

# Prayer

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For some prayer may simply mean saying the “Our Father,” or blessing a meal at supper time. For others it can be a meditating experience where petitions are offered, reflections experienced, and answers received.

## **Prayer is Our Connection Back to Heavenly Father**

Prayer is consider one of the greatest blessings we will have during our journey in mortality. Prayer is “...sincere, heartfelt talk with our Heavenly Father” (Gospel Principles 41). Prayer has been taught and practiced since the beginning of time, affects all of our thoughts and actions, and will bring us closer to God than anything else we can do as humans.

We are instructed to pray whenever we feel the need to do so, and always “with a sincere heart, with real intent.” The times we don’t feel like praying are likely the times we need it the most. All prayers should be directed to God the Father, only, and can be done in silence or out loud as we feel prompted. We are directed to have personal prayers each morning and night (as a minimum), while having a prayer in our hearts at all times. We are also directed to have prayers as a family each morning and night. In addition, we are admonished to have prayers before eating as an individual or as families. All Church meetings and events should begin and end with prayers.

## **The Method of Prayer**

A prayer is best accomplished by addressing Heavenly Father, expressing feelings from the heart as if to “confide in him,” asking forgiveness, giving thanks, praying for others, and expressing love for Heavenly Father and for his son Jesus Christ. The highest and most reverent language possible should always be used. In all instances of prayer, Christians are asked to avoid “vain repetition” and ask for and submit themselves to God’s will, understanding that God knows what is best for us. All prayers should be ended in the name of Jesus Christ.

Prayer position should always be that which invokes humility before God and limits distractions. A humble position for many is on bended knee with arms or hands folded.

## **The Six Keys to Effective Prayers**

Six key things stand out when considering prayer: 1) conducting personal prayers morning and night (at a minimum); 2) praying to our Heavenly father exclusively; 3) using the most reverent language possible; 4) always ending prayers in the name of Jesus Christ; 5) avoiding meaningless words and repetitions; and 6) the emphasis on praying as a family. The following explains each one:

### **1. Personal Prayer**

Praying with a group, even with family, is very different than praying by one’s self alone. It is the difference between having a family dinner and having one-on-one time between a parent and a child. One-on-one time has a special spirit associated with it, where intimate conversation and special feelings can be expressed. The same goes for prayer, where our Heavenly Father wants to hear from us personally whenever possible.

### **2. Praying to Heavenly Father Exclusively**

Praying to Heavenly Father exclusively is something that may be foreign to some Christians. Although the principle of intercessory prayer is biblically sound and comforting, why not direct all of our prayers directly to our Heavenly Father—the source of all life. He is our Father, our God, and the deity to whom all prayers should be directed. When Jesus taught his disciples to pray, he addressed his Heavenly Father and set the perfect example for all of us on prayer. He did not invite anyone to pray to him. He

always deferred to the Father—always! Praying to our Heavenly Father exclusively also avoids confusion with children.

### **3. Using the Highest Language in Prayer**

As a child and young adult I gave little thought to the language of prayer, the formulas were set or I was free to chat with whomever I chose. I grew up voicing my prayers silently or out loud in a casual language, since this was most comfortable to me. Over time I found the practice of using a “higher” language in prayer to be more reverent. I was accustomed to saying “you” and “your” when addressing Heavenly Father, but over time using “thee” and “thou” gave my prayers more meaning. Language is powerful. I was showing greater reverence and respect. My love and awe for my Heavenly Father grew, as did my feeling of closeness and of having a deep personal relationship. I came to understand, along with my family, that language can enhance prayers and the spirit behind prayers.

### **4. Ending Prayers in the Name of Jesus Christ**

Jesus Christ said: “...I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). When we pray to the Father we do so in the name of His only Begotten Son so that our prayers will find access to Him, allowing us to come unto the Father through Jesus Christ. The prophet Alma declared “...there is no other way or means whereby man can be saved, only in and through Christ. Behold, he is the life and the light of the world. Behold, he is the word of truth and righteousness (Alma 38:9). For this reason we always close our divine communication in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

### **5. Avoiding Vain Repetitions in Prayer**

As a Catholic I can remember reciting congregational prayers and communal proclamations during the course of the liturgy, or Mass—much of which is repetitive. I remember reciting the Nicene Creed and the Mystery of Faith over and over. I remember hearing the Eucharistic prayers being recited by the priests, and of the constant repetition—perhaps to the point of being meaningless at times when our minds might wander. In pondering this I am reminded of the counsel from Jesus as recorded in

Matthew 6:7: “But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions...”

### **6. Praying as a Family**

Finally, there is the practice of praying together daily as a family. What better way to know what is in the hearts of our children, and to share with them what is in our own hearts as parents. I cannot imagine laying myself down to sleep without having prayed together as a family.

### **God Answers All Prayers**

The genuine prayers of the faithful are always answered, but not always in the way or timing we desire. We are to accept the influence of the Holy Ghost, which often manifests itself with warm comfortable feelings of confirmation, to understand the answer to our prayers. We are counseled to do all we can to bring about that which we desire and not ask God to do all of the work. God is not our butler; he is our Heavenly Father, and he has given us power to make things happen. Finally, we must be ever aware that answers to prayers frequently come through other people.

### **Conclusion**

Prayer is a divine form of communication with our Heavenly Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, that provides peace and revelation to the truth seeking Christian. While we are encouraged to pray always, the way in which we pray can make a big difference in the spiritual experiences we have in prayer.

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