

Formative Practice Guide: Pray

Read *Matthew 6:9-13*

Prayer is simple but profound. Because of the grace we have in Jesus, we can have a conversation with the God of the universe, who is also our Heavenly Father and faithful friend. As we pour out our heart and requests to God in prayer, we not only share ourselves with him, we also get to know, understand, and experience him more.

Spiritual Exercises:

Plan time in your upcoming schedule to include the following exercises in your routine.

Take some time to pray through the Lord's Prayer in *Matthew 6:9-13*. First, read and pray through the whole prayer. Pause and listen. Then, pray through it line by line, pausing and listening to the Lord after each, and expanding upon that line as the Lord leads. To dive deeper into the Lord's Prayer, reference [this page on the Reality LA website](#).

Practice breath prayer. Choose a short passage of Scripture, and breathe in while you pray the first part of the phrase; breathe out while you pray the second part of the phrase. For example (inhale) "The Lord is my Shepherd," (exhale) "I shall not want". (See the end of this document for other examples of breath prayers.) Set aside two minutes, several times a day, to pray and think on Scripture in this way, allowing the Lord's peace to settle in your heart through his word.

Take a prayer walk around your neighborhood. As you walk, be open to what the Lord brings to your attention, whether it's a need you observe, something personal that you find yourself focusing on, etc. Talk to the Lord about whatever he brings to mind. At the end of your walk, make note of at least one thing the Lord brought up that you want to continue to pray about.

Look for prayer as an opportunity to share God's love with someone who doesn't know him. The next time a non-believing friend shares something and you think, "I need to remember to pray for them about that," consider in the moment if it would be appropriate to ask if you can pray for them right there. Or consider just telling them you will pray for them regarding what they shared. Then, remember to pray, and follow up the next time you talk with them.

Guided Reflection:

Reflect on these concepts throughout your day. Feel free to also set aside some distraction-free time for more intentional reflection.

Think about specific prayers that God has answered throughout your life, whether big or small. Set aside 30-60 minutes to journal, draw, paint, or use some other creative outlet to record those answered prayers and worship him as you create.

Reflect on seasons of your life when your prayer life felt encouraging. Think through rhythms or practices that helped facilitate that time of consistent and life-giving prayer. Consider concrete steps for how you might incorporate some of those rhythms into your life long-term. If prayer has always been a struggle, remember that God's grace extends even over our imperfect prayer lives, and choose one rhythm that you'd like to incorporate long-term.

Connecting the Practices

Since prayer is simply conversing with God, prayer can (and should) happen through all our Formative Practices. See every practice as an opportunity to converse with God in a new way, or on a new topic that may not come naturally to you!

Sample Breath Prayers

(inhale) The Lord is gracious and merciful,
(exhale) abounding in steadfast love. (*Psalm 145*)

(inhale) Create in me a clean heart, O God
(exhale) and renew a right spirit within me (*Psalm 51*)

(inhale) Help me be strong and courageous
(exhale) for you are with me wherever I go (*Joshua 1*)

(inhale) Help me to do justice and kindness
(exhale) and walk humbly with you, God (*Micah 6*)