible

Read Luke 23:32-34

Think

1. How difficult do you think it was for Jesus to pray this prayer?
2. How important is it to forgive those who are ignorant of their sin?
3. How could this prayer shape your own prayer life?

“I believe that prayer is the measure of the man, spiritually,
in a way that nothing else is.”

J. I. Packer

Pray

1. Praise God for sending his Son into the world to bring us back to himself.
2. Thank God for the gift of prayer, and the confidence we have that he hears us and cares for us.
3. For leaders, governments and all in authority in Australia and across the world.
4. For those whom you know personally who don't yet know Jesus as their Saviour and King.

Learning to Pray

A prayer for a non-believing friend

Dear Father.

I know you to be a lover of the prodigal and a welcomer to the lost. I know that your desire is that all people be saved that none perish.

You showed me kindness when I was blind to your goodness. You opened my eyes so that I could see your glorious righteousness. You convicted me of my sin, then comforted my heart with the grace of the gospel.

Today I ask you to do the same work in the life of _____. Open their ears that they may hear your word, open their eyes that they may see your glory, warm their heart with the forgiveness of sins and cause them to trust in Jesus, so that they will know with me the joy of serving you and the hope of life eternal.

Amen

A prayer of Simone Richardson

<https://au.thegospelcoalition.org/article/prayer-for-a-non-believing-friend/>

Bible Study

Praying to a God who speaks

Can you remember the first time you prayed?

Can you describe where, how or why it happened?

Read Hebrews 1:1-3

1. What does this teach us about God?

2. What does it teach us about God's relationship with us?

Prayer is a reply to a conversation that God has started.
We must therefore understand how he first speaks to us.

3. What do you think of this idea above? How does Hebrews help us consider how God has spoken first? How might this help us consider our prayer life from a different perspective?

Read Hebrews 4:12-16

4. What is a priest's job? What difference does it make that Jesus is a high priest that 'empathises with our weaknesses'?

5. What things are we encouraged to **do** in this passage?

Living it out

6. Have you ever been in a *place* that has made you spontaneously want to pray? Share with the group.

7. What kinds of *places* in day-to-day life do you find most helpful for meaningfully talking to God?

8. How might the *places* we pray help or hinder our prayers lives?

9. In pairs, pick one or two sets of alternatives below and discuss the pros and cons of each. Share your thoughts with the group.

- The same place / a different place
- Sitting still / moving around
- A noisy place / a quiet place
- Alone / with other people
- A comfortable place / an uncomfortable place
- At home / away from home

Pray

1. Thank God for the gift of prayer.

2. Pray that our prayers would be shaped by godly desire and concern.

3. Pray for growing confidence as we approach God in prayer.

4. Pray for wisdom to develop meaningful habits to grow our prayer life.

7 Ways to Fight Distraction in Prayer

by Gavin Ortlund

I've been trying to pray more this year. But prayer doesn't always come easily to me. I often sit down to pray with the best of intentions only to suddenly catch myself, a few moments later, daydreaming about yesterday's conversation, tomorrow's meeting, or next week's vacation.

Most of us will admit experiencing this, and the rest of us are liars!

Distraction can be a huge hindrance in our prayer life, but I'm also discovering it provides an opportunity for growth. Here are seven strategies for fighting and harnessing distraction to deepen and direct our prayers.

1. Pray with Scripture

I remember hearing somewhere that Scripture teaches us how to pray as a mother teaches a child how to talk. God speaks to us through his Word, and then we speak back to him in response, much as a child listens to his parents and then responds. As the father of soon-to-be-3-year-old who's talking more and more, and saying some truly hilarious things, this is an illustration that resonates with me! And I find it true in my prayer life.

The point of the metaphor is that just as none of us is born knowing how to talk, none of us knows how to pray on our own. We *learn* how to pray, and more often by observation and imitation than by direct instruction. As I look to Scripture to develop and mature my praying instincts, I find it not only informs the content of my requests but also helps cultivate the impulses and appetites undergirding them.

There are so many things in Scripture my flesh would never think to ask for. I usually don't ask for boldness when I'm persecuted (Acts 4:29), or interpret my grief in light of God's honor and redemptive plan (Neh. 1:5–11), or say things like “teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom” (Ps. 90:12). But again and again Scripture rebukes my shallow, self-oriented prayers and summons them upward into the larger context of God's glory, the church, eternity, and the advance of the gospel.

Here are some biblical prayers that may be especially worth meditating on to focus our minds and hearts:

- Nehemiah 1:5–11: Nehemiah’s prayer when he hears Jerusalem’s walls are still in shambles.
- Daniel 9:1–19: Daniel’s prayer for God’s people during exile.
- 2 Chronicles 20:1–12: Jehoshaphat’s prayer for deliverance from attack.
- Ephesians 3:14–21: Paul’s prayer for spiritual strength to grasp Christ’s love.
- Matthew 6:9–13: The Lord’s Prayer (often a great one to start with).

2. Pray with a Pen

I find it helpful on occasion to write out a prayer. Written prayer shouldn’t replace vocal/mental prayer—but I find it works effectively as a supplement. When you’re writing there’s a kind of mental discipline and intentionality that’s often absent in vocal communication. It’s harder to get distracted, and it enables you to channel and structure your prayer a bit more.

An added benefit is being able to go back, even years later, to see how God has answered your prayers—or, more commonly in my experience, changed what you pray for.

3. Pray with Fasting

Prayer and fasting are healthy practices in themselves, but work especially well together. An empty stomach reminds us to pray, “Lord, fill my soul!” When we’re earnest in prayer, it helps us deal with the hunger pains.

One thing I must fast from is social media. Social media changes the way our brains function. It speeds up information flow, clutters our consciousness, and reduces our ability for things like meditation, reflection, quiet. It’s not an easy transition from surfing Facebook and Twitter for hours to lingering before the Lord in prayer.

When Jesus prayed, for instance, he often went out to “a desolate place” (Mark 1:35). Like him, we need to cultivate the discipline of solitude, the discipline of stillness before God. We shouldn’t be surprised if we’re scattered and distracted in prayer if we’re scattered and distracted all the time.

4. Pray with People

Corporate prayer and private prayer fuel one another (kind of like prayer and fasting). Corporate prayer is all the more powerful if we've already been praying on our own; and private prayer is instructed and encouraged by how we've seen God at work in the prayers of others.

Not only is it harder to get distracted when you're not out there on your own, but Christ promises his provision (Matt. 18:19) and presence (Matt. 18:20) when "two or three" are gathered in his name.

5. Pray with Purpose

Distraction flourishes with the amorphous, the ambiguous, the underdefined. I find it helps me maintain focus if I structure my prayer time in specific ways. For instance, I might structure a prayer around one particular aspect of God's character. "Lord, today I have seen your faithfulness through..." Or I might focus on a particular area of need: "Father, lately my heart has been cold because..."

It's hard to drift off when there's a theme or some kind of orienting structure to the prayer.

Also, if you're consistently getting distracted by the same things, you might consider praying about those very things, whatever they are, that are distracting you. Convert the distraction into an opportunity; leverage its grip on your mind and heart to intensify your prayers. "Lord, I am distracted today by _____. I give this to you..."

6. Pray with Emotion

There's a kind of unhealthy manipulation that can occur in trying—through an act of the will—to stir up emotions we think we should be feeling. It's also unhealthy to let our emotions have untouched sovereignty over our will. There's a way to actively engage our emotions (rather than passively experience them) that's entirely appropriate, and can help us fight distractions.

David, for instance, will interrogate his emotions: "Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me?" (Ps. 42:5); he'll call upon his emotions: "All that is within me, bless his holy name" (Ps. 103:1); and he'll reason with his emotions: "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?" (Ps. 27:1).

If there are particular emotions leading to distraction (boredom? anxiety? self-concern?), talk back at them, as David does. Engage them with the counter-emotions called for by truth.

7. Pray with the Gospel

Spurgeon once advised preachers, if they ever lose their place in their sermon or don't know what to say next, to go straight to the gospel. That's a good instinct, and I believe it can help us in our prayer life as well. If all else fails, if distraction keeps seeping in, keep circling back to the gospel. I often find it helpful to pray with this kind of framework:

1. Lord Jesus, this is where I would be without you: _____.
2. Lord Jesus, this is where I am now with you in my life: _____.
3. Lord Jesus, this is what you went through to do this: _____.

The gospel never runs out of gripping, awful, wondrous power. Jesus has rescued us from sin, death, and eternal ruin. He's adopted us into his heavenly family, clothed us in his righteousness, and invited us to share in his glory. And he's done so at infinite cost—as the blood drained slowly from his veins, as he sunk down into death and defeat, as friends fled and enemies mocked, as the love between Father and Son was now, for the first time in eternity, ruptured.

It's hard to daydream when our hearts and minds are focused on the great truths of hell, heaven, and Calvary. Make them the North Star of your prayer life, and it will help you fight distraction.

This article can be found online at:

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/7-ways-to-fight-distraction-in-prayer/>

5 Habits for Better Prayer

by Blake Glosson

One of my closest friends moved across the country. I've learned that in long-distance friendships, every bit of communication matters. Our steady stream of texts and short voice memos is the glue that holds our relationship together. Meanwhile, our extended phone calls (when our schedules align) are what deepen and strengthen the relationship.

Every Christian's relationship with God thrives with similar habits. A healthy prayer life involves a steady stream of shorter communications (brief prayers throughout the day), paired with more intimate and extensive conversations (unhurried times of solitude with God).

Jesus modeled both forms. Sometimes he'd send up a brief prayer like "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34; see Mark 15:34; Luke 10:21, 23:46; John 11:41–42; 12:27). On other occasions, he set aside extended time to pray—even praying all night (Luke 6:12–13; see 5:16; John 17:1–26).

Many Christians are comfortable with short prayers in moments of need ("Lord, let this meeting go well") but struggle with extended prayer. How do you use that time? What do you talk to God about?

Consider five habits or mindsets that can enrich your extended times of prayer.

1. Relax and enjoy your Father's presence.

When I was 8, my dad took me to work with him in Chicago. On his lunch break, we got McDonald's, sat on a curb, and looked at the city. I don't think we talked much, but it's one of my favorite memories from my childhood—simply because I was there with my dad, enjoying his presence and love.

Prayer is, first and foremost, being in our Father's presence. One of the most common hindrances to prayer is the fear of not "doing it right," like a student hesitant to attempt a tricky math problem. Yet prayer is about cherishing a relationship, not cracking a formula. It's not the eloquence of our words but the posture of our hearts that the Lord considers (see Pss. 51:17; 62:8; Isa. 29:13; Hos. 6:6; Matt. 6:7; Luke 18:10–14).

I love Dane Ortlund's words: "Go to him. All that means is, open yourself up to him. Let him love you." Prayer begins with simply going to your Father and resting in his love. Like any loving father, God isn't critiquing you. He isn't counting how many spiritual-sounding words you use. He simply wants to be with you.

2. Give God your full attention.

You may recall a time when you were scrolling on your phone while someone was talking to you. After realizing you weren't giving him your full attention, you set down your phone and looked him in the eye. Extended prayer times are similar. They are moments when we set aside all distractions and look God in the eye.

Giving God your full attention takes practice. Praying out loud in secluded places (e.g., in the car, in a closed room, at a forest preserve) has been a game-changer in helping me focus. Putting my phone away has been key too.

Prayer walks are a lifeline for me. The combination of fresh air, increased oxygen to the brain, and the freedom to speak aloud to God with emotion is unmatched. Being surrounded by God's creation also aids worship.

If you get distracted while praying, let it drive you to deeper intimacy. Whether you feel distracted by anxiety, longing, anticipation, your to-do list, or anything else, bring that to God. Lay it out before him. Invite him in. Cast all your cares on him, because he cares for you (1 Pet. 5:7).

3. Have a plan.

Before I meet with congregants or friends, I always mentally prepare a few questions or discussion topics. My aim isn't to script the conversation but to open doors for deeper connection. These prompts frequently serve as on-ramps to meaningful dialogue.

Many Christians have experienced breakthroughs in intimacy with God through prayer prompts. The Lord's Prayer (Matt. 6:9–13) is a helpful guide. Pause after each line and apply it to your circumstances. The acronym ACTS (adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication) can also be helpful.

You can also pray through the Psalms or any Scripture. Gathering prayer requests from other congregants or loved ones and praying through them is

another excellent way to spend time with the Lord while loving the people in your life.

4. Be honest.

I still remember the progression of my friendship with someone close to me. The first few times we hung out, we mostly talked about surface-level topics—work, hobbies, food preferences. But at our fourth get-together, we got vulnerable and shared specific struggles. I remember walking away feeling 100 times closer to this person than I did after the first few meetups. Vulnerability created a bond that dozens of surface-level conversations couldn't forge.

Intimacy with God also grows through vulnerability. It can be easy to keep your prayers at a surface level out of fear of admitting weaknesses or because you've practiced covering up in other conversations. Yet God already fully knows you, he'll never sin against you, and he wants to help you.

Next time you pray, be completely honest:

- “Lord, I know you're good, but it doesn't feel like it right now.”
- “Lord, I'm tempted to look at something I shouldn't.”
- “Lord, I'm jealous of my sister, and I'm struggling to be happy for her.”

Prayer is less of an obligation and more of an invitation to let God carry our burdens (Phil. 4:6–7). But we must give our burdens to him in all their messiness. Honesty may feel scary at first, but it's often the means God uses to set us free.

5. Be patient and remember God is working.

God knew prayer would be a struggle for us. Jesus encouraged his disciples to “always pray and never give up” (Luke 18:1, NLT). The apostle Paul reminds us that though we struggle to know how to pray, the Holy Spirit intercedes for us in accordance with God's will (Rom. 8:26–27).

Believer, you can approach the throne of grace with confidence, not because your prayers are perfect but because God is faithful to work through them—even when it seems like he's saying no. God won't forget a single word or tear (Ps. 56:8). So go to him. Trust him. And rest in his loving presence.

This article can be found online at:

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/better-prayer-habits/>

Book Recommendations

Five things to Pray

Do you ever find yourself uncertain of what to pray? Or perhaps you feel limited to praying for the same things in the same way all the time?

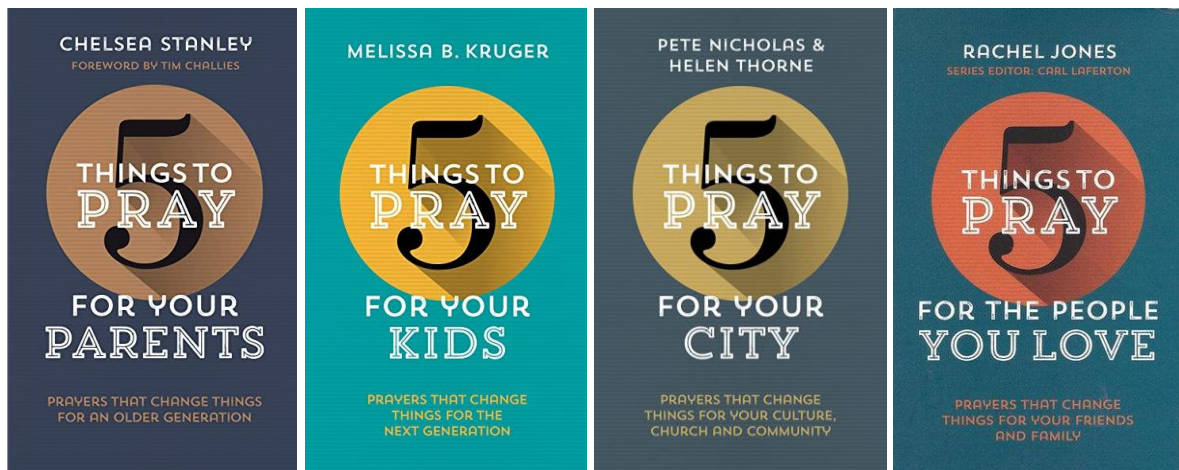
This little series of books, “5 things to pray” is a wonderful collection of short, punchy reflections in the form of offering you five things to pray each day.

Each day provides you with five items for prayer, along with a short Bible verse, and a sentence or two for reflection.

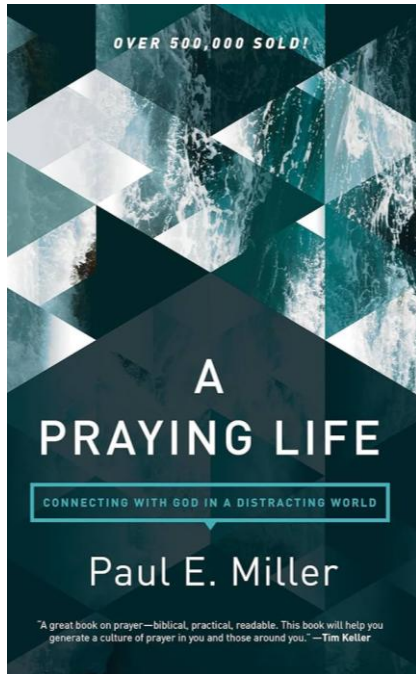
It will allow you to grow the depth and breadth of your prayer in very manageable and simple steps.

This series covers a great range of topics, including five things to pray for: your city; your spouse; your kids; our world; in a global crisis; your church; the people you love; your parents.

No matter how well you feel your prayer life is, this whole series will provide freshness in guiding you to a deeper engagement in prayer. Highly recommended!



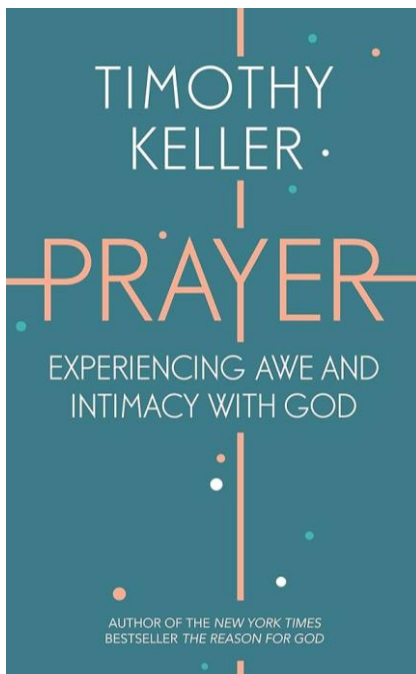
Book Recommendations



A Praying Life by Paul Miller

A very practical and easy to read book. Paul tells many stories that help us understand the joy of prayer, and provides countless examples from personal experience that readers can put into practice for themselves.

Difficulty to read: ★★



Prayer by Timothy Keller

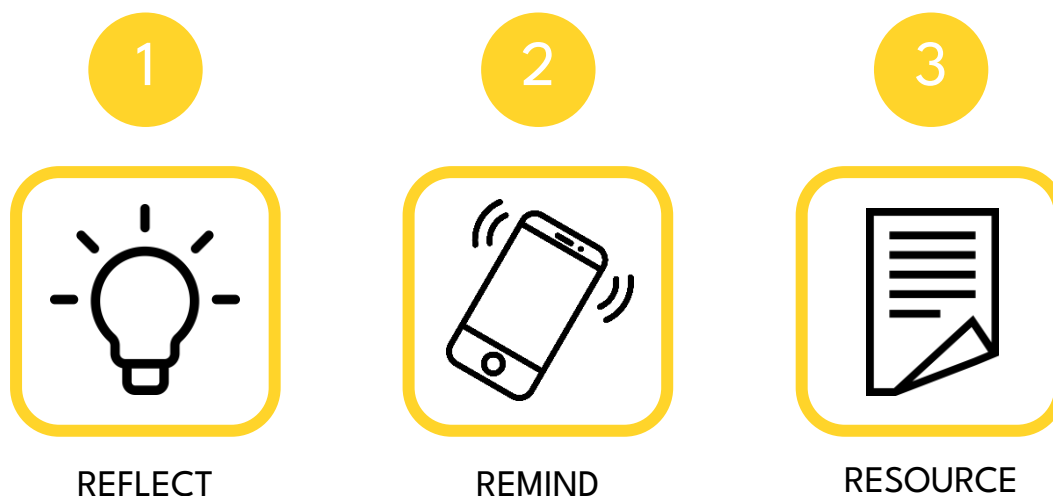
This excellent book unpacks the theology of prayer, and the beauty of this gift that God has given us. With much wisdom and many helpful illustrations, Keller has written a rich and thoughtful, whilst still having a practical edge. It's not a short read, but well worth the investment.

Difficulty to read: ★★★



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 what to pray, or how to pray.



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

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

Check it out on our website: bac.org.au/prayer

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