


THE SIX PRACTICES OF WHOLE-HEARTED DISCIPLESHIP

# THE PRACTICE OF PRAYER



COMMUNITY PRACTICE GUIDE



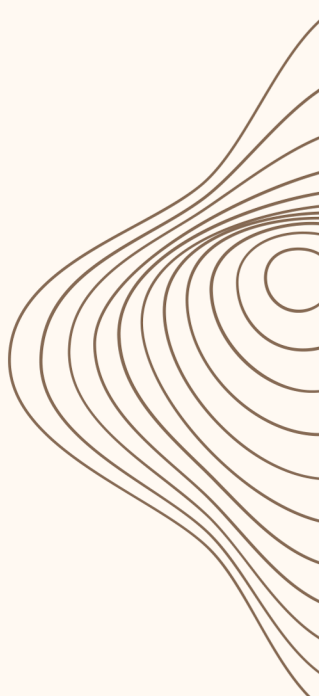
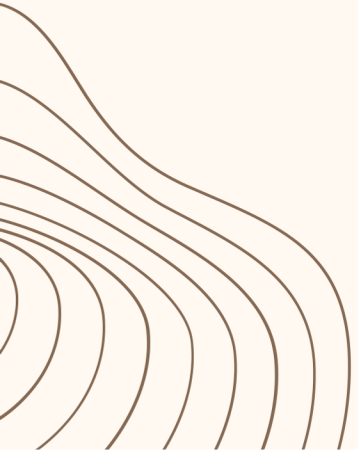
And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites, for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by others. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full.

But when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you. And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words. Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

This, then, is how you should pray:

Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
And forgive us our debts,  
as we also have forgiven our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from the evil one.

Jesus, Matthew 6:5-13





## PAUSE

Take sixty seconds and pause, silently remembering God's presence with you today.

Pray this prayer of God's people from Psalm 84:

Better is one day in your courts  
than a thousand elsewhere;  
I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God  
than dwell in the tents of the wicked.  
For the Lord God is a sun and shield;  
the Lord bestows favor and honor;  
no good thing does he withhold  
from those whose walk is blameless.  
Lord Almighty,  
blessed is the one who trusts in you.

## READ & REFLECT


Read Matthew 6:5-9 twice out loud.

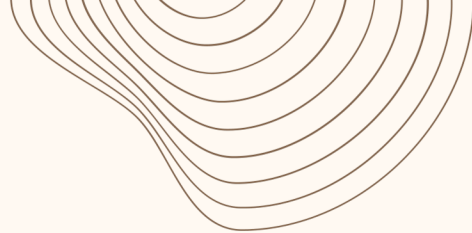
What has been your experience with prayer in your own life?

When have you felt God's presence in prayer?  
When have you felt God's absence in prayer?

Which do you experience more?

What barriers do you find in yourself and in your life that keep you from praying more?





# THE PRACTICE OF PRAYER

The Practice of Prayer means this:

**We prioritize being with Jesus over being busy for Jesus to cultivate attentive awareness of the Spirit's leading.**

Jesus re-orientes prayer around the confidence that comes from knowing that we have a Good Father in heaven who sees us, knows us, and desires to take care of us, even knowing what we need when we aren't even sure what to pray for (Rom. 8:26). Knowing that God is good and that he always hear us changes our approach to prayer from one of anxiety (trying to get God's attention, conjure God's presence, or convince God to act on our behalf) to a posture of trust, rest, and recognition of God's presence already in our lives.

This is why the practice of prayer has been seen in the Christian tradition as the starting point of following Jesus and the sustaining energy of all the other spiritual disciplines. In prayer we recognize our dependence on God in all things. Prayer reorients our attention around God and his work, inviting us to join him and follow his leading. Prayer is ultimately about attention and trust.

In Jesus' teaching, he outlines three shifts in our practice of prayer that will lead us through resistance and control and into true rest:

- **From praying with others to praying alone.** In private prayer, we seek God, not for a formal, performative reason (like praying in church or before a meal), but because he is our hope and our trust in life's circumstances.
- **From one-way prayer to two-way prayer.** Rather than a prayer full of words, which can betray our uncertainty of God's presence, two-way prayer speaks but also listens for the Spirit's leading in silence and Scripture.
- **From my prayer to His prayer.** In the Lord's Prayer, we are invited to submit what I feel I need to pray for and instead pray the prayer that Jesus says I need to pray: for his kingdom to come in my life as it is in heaven.





## ASK

In prayer, we answer Jesus' invitation to rest and trust in his goodness and presence in our lives:

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened,  
and I will give you rest." (Matt. 11:28).

Take a few moments and prayerfully ask God these questions:

- What anxieties keep me from seeking you in prayer?
- Where am I guilty of seeking to control in my life rather than yielding to your presence and power in prayer?

## YIELD

Each week we will consider a few yielding practices, ways that we can begin to make space in our lives and our habits for Jesus to lead.

- **Praying alone.** Find a comfortable place away from noise and distraction where you can be alone. Begin with 60 seconds of silence, remembering God's presence with you. In your heart, mind, or even with a journal or your voice, tell God what's on your heart.
  - **Two-Way Prayer.** Find a comfortable place away from noise and distraction where you can be alone. Begin with 60 seconds of silence, remembering God's presence with you. Pick a short psalm or verse from Scripture and read it three times as God speaking to you. After a time of silent reflection, talk to God in response to what he has said.
  - **His Prayer.** Pick 2-3 regular times in your day - morning, afternoon, and evening. Set a reminder on your phone if it's helpful. At each reminder, pause and pray the Lord's Prayer.
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