

Plug and Pray

Filling Prayer With Feeling

July 23, 2023



Today we're putting Jesus' prayer pattern into practice by personally running through each beat of His *cheat sheet*. So the only question is: **Are you ready to get real?** Because, as we've seen over the last few weeks, **we only get out what we put into prayer**. So if we want personalized, real *answers* – we gotta supply personalized, real *prayers*.



Because, to recap: **prayer is a partnership**. And its purpose is to get *us* to open the door and receive *God's* unexpected answers. Which is why **we need to listen more than speak in prayer**. And as the story of the sneaky woman showed us, **we listen through God's Word** – so we can *act out* our *faith* in His *answer*. And the resulting relationship creates such a powerful picture of who God really *is*, that His reputation becomes more *respected* and *revered* than all others on earth. And **as His name is hallowed, we are humbled** – because even in His *infinite authority*, He calls us into *individual* intimacy – by revealing that **every prayer's ultimate answer is our undeserved adoption** as the earthly children of a *heavenly* Father. Because prayer lets us:



See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that *is* what we are! **[And knowing that is everything!]** – 1 John 3:1 NIV



Cuz when we finally see that all of *this down here* is just part of our Dad's plan to reveal His *love* for us, we see what it *really* means to *love Him back*. And *that* completes His plan to *get us back* – cuz to have a *forever* relationship:



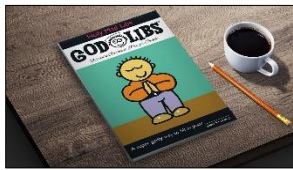
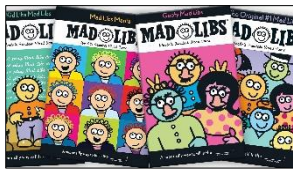
Love must be sincere. **[And back in the beginning, ours wasn't. So we're here to become sincere by learning why we love and what we love in a two-step process:]** **Hate what is evil; [and] cling to what is good.** – Romans 12:9 NIV



And **prayer is our tool to develop that discerning heart** that can *rightly* divide *good* and *evil* because it gives us access to our Partner's perspective. And in *all things*, before we judge *anything*, **we should double check with the view from above to see what to love!** Cuz sometimes a better perspective reveals how losing your *job*, twisting your *ankle*, or getting a *ticket* was a *good* thing!

So, knowing that we *routinely* need to consult *God's perspective* on all the events of *our life*, Jesus provided a way to pray where **the whole purpose is to deliver that perspective – personally and promptly**. And we call it The Lord's Prayer. But as we've seen, **The Lord's Prayer is not a prayer**. It's a guide. A pattern. A template. A tool. It's an index that makes it easy to *plug in* all the personal experiences of our daily lives so we can *pray to* our Partner with the confidence of knowing we've asked for *His input* on everything He *wants* in on; from our *deepest needs* and *darkest secrets* to our *highest hopes* and most *passionate praise*. And yet, **it's so simple, kids of all ages can use it**.

In fact, it's a lot like Mad-Libs – remember those? You get a *template* full of blank spaces where you're given a *prompt* to provide some *missing words* and, in the end, the *result* is always a one-of-a-kind, hilariously *personalized* paragraph that actually says a lot about who *you are!*



Well, Jesus' prayer guide is like being given a page out of *GOD-LIBS*. Cuz **it's the instruction and invitation for all to plug and play**. It tells us what to do – but then leaves *space* for us to *do* it in *our* unique way. Cuz each *piece* is our *Partner's* prompt to *pour ourselves into it* so He can reveal what He wants us to *take away from it*.

So when we're *prompted* to **pray** a piece like "Our Father" – our *job* is to provide *our* perspective; i.e. to **personalize** that prompt. How would *you* say that and what does it *mean* to *you* where you're at. And once you've filled in that blank, we **pause** to hear what *God* has to say in response.

And then it's *game on!* Because **praying that way keeps us engaged by keeping prayer fresh, dynamic, and relevant**. And *that* draws us *in* rather than tuning us *out*. Which is why Jesus' young *apprentices* were so *eager* to learn it. It was the *antidote* to the *mechanical, religious repetition* that they were used to in *long-winded* Jewish prayers like the Amidah.

Cuz **it's quick and simple but keeps prayers comprehensive and concise**. And when practiced *properly*, it *promises* to produce all the fruit God's been trying to get *you* to *grow*. So what do you say we put it all together and take a practice run through the whole thing just for fun? Here we go – our first prompt is to think about where you are *right now* and –

Pray: "Our Father" – because **He's your Dad!** And what *that* means to *you*, we put into *words* to –
Personalize: How do *I* best express *my* childlike *affection* for *my* devoted Dad? "**Love you Pops!**" "**Mornin' Father**", "**Hey Dad – it's your favorite kid calling!**" *Just be natural* – and then –
Pause: *Listen* to hear what *He* has to say about this relationship. Maybe it felt weird to call Him *Dad*; or call *yourself* a kid. *Why?* Well open His Word and let Him *show you* how to get on the *same page*.

Then, we Pray: "In heaven," – because **our prayer Partner is above all, and in full control**.
Personalize: How do I best express *my respect* for Dad's absolute *authority*? "**You're God and I'm not.**", "**Noah here, reporting for duty!**" or "**I didn't see that coming! You're the Boss Applesauce!**"
Pause: After *your* words, what do you immediately *hear* needs to change in your life? Maybe you're *convicted* by how you *haven't* handed over a *relationship, struggle, or worry* to Him. Is He *telling* you that you need to work on *submitting* and *surrendering* in some specific place?

We Pray: "Hallowed be Your name," – because **His name is what draws people into His family**.
Personalize: How do I express the *honor* of sharing *His* family name? "**How do I show You to others today**", "**Help me watch my mouth and give You glory**", or "**Give me courage to live like You.**"
Pause: to *listen* for all the opportunities and instructions that He provides each day where you could better display the *trust, obedience, comfort, or joy* that comes with an *adoption* into His *family!*

We Pray: “Your kingdom come.” – cuz **we want God to adopt everyone and transform everything!**
Personalize: How do I express my *desire* for His *rule* over this world? **“I can’t wait till everyone gets what You’re giving”, “What can I do to get things ready for You?”, or “Whose heart needs help?”**
Pause: Do you have any *ideas* that might be His *instructions* for you to *do*, so *He* can get it *done*. Is *your heart* the holdup cuz you’ve got *someone* or *something else* already on *His throne* or is there a *different heart* that just needs *your love*. *Either way*, can you *hear* what *He* wants you to *do*?

We Pray: “Your will be done” – because **we want to be the faithful servants that get-r-done!**
Personalize: How do I best express my *obedience* to His *will*? **“What’s the plan Coach?”, “Remind me to shut up Lord!”, or “Soften my heart, cuz I know I whine when I don’t get my way!”**
Pause: And *return* to His *Word* to make sure you’ve *heard* what His *will* really *is*, and what you’re *really* willing to *do*. Maybe kept what *He* wants from you, *off limits*; so *check yourself*.

We Pray: “On earth as it is in heaven.” – because **we know whatever He has works better.**
Personalize: How can I be express my *trust* for what I *can’t* see? **“Show me where I went wrong at work?”, “Grow my faith in the future”, or “Help me to look past the distractions down here!”**
Pause: Maybe things are *good* and *He’s* giving you a glimpse of what *He’s* got in *store* or maybe things are *rough* to *remind you* of what *earth won’t* offer. Listen for *any* life lessons *He’s* teaching!

We Pray: “Give us this day our daily bread.” – because **we want what God gives, no more, no less.**
Personalize: How do I best express my *confidence* in *God’s* care? **“Help me see when to say when”, “Lay it on me Lord!”, or the popular “Let me win the lotto if You think I can handle it”.**
Pause: Is *He* giving you the *lucky numbers*? Probably *not*. But *He’s* *definitely* giving you *something*; so maybe it’s time to *adjust* your appetite to the *truth*, *guidance*, or *discipline* *He’s* dishin’ up.

We Pray: “And forgive us our debts.” – because **we’ve all violated our commitment to Christ.**
Personalize: How do I best express my *remorse* for *failing* to do the *right* thing? **“I’m sorry for what I said to Sally”, “I blew it Lord, help me fix it”, or “I’m a Bozo for being such a Jumbo Dumbo”**
Pause: Often after you *confess*, you can *immediately* hear how to make a mistake *right*. Maybe *God’s* saying to sit this one *out* while *He* works or maybe *He* wants you to *rebuild* what you broke.

We Pray: “As we forgive our debtors.” – because **we want to pass on the grace we’re given.**
Personalize: How do I best express my *gratitude* to *God* through *forgiveness*? **“Help me let go of my anger at Andrew”, “Remind to give as good as I get”, or “Hold me back, Lord!”**
Pause: You *know* how hard it is to let someone who hurt you off the *hook*, so in all your angry arguments listen in case *God* is saying “You do that *too*!” And then thank *Him* by forgiving *them*.

We Pray: “And do not lead us into temptation” – because **we want God to lead us away from it.**
Personalize: How do I best express my *weakness* and need for *His help*? **“Help me keep cool when conversation gets political”, “Give me strength to turn down dessert”, or “Jesus, take the wheel!”**
Pause: to *hear* if *God’s* given you the way *away* from what’s tempting you. Maybe it’s an *example* in *His Word* that inspires your *strength* or maybe it’s a victory *He* gave to remind you *He’s* there.

We Pray: "*But deliver us from the evil one.*" – because **we can't conquer anything alone.**

Personalize: How do I best express my *inadequacy*? "**Help, I can't escape the shame of what I did!**", "**Why is it that I can't quite quit smoking**", or "**Show me a way out of this depression.**"

Pause: to hear His *escape plan*. Maybe you need to *let go* of something that's dragging you down or maybe He's telling you to *hold tighter* to something that He'll use to *lift you up*.

We Pray: "*For Yours is the kingdom*" – because **Jesus paid for it!**

Personalize: How do I best express my *devotion* to my King! "**I gladly give my offering today cuz everything I have is Yours.**", "**Lead me where you want me**", or "**Thanks for letting me live here!**"

Pause: Once you *confirm* He's your King, do you hear *Him* asking you to *behave* more like you *believe* and *belong*? Maybe you need to be *rejuvenated* by *re-reading* your King's inspiring story!

We Pray: "*And the power and the glory forever.*" - because **all things awesome are from Him.**

Personalize: How do I best express my *praise* for an all-powerful God who saved *me*?! "**I can't believe you made that sunset for me!**", "**Everything is nothing without You**", or "**I worship You**"

Pause: Are any of His incredible *exhibitions of power* speaking to you? Maybe the *serenity* of your camping trip showed His *gentleness* or maybe a *thunderstorm* made you remember His *strength*.

We Pray: "*Amen.*" – because **we mean what we say.**

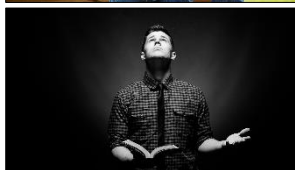
Personalize: How do I best express my *certainty* for my *belief* in Him? Well *this* little word is *already* packed with meaning. It's the Hebrew word for "**Truly.**", "**Right on.**", or "**So be it.**". And it's like the "**I do**" at a *wedding*; **it's a vow to act on the truth you've just acknowledged.** So to make it your *own* just choose the right *tone*! Was *today's* prayer a *tough* one? Maybe it gets an *exhausted*, "**amen.**", was it a *challenging* prayer? Well you can let Him know you're *on board* but *nervous* with an, "**aMEN...**". Or maybe you're just *on fire* after prayer and you want the *world* to know by *sealing* the *deal* with an, "**AAAAMEN!**". And though that ends the talking part of prayer, *we keep listening!*

Pause: Because *however* you wrap it up, *remember* you've just *promised* to *carry out* what you've prayed – so keep your eyes and ears open all day, for every *whisper*, *hint*, or *nudge* Dad throws your way. And then get in *His Word* cuz that where we *confirm* every answer we've ever heard!



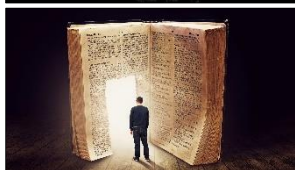
And the more you pray this way, the more you'll know what He has to say about *you*, *Him*, *your* relationship, and *His* plan. Because He promises:

Call to Me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know. - Jeremiah 33:3 NIV



And **although prayer begins with us, it should always end in an illuminating adventure through His Word** because:

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. - 2 Timothy 3:16-17 NIV



So practice getting *real* and then get ready to get *going*, cuz *it's game on!*

Father God, thank You for loving me in spite of my sin; forgive me and cleanse me by the sacrifice of Your Son, my Savior; and free me and lead me by Your Spirit and Word, as I seek to trust and follow Jesus Christ, as the Lord of my life. Amen.