

ENGAGING WITH GOD IN PRAYER

Prayer is about a posture of the heart toward God – to be present with Him, and He with you – put simply, intentionally and attentively hanging out together!

There are a multitude of ways we can pray. Often we think of prayer as bringing lists of needs to God, and sometimes this is what we do, but often we can find this hard work. One-way conversations generally are!

Here are some ideas to make engaging with God a bit more interactive and perhaps life-giving, than simply closing your eyes and trying to remember all those things to pray about.

1. Slow down and just breathe!

Try starting your prayer time by simply slowing down. This might mean noticing your breathing and taking some deep breaths in and out, before resuming normal breath. With your normal breath choose a name of God and say this with each breath a few times. This helps to centre your attention on who you are spending time with. Here are some names for God:

- *Yahweh (The Lord – Yahweh is derived from the Hebrew word for “I AM.” It is the proper name of the Divine Person, coming from the verb which means “to exist,” “be.”)*
- *Wairua Tapu (Holy Spirit)*
- *Good Shepherd*
- *Prince of Peace*
- *Jehovah Jireh (God who provides)*
- *Abba (Father God – Daddy)*
- *El Roi (The God who sees)*

2. Give thanks.

What does the name of God mean to you? Give thanks to God for who He is and how that name shapes the way you can pray.

3. Put aside your own concerns and needs.

What’s on your mind that could distract you from being able to pray for others? Jot those things down, knowing that they are important to God too, but then put them to one side, remembering you can pick them up again later. You could even write them on sticky notes, and then as you come back to them decide which things are important and which are not. You may like to put the important things somewhere to give them time and attention with God later (maybe even using some of the prayer tools below to help you pray about those personal issues).



4. Read the Scripture passage for today.

- How can this act as a frame for your prayer?
- What key concepts are in the passage that might help shape your prayer?
- Perhaps use some key words to doodle a design that helps you as you pray through the lens of this passage.

5. Pray through the themes for today.

You could bring these themes to God by:

- Writing your prayers. Written prayers can help maintain focus, and the Holy Spirit can guide your prayers by developing streams of thought while you are writing, as it slows you down (rather than rushing with lots of words).
- Drawing something to represent the theme. No you don't need to be an artist for this! No need for anyone else to even see your prayer drawing. It may just be a shape or colour that represents your thoughts. (Crayon is a good medium as it doesn't allow for perfectionism!) Ask God to give you words, other pictures or colours to add to the image.
- Using Bananagrams/Scrabble letters to make words that capture your hopes and longings for this situation. No need for long, well-structured sentences, just words to keep you engaged with God over the theme you're praying for. Be attentive for unexpected words that might come from God.
- Going for a walk (or bike ride), and perhaps committing to praying for a certain aspect of today's theme as you journey each street, block or certain number of lamp-posts. Be aware of your surroundings; ask God to speak to you through the ordinary things you see, and how they might relate to the theme you're praying about.
- Collaging with natural resources or magazine pictures. Gather words, pictures, or objects and ask God to guide you as you arrange them to represent what you hope and long for.
- Using your imagination. Picture the situation you are praying for. Imagine Jesus entering the picture. Where is his focus as he enters? Who is he interacting with? What influence does his presence have? How are others responding to what he does or says? Is there anything that stands out from this that could guide what you pray for Him to do in that situation?
- Just sit still and pray! Where's your quiet place without interruptions?
- Pray with someone else, if you can. If it's possible to meet in person, make a time and place to do that, or use the phone or an online platform to connect together. Maybe a small group rather than just a pair is less intimidating. You could also connect after trying some of the above activities, and share those prayer experiences with each other.

