

Design your own cover! Everyone who is going to start this Prayer Adventure together, sign in below. You can draw a picture of yourself, sign your name, put a handprint, thumbprint creatures, decorate it the way you like!

Date:





HOW TO USE THIS JOURNAL:

Pages are provided for you to write down notes about your prayers to God each week. Fill them in as you pray and when you are done you will have a keepsake of this Christmas season!

WHO DOES THIS?

You can work through the journal yourself privately, as a couple, as a family, or as a small group. Tips noted with icons throughout will give you ideas for use with different age groups: young elementary, older kids, teenagers, grown children, and even infants and toddlers.

Is there a dad or husband in the house? Take the lead! Pick a time, like every Sunday and Thursday night, to sit together with screens off and go through one the "tips," talk about it, then end with prayer requests written out and an actual prayer. No reason to feel awkward or judged unless you feel that way yourself. Make it your own and include your spouse and/or every member of the family.

Are you new to prayer? Don't skip the sections about what prayer is and what it isn't. Have big questions? Pastoral staff would be thrilled to talk to you about them!

HOW OFTEN?

There is space for four weeks of daily notes and prayers—keep going and add more pages if you want to, or just do it once a week if that's all you can do. But be deliberate about it—set aside time to focus on your prayer life and recharging your Christmas lifestyle.

WHY IS THIS USEFUL?

In 1 Thessalonians 5:17 Paul tells us we should be praying continuously; that doesn't mean walking around in a stupor, disengaged with the world, but making it an integral part of our daily life. How crazy can the Christmas season get? How often do we find quiet time to pray and listen to Christ during this time? Can we do better?

If you have young ones, you teach your children to love reading, to share, to forgive, etc. by modeling this behavior for them to copy. If they never saw you reading a book, why should they even think to read one on their own? The same thing applies to prayer; if praying as a family, exercising your faith muscles, comes naturally when you are together, it will be a source of strength for them for a faith lifetime.

THE BASICS OF HOW



Prayer is a gift—the opportunity to converse with God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Traditionally, we teach children to pray with their hands folded and eyes closed. What a great practice this is! Not distracted by things we see or material things we fidget with, we can focus on the One we cannot see and to Whom we owe everything! Jesus Himself told us, *"When you pray, you should go into your room and close the door and pray to your Father who cannot be seen. Your Father can see what is done in secret, and he will reward you. "And when you pray, don't be like those people who don't know God. They continue saying things that mean nothing, thinking that God will hear them because of their many words. (Matthew 6:6-7)*

Focus on focus. Take a minute to get quiet, and really think about your Creator and your Savior before you start talking to Him. Even if it's a written or memorized prayer, say what you mean and mean what you say.

HELP US BLESS OTHERS

Do you send out Christmas cards? This year, try to pray a blessing for each person that you are sending them to. Do you receive cards from friends and loved ones from far away? Each night at dinner or before bed, take the cards you received that day and ask God to bless them with whatever they are struggling with--even if you don't know what that is. Maybe someone's praying for us right now! Let's pray.



TIME... FOR A NEW HABIT



Time, time, time. It's always an issue, isn't it?

It might be a habit to pray at bedtime with kids, or before meals. No matter what your prayer habits are now, try and force a new one by picking a daily prayer signal—something that will remind you to stop and pray at an additional moment in your day.

For example, Grandma told me she always prayed while doing the dishes, a daily chore she hated. But she used it as prayer time because, guess what? No one interrupted her while she was washing or else they would be recruited to dry.

You could choose a prayer signal like:

- before your spouse and you head to work each morning
- in the car after your family parks, before each game
- at the end of each workout in the gym
- as you empty the mailbox
- everytime you open Facebook (why not?)
- at every diaper change
- what can you think of?





PEOPLE GET READY



Consider preparing to pray by listing your notes (praise, repentance, asking, and yielding) or other questions ahead of time in a journal (like here!) Leave space to consider answers to prayer! Place this journal on the fridge or bedside table where you would normally pray. Get creative—where else?

- Try a chalkboard or dry-erase bulletin board for prayer notes in your kitchen or dining room
- Use a blank notebook or coloring book where you can focus on the prayer while you doodle icons related to the requests you're making to the Lord.
- As a family, build a small tower of blocks with prayer items written on Post-its attached. Rebuild each time you pray.
- Find a small bowl for the table with cards in it
- Does your family use a common online list manager app like Cosi or Wunderlist for groceries? Add another one for prayer requests.
- what else can you think of?



WHAT IS PRAYER?

Prayer is a way that God communicates with us, his loved creation. Jesus taught us how to pray. Communicating with God directly is a huge gift! How blessed are we that He would let us speak directly to Him at any time! Prayer is best understood by knowing with Whom we are speaking:

God made us, loves us, and wants to hear from us. (1 John 4:8)

God is all-powerful, so no prayer is too big, no prayer goes unanswered. Since He controls the universe, getting to talk to Him through prayer is a very powerful weapon against the Devil and sin. (Luke 1:37)

God is all-knowing, so He knows what's in our hearts and what we need, even before we ask it. (Matt. 6:8)

God is perfect, wise, and active in our lives. If it matters to you, it matters to Him. He loves when we call out to Him for help. (Matt. 6:26)

God is everywhere at all times; this means that God is always available and always approachable, because of Jesus' sacrifice to make us children of God. Nothing can separate us from God—the prayer channel is always open.

WHAT PRAYER IS NOT

Just a few things that Prayer is NOT:

Prayer is not magic. We cannot summon God as though He were a genie, waiting to grant our wishes without regard for our circumstances or the consequences.

Prayer does not make demands. While we can make requests of God in prayer, we dare not make demands. God is the Creator of the universe and does not take orders from us.

Prayer is for our benefit, not God's. God doesn't need us to change His mind or help Him out. He is the awesome and powerful Creator of everything. It is a huge gift that He has created prayer so that we can talk to Him and develop our faith with Him directly, because of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Why? We don't deserve it. But that's how much He loves us.

Prayer is not a guarantee against suffering.

"In this world you will have trouble" (John 16:33); "Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed" (1 Peter 4:12-13).

Prayer is not a show or an opportunity for us to show off. "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 men" (Matthew 6:5).

(adapted from Robert Velarde, Focus on the Family)

HELP US PREPARE

There is so much to do to get ready for Christmas! We can often lose sight of why we are doing these tasks, or which are the most important. God prepared from the beginning of the world that one day He would send His Son as an infant grown to a man, to save His people. That's a lot of planning! Ask God in prayer to prepare our hearts to understand Him and what this gift means for us at Christmas. Let's pray.



WHAT NOW?

What is appropriate prayer? Some people benefit from using an acrostic like P.R.A.Y.

P is for Praise & Thanks:

"Dear Jesus, you are bigger than all of the rulers all over the world; You have given me eternal life, what else could I ask for! Thanks for loving me and giving me what I need."



R is for Repent:

"I am sorry for these things I have done. I am responsible for them. Please help me look to You for forgiveness."

A is for Ask:

"Please be with my friends as they travel across the country. Help me to be patient with my brother."

Y is for Yield:

"Guide me in the way you want me to go. Let Your will be done."

MEMORIZE ONE OR TWO

Do you feel uncomfortable praying in a restaurant or in front of others? Memorize a prayer with your family that you can pray easily. Your kids will be able to pull it up from memory when they need it away at school or camp, too.





HELP US LEARN

ANXIETY

Prayer can be an excellent tool to hit the “pause” button during angry or anxious moments in a young child’s life. Learn a hand signal together (like “halt” or folded hands) that will tell your little one it’s time to stop yelling, and we are going to be quiet and pray now. Express the anxieties and mistakes to God, and give it rest and completion.



Anxious little ones (and bigger ones) can picture folded hands– at the “Amen,” God is planting a kiss in there. Inside the fist, all day at school that kiss is there when they need it. Mommy or Daddy can plant a physical one in the other palm, too. A reassuring kiss from God in one hand, and a parent in the other. Amen!

Let’s face it, anxiety doesn’t stop in elementary school. God commands us over and over, “Don’t worry! Don’t be afraid!” but we’d rather ignore Him sometimes. Reassure your older and adult children or a friend that God is still there. God is always listening! Suggest they stop at an anxious moment and give it to God in prayer. Text a prayer! Send a calming short prayer or Bible verse on a pretty picture on Snapchat or Instagram or Twitter and remind them to take it to the Savior and leave it there.



What do you know about how people in other countries celebrate Christmas? Why do they do it that way? Is there a meaning from the Bible that these traditions illustrate? How well do we know the Christmas story itself? Do you know that the Old Testament is full of prophecies about Christ? Try learning some of them. Practice each day this week to learn to recite all of Luke, chapter 2 together! God will help if we ask--Let’s pray.

HELP US SHARE

When we pray, we are praising God, that we recognize what He has done for us. We can also feel bold enough to ask the Almighty for things, because He told us we could-- He loves us that much! Our God is a giving God-- are we a giving people? Pray this week that God will help us share His blessings for us with those around us-- blessings of love, of faith, of even good food and wrapped gifts! Ask Jesus to help us find ways to share with others who may need something special-- like a hug, or a card, or a warm hat, or a plate of thoughtful cookies, or a tank full of gas. Let's pray.



DON'T PUT BABY IN THE CORNER!



You can pray with your infant! When you are praying with family or in church, place baby's face where she can see your face, eyes closed, etc. She will start to recognize the cadence and volume of the speech, and later the vocabulary and match it to your facial expressions. Fold little hands when they are older, to mimic you and older children. Shh! Prayer is a time when we are quiet. As toddlers, they can mark a big, "Amen!"

PRAYER PLACE

You can pray anywhere, because God is everywhere. We pray in church, at bedtime, at the dinner table. Do you have any other places that quiet your spirit so that you can pray and listen to God?

- We've prayed many times in the car because everyone is contained!
- Consider making a prayer fort for the day or the month, with some cushions and blankets.



Peter's Perfect Prayer Place, by Stephen Kendrick and Alex Kendrick is a book about a little boy looking for the perfect place-- with stickers for each time the reader prays in his "perfect place."



SOME PRAYERS TO TRY

The Doxology – (sung or spoken)

Praise God from Whom all blessings flow,
Praise Him all creatures here below.
Praise Him above ye heavenly hosts
Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
Amen.

Prayer of Thanks

For each new morning with its light,
For rest and shelter of the night,
For health and food,
For love and friends,
For everything Thy goodness sends.
Amen.

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

Prayer for the Sick

Oh Lord, Who feels the pain of the world,
Look down on all sick and suffering persons.
Enfold them with Your love, that in the midst of pain, they
may find Your presence.
To doctors and nurses grant tender hearts and healing
hands, until health is restored body and soul.
In Jesus' name we pray,
Amen

Martin Luther's Table Prayer

Come Lord Jesus,
Be our guest
And let Thy gifts to us be blessed.

(want to try it in German?)

Komm Herr Jesus.
Sei unser Gast
Und segne was Du uns bescherret hast.

-Martin Luther

Jesus, Savior Wash Away

Jesus, Savior, wash away
All that has been wrong today;
Help me every day to be
Good and gentle, more like Thee.
in Your name we pray, Amen

The Lord is Good to Me

(Johnny Appleseed Prayer, sung or spoken)
Oh, the Lord is good to me,
and so I thank the Lord,
for giving me the things I need,
the sun and the rain and the appleseed,
the Lord is good to me.
Amen.

World so Sweet

Thank You for the food we eat,
Thank You for the world so sweet,
Thank You for the birds that sing
Thank You God for everything.
In Jesus' name, Amen.

Make me a Blessing Prayer

Lord, we thank You
For You've been faithful to provide for us once again.
Just as You are faithful,
Help us to be faithful too;
To be someone friends can count on,
To always be there for them,
And someone friends can look up to,
Blessing others as we've been blessed by You.
Amen.

Father We Thank Thee

Father, we thank thee for the night,
And for the pleasant morning light;
For rest and food and loving care,
And all that makes the day so fair.

Help us to do the things we should,
To be to others kind and good;
In all we do, in work or play,
To grow more loving every day.

- Rebecca Weston

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father, Who art in heaven,
hallowed be Thy name.
Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those
who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
Forever and ever,
Amen.

-as Jesus taught us, from Matthew 6:9-13