

PRAYER IDEAS

Prayers begin the day. Prayers end the day.

Prayers INTERRUPT – Thank you, God, for reminding us to pray – the day.

Prayers happen when we only have one second to pray. Prayers can take years to pray.

Prayers happen when we're stressed, when we're glad, when we're lost, when we're confused, when we're thankful, when we're eating, when we're resting, when we're thinking, when we're playing, when we're safe, when we're in danger, when we're worried.

Prayer happens a lot. In fact, the Bible tells us never to stop praying! That's a lot of prayer.

Here are some ideas to help you pray.

PRAYER FOR LEADERS

One traditional prayer that leaders pray, like pastors before they begin worship, is a request that everything they do that day be acceptable in God's sight.

Using your thumb, make the sign of the cross on your forehead and say: May the thoughts of my mind...

Then make a cross over your lips, saying: And the words on my lips...

Finally make a cross over your heart: And the meditations of my heart be acceptable in your sight.

You might even end the prayer saying: And a blessing to your people.

PRAYER BASICS

Prayer is all being in relationship with God, sort of like you have a relationship with your parents or guardians or best friend. You try to talk with them every day if you can, you hug them, you want to hear what's going on in their lives, you laugh with them, you cry with them. You ask your parents for things when you need them.

Prayer is about doing these same things with God. God wants to hear what's going on in your life, to laugh with you and cry with you. God wants to hug you in his love when you need a hug. God wants to hear what you want, your hopes and dreams and desires. God wants to hang your creations on his heavenly refrigerator! God wants you to know how big and great his love is for you. God wants a relationship with you, because you are his child. God wants to teach you all about what it means to be his child and how to love the world as he does.

Prayer is all about being in that relationship, about telling God everything that's going on in your life and seeking God's love and guidance.

BEGINNING: DEAR GOD

Prayer is about your relationship with God. Start by telling God "Hi" somehow.

MIDDLE: WHATEVER YOU WANT

Anything can be a good prayer. If you want to tell to God or you think God wants to hear it, that's prayer. And words aren't required. Anything that puts you in a place where you're spending time with God counts as prayer.

ENDING: AMEN

Prayers often end by saying "Amen." Did you know "amen" means "I agree" or "I believe what I just said is true"? When you say "amen," you're saying yep, definitely, let it be so God, I believe this, this is legit. If you can't say "amen" to a prayer (if you don't believe it), then don't pray it.

Sometimes we say "Through Jesus" before "Amen" to remind us that it's through Jesus open arms on the cross that we first discovered how big and awesome God's love for us is.

THINGS TO PRAY ABOUT

The word cloud is shaped like a map of the United States and contains the following text:

new friends your heart
your church family
the universe people getting married
firemen anything that excites you
justice people in prison safety
floods addicts today your left arm your town
god's presence porcupines vacation
people who are traveling mountains
goodbye to the devil widows
saxophones electricity orphans the air
faith other countries **the church** wisdom
rich people rivers
people who work at night
goosebumps government
anything that confuses you farmers
upcoming tests peace
wars white people
pregnant women health
people who have died
yourself pets
the smell of apple pie
brown people kidnapped people
the holy spirit thanks for the cross
cherry trees winter flowers
your teachers trees
your neighbor poor people
family the hungry
friends your eyes
spiritual growth the soil
alcoholics
the international space station
forgiveness your girlfriend
babies old people the president hugs
spring the baptized your enemies
your boyfriend dark matter
monkeys the duckbill platypus rain movie stars
oxygen autumn
that people hear god's story

WORD SMART (VERBAL-LINGUISTIC) PRAYERS

DIVINE READING

This is a really old prayer. You'll need a Bible.

- Read a scripture passage
- Meditate on (think about) what God's saying in this story
- Pray for anything that's on your heart after reading this story
- Contemplate (think) about what God's trying to tell you in this story

A SIMPLE DIVINE READING

Read a Bible story three times (use different translations each time if you can).

- Before you read it first, tell everyone, "Listen for a word or phrase that jumps out to you." When you finish reading, ask, "What word or phrase jumped out at you?"
- Before you read it the second time, say, "This time, listen for how you hear the passage speaking to your life today." When you finish reading, ask, "What did you hear God telling you?"
- Before you read it the last time, say, "This time, listen for what you hear God calling you to do in the coming week." When you finish reading, ask, "Where is God calling you this week?"

CHANGING THE EMPHASIS

Use this with any written prayer, but the Lord's Prayer works extremely well. Pray the prayer or one line of the prayer multiple times. Change the emPHAsis each time. See how that changes what you're praying.

Our FATHER, who art in heaven.

OUR Father, who art in heaven.

Our Father, who are IN heaven.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Pray the Lord's Prayer, but after each phrase or sentence, stop and ponder what you just said. What does "Our Father who art in heaven" mean? Why did I just pray that? Or what am I asking God for when I ask for my daily bread? You can do the same with the Apostles' Creed or the Ten Commandments.

Or use the Lord's Prayer to inspire your prayers. Maybe while saying "Give us our daily bread" you suddenly find yourself wanting to thank God for the food you had at dinner or pray for the hungry child you saw on the street. Immediately pause the Lord's Prayer and pray for all the things that jumped into your mind. Only come back to the Lord's Prayer when you've offered all your prayers (if you run out of time and don't finish the Lord's Prayer, don't worry about it, you prayed well enough if you run out of time).

REWRITE THE LORD'S PRAYER

Write the Lord's Prayer in your own language. How would you say it?

JOURNAL / DIARY

Write down your prayers. Write them as full and completely thoughts, saying everything you want to God. If you're praying for a friend, tell God about your friend, who this person is, why they're important in your life, maybe some favorite memories, your joys and concerns surrounding the friend, and everything you know that's going on in the friend's life. Write in it daily as a diary or journal.

PRAYER CARDS

Write a variety of things to pray for on index cards. Use them like flash cards to decide what you're going to pray about next.

PRAYER NOTEBOOK

Keep a pocket notebook and write person or thing you want to pray about down. Only use one line for each prayer. If you keep it with you throughout the day, you can easily remember everything to pray for.

WRITE POETRY

Write your prayer as a poem. Use a standard format, like rhyming, if it helps get your prayer going.

PRAYER BALL

Get an inflatable ball that you can easily write on with a permanent marker (like a beach ball). Divide it into a variety of sections about the size of your palm or entire hand. In each section, write a generic prayer topic, like “another country” or “your family” or “the weather”. Pass the ball to someone have them pray for whatever topic their hand lands on (they can choose whether it’s their left hand or their right hand). If you’re doing this by yourself, throw the ball in the air and then pray for whatever topic your hand lands on when you catch it.

PSALMS

Use one of the psalms as your prayer.

BIBLE PRAYERS

Pray one of the famous Bible prayers: Luke 1:46-55 (the Magnificat), Luke 1:67-79 (the Benedictus), Luke 2:28-32 (the Nunc Dimittis)

NAMES OF GOD AND WORDS THAT DESCRIBE GOD

God has so many names in the Bible. Hundreds. Elohim. YHWH. The one who sees. King of Kings. I AM.

And there are so many images of God. God is a vine. A rock. A gate. Bread. A lamb. A mother.

And there are so many words that describe God. Almighty. Jealous. Faithful. Forgiving. Holy.

Find as many names, images, and words for God as you can. Search the Bible (have someone help you or use the internet). What do these words tell you about who God is? What would you call God? How do you describe God? You only have three or four names; why does God have so many names? Use these images to ponder who God is. Do any of these images help you see God in your life?

PUT YOURSELF IN THE BIBLE

Find a Bible story where God or Jesus is speaking. Imagine they’re speaking to you. Isaiah 43:1-5 is a good and simple example, but you can use stories where Jesus is talking to his disciples or the Pharisees or anything where God is speaking. What is God saying to you? Why is God saying this? What is God trying to tell you?

ERASING SINS

Get a chalk board or a marker board, something easy to erase. You might want to do this by yourself, unless you're with people you trust. Write all the bad things that have happened in your life lately. Ask God to take care of them, to make them better, and to continue loving you. When you're finished, erase everything like God does (see Isaiah 44:22) and trust that God is big enough to deal with all your junk.

LETTER TO GOD

Write your prayer as a letter to God. Start with "Dear God," write everything you're praying for, and sign it with your name at the end. If you really want to mail the prayers somewhere, send them to The Lutheran Magazine, 5th Floor (ELCA-LU), 8765 W. Higgins Rd., Chicago, IL 60631-4183. Or the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 8765 W. Higgins Rd., Chicago, IL 60631. Someone will find them and join you in prayer. Or send them to a friend or relative you'd like to have pray with you. Maybe you can even write the letter to the friend (or email) and ask them to pray for these things with and for you.

PRAYER ENVELOPES

Get three envelopes. Mark one "Thank you", one "Sorry", and one "Please". Or do "Me", "Others", and "the World". Get a number of slips of paper for people to write their prayers on and put in each envelope. You may pray over the envelopes without opening them, or tell everyone you're going to prayer through these envelopes this week, or use the envelopes from week to week and pull out the prayers as a group to pray.

WORD ASSOCIATION

Do a word association prayer. This works great in places where you have a lot of space to write, like with chalk in a parking lot. Pick a word like "Faith" or "Hope". Better yet, pick a Bible verse or story (maybe the one you're studying today) and have that be the starting point. Write the Bible reference on the ground (like "Luke 13:10-17") and read the story. Then start shooting off from there to the first word that comes to mind. From there, continue from any word (yours or someone else's) and write the first word that comes to mind. You may write any word, but remember that this is a form of prayer. What's the first thing that comes to mind if you were to use this word in a prayer?

PRAYER CACOPHONY

Have everyone pray out loud at the same time. Make a cacophony of prayers, trusting that God's ears can hear anything and everything. This is a favorite prayer style in Korea.

OTHER LANGUAGES

Learn how to say the Lord's Prayer or other simple prayers in another language. If you know someone who actually speaks another language, maybe they can teach you.

LOGIC SMART (LOGICAL-MATHMATICAL) PRAYERS

QUESTIONING PRAYER

Ask a question, like “Why is there suffering in the world?” or “Why did God create the sea cow?” Spend time asking questions like that, as many as come to mind. Offer ideas to how you think God might answer. Ponder the ideas for a while and offer them to God.

A.C.T.S.

This is a simple model for how to pray:

- Adoration: Tell God how amazing you think he is.
- Confession: Tell God about what you’ve done wrong or regret recently.
- Thanksgiving: Tell God about all the things you are thankful for right now.
- Supplication: Ask God to help you wherever you need help.

P.R.A.Y.

This is another simple model for how to pray:

- Praise: Praise God for everything good that’s happened in your life recently.
- Repent: Tell God about everything that’s gone wrong recently and consider how God might want you to do things differently
- Ask: Ask God for whatever you want or need
- Yield: Stop and listen. Either listen silently or listen by reading a Bible story.

T.R.I.P.

A third simple model for how to pray:

- Thanks: What am I thankful for today?
- Regret: What do I regret today?
- Intercession: What prayers for others do I want to pray today?
- Purpose: What do I hear God calling me to do today?

P.A.R.T.S.

One more model for how to pray:

- Praise: Praise God
- Ask: Ask God (both what you want or need and to take care of you and others)
- Repent: Say sorry for the things that have gone wrong
- Thank: Thank God for loving you and calling you his child
- Share: Tell God about your day

S.A.C. I.T.

Maybe one more:

- Supplication: Humbly ask God for what you want or need
- Adoration: Tell God about how much you love him
- Confession: Tell God about what's gone wrong recently
- Intercession: Ask God to care for the people you're concerned about
- Thanksgiving: Thank God for everything he's done

THE "P" S OF PRAYER

Maybe it'll help you to remember the main parts of prayer.

- Praise: Praise and honor God
- Provision: Ask God to provide for all your needs
- Pardon: Forgive those you're holding a grudge against and ask for God's forgiveness
- Protection: Ask for God's protection from Evil
- Purpose: Ask for God's guidance in your life

MATH PRAYER

- Add: God, add these things to mine or other people's lives
- Subtract: God, remove these things from mine or other people's lives
- Multiple: God, multiple these things (like your love and food) so that everyone has some
- Divide: God, divide these things among everyone (like your Spirit and its gifts)
- Sum: Unite us all together into your family

GUIDED PRAYER

Have someone lead you in prayer by saying an opening and then suggesting broad topics that everyone can add their personal thoughts to.

For example, the guide might start by thanking God and saying we are especially thankful for all the animals you made, at which point everyone names animals they are thankful for, then the guide might say we are thankful for all the good things you've given us, and then for all the Bible stories we love.

After that, maybe the guide will ask God to address all our concerns and worries, saying we especially want God to help people who are sick, or the places where bad things are happening, or anyone who is sad. Each time the group can offer as many ideas as they can for each topic.

See the prayers in "Morning Prayer" in the hymnal for a good example of this prayer.

PRAYER PAUSES

Some people don't like praying out loud, but it's hard to pray silently as a group. Use the guided prayer above, but this time say "Let's pause to remember all the people we love" or "Let's think about all the animals God created". Pause after each topic. This way, everyone is praying together but silently. This can be great for people who find praying out loud hard or scary.

COIN PRAYER

Get a coin.

- Heads up: Ask God to help someone
- Tails up: Thank God for something

S.T.O.P.

Any acronym that helps you remember what to pray about is a good acronym:

- Sorry
- Thanks
- Others
- Please

BIRTHDAY PRAYER

Pray for whoever you know that's having a birthday today. An easy way to make a list is to use facebook or check the church bulletin. Go down the list and pray for each person. This works for anniversaries as well.

TEASPOON PRAYER

An acronym on "tsp" ☺

- Thanks: Thank God for everything he's done
- Sorry: Tell God the things you're sorry for
- Please: Ask for God's help and for what you need

PRAYER VENTURES

Often we pray for things throughout the world. If you ever need help coming up with ideas on what to pray for, search for "Prayer Ventures" on the ELCA website. There's a prayer for every day, sometimes for a missionary, sometimes for a place where wildfires have been burning, sometimes for school in Africa, and sometimes for fishermen. You never know what you'll find.

FIVE-FINGER PRAYER

Use your fingers to guide your prayer.

- Thumb: Pray for people far away
- 1st Finger: Pray for people who lead and guide you
- 2nd Finger: Pray for people in power, like the President
- Ring Finger: Pray for people you love
- Little Finger: Pray for anyone who is sick
- Hand: Pray for yourself

PRAYER CARDS

Get a deck of cards and shuffle it. Slowly turn over one card after another in the deck.

- For red cards, say a "thank you" prayer
- For black cards, say a "sorry" or "please" prayer
- For kings, think of a word that describes God
- For a queen, pray for someone who is a female
- For a jack, pray for someone who is male

PRAYER CHALLENGE CHART

Make a chart with Monday through Sunday on the left and times of the day (morning, 10am, noon, afternoon, supper, bedtime) across the top. In each box, write something to pray for. Challenge yourself to take time at each of those times to say a prayer for whatever is written in that box. Many people in the Church set aside time to pray multiple times throughout the day.

If you want to do this together as a group, you can make it into prayer bingo instead, numbering the columns and rows 1-6 and using two dice to determine what you're going to pray for.

PRAYER PAIL

Get a small pail or a mug and lots of wooden craft sticks. Print written prayers on paper and glue them to the sticks. Now you have a ready collection of prayers whenever you need them. Make all the prayers in the pail the same type: Meal prayers, or morning, or end-of-class. Make multiple pails if you like.

PICTURE SMART (SPATIAL) PRAYERS

IMAGINARY PRAYER

Close your eyes and imagine how God wants the world to look. What do you see? How is it different from the way things are now? Where are you in this world? How can you help God make it come true?

Or imagine heaven. What makes it heaven? Is there gold? A garden? A tree by a river? A city? Mansions? Is it day or night? What food's there? Remember this is what God desires to give you.

WORD CLOUDS

Make a word cloud of everything that's on your mind. Or focus on one prayer and make a word cloud of everything that comes to your mind related to that prayer. For example, if you're praying for your dog, write words like help, love, shaggy, little, friend, leg, broken, pain, tears, smile, slobber. Even put the words in the shape of a dog, if you can. See Wordle online for an example of word clouds.

PICTURE PRAYER

Find a picture (or short video, or even a collage) that reminds you of God somehow. Pictures of Jesus work great. Sit with the picture and reflect on everything it's telling you about who God is.

Or find a picture that represents something you'd like to pray about. Photos of current events is always great. Use it to focus your prayer.

PRAYER MAP

Get a map of the country or the world, or anywhere. Pray for the various places you see on the map. If you're really good, close your eyes and point to a spot at random to pray for.

POSTER PRAYER

Get a large white sheet of paper, preferably a banner, and every week write everyone's prayers on it. Or draw small pictures if that works better. Or both. See how long it takes you to fill up the poster.

Do this at home in your bedroom. Put a large white sheet of paper on the wall. Or if your parents will let you, use an entire wall. Write all your prayer requests so that each night you're surrounded by your prayers, all of them ready to be given to God, even when you don't have the energy to pray.

PLAY-DOH PRAYER

Shape play-doh into something you want to pray for, praying while you're creating the object. When you're ready to move on, smash the play-doh and start making the next thing you want to pray for. Or just use the play-doh like a stress ball while you pray.

DRAW A PRAYER

Instead of speaking or writing a prayer, draw it on a piece of paper. Or paint an image of God, Jesus, or a favorite Bible scene as a way to pray.

PRAYER DOODLE

You don't have to be a good artist to do this one. Just make a small shape (a blob works) on a piece of paper. Write a word in the shape that you want to pray about. Focus on that word as you fill in or add detail to that shape (color it in, add wavy lines, give it a border). When you're ready to move on, draw another random shape on the paper and put different word in it for another one of your prayers. Continue as long as you desire or until the paper is full.

Keep the paper with you throughout the day, if you can. It's an easy reminder of your prayers, and you can keep adding details to the shapes if you want to pray the same prayers again.

PROPS

Get a prop (anything, like a toy) or many props. For each prop, see what it reminds you to pray about. Maybe the stuffed animal cat reminds you of your friend. Or the rock reminds you of the creek outside.

DRAW GOD'S LOVE

Draw what God's love looks like. Where do you find God's love in your life? Where do you need God's love? Draw those places and draw God's love into them.

PRAYER NOTICE BOARD

Get a bulletin board and post pictures of all the things you're praying for. It can be photos you've taken, clippings from newspapers, or pictures you've found online. Drawings and words written really big work too. This way it's really easy to see everything that needs prayer.

As a variation, you could make two boards, one for prayer concerns, and one for gratitude, thanksgivings, and joys. Often we forget that prayers aren't just for what we're worried about, they're also for the things that bring us joy in life. Make a place where anyone can post their prayer requests.

PUMPKIN PRAYERS

Get pumpkins to carve. Instead of carving scary things, carve images of something you're praying for. If you're praying for your school, carve the school's logo. If you're praying for grandma, carve the word "LOVE". If you're praying for God to protect you from the monsters under your bed, then maybe a scary thing would be appropriate.

Oh, and you can use the seeds to do a cooking prayer!

PRAYER AROUND THE CROSS

Sometimes it just helps to be by a cross when praying. The cross is the BIG symbol of God's love for us. Get a cross, lay it flat or stand it up, and have everyone gather around it to pray. If you have a cross people can write on, write your prayers on the cross, reminding everyone that Jesus went to the cross as the answer to our prayers. If you have a dark space, use glow sticks. Lay some in the outline of a cross and have people put glow sticks inside the cross for each prayer.

PRAYER RIBBONS

Write all your prayers on ribbons with markers. Collect all the ribbons in a basket. Find somewhere to hang the ribbons. As you hang each ribbon, read the prayer aloud. This makes a great prayer visual.

PRAYER CHAIN

Make chain links from paper with prayers on them. This can either be used to as decorations so that we can see our prayers each time we come in the room, or it can be used like an Advent or Lent calendar, praying one prayer each day to pray. This idea can be varied to use any decoration, butterflies at Easter or flames at Pentecost, crosses, stars. Decorate the space with our prayers.

PRAYER BALLOONS

Get a bunch of helium-filled balloons. Write a prayer request on each balloon. Keep the requests simple (a word or a phrase). Maybe the best thing is to write someone's name on each balloon, if it's likely everyone will know who the person is. Send a balloon home with each person (and it doesn't have to be just your small group, you could send the whole congregation home with balloons), asking them to pray for the person on the balloon.

PRAYER DICE

Find a large cube, big enough to write a whole sentence on each side. Write a short prayer on each side of the cube. When it's time to pray, roll the dice to decide what you're going to pray. This works really great at meals – no one's afraid to pray because the dice has the entire prayer on it! Or you could put pictures on each side of the dice. Then even little children can use it.

STICKY PRAYERS

Get a pad of sticky notes and write a prayer on each sticky note. Post the prayer on a board or, if you have a lot of prayers, post them all around the room.

PRAYER COLLAGE / MOSIAC

Stained-glass windows have been used to guide prayer for centuries, sometimes by telling a story and sometimes just through the random beautiful colors. Get scratch paper of a variety of colors, shapes, and sizes. Write prayers on the paper and glue them together as a mosaic. Or find images of things you want to pray for and glue them together as a mosaic. If all your prayers revolve around a central topic, like school, or the earth, turn it into a collage in the shape of the thing you're praying for.

PAPER PRAYER TELLER

Make a paper fortune teller, but put a broad prayer item (like family or rescue people) under each flap.

SPIDERGRAM PRAYER

Draw a picture of someone or something you want to pray for. Then draw a line from that picture to a word that describes a topic you want to pray about related to what you drew. Under the line, write a short prayer on that topic. Draw another line to another topic and repeat.

For example, draw your school. Draw one line from the school pointing to the word “teachers”. Then write a short below the line for your teachers. Draw another line that points to “safety”. And another to “the principal”. And another to “my friends”. Under each line, write a short prayer about each. Or draw your grandmother. Draw one line pointing toward “health”, another to “hugs”, another to “all her family”, and another to “being alone”. Write a short prayer under each topic. Or draw the country.

COMMUNION BREAD

Many people use making communion bread as a prayer activity, but cooking can take a lot of time. Instead, get a loaf of sliced bread and lightly toast the slices. Using food coloring in milk, have everyone paint their prayers on the bread slices. When they’re finished, share the bread with each other or have it be the communion bread for the day, showing us that as our prayers go to God, God nourishes us. This is the offering prayers turned into our communion meal (have you noticed we always bring the bread and wine forward as part of the offering?). This prayer works particularly great if you’re giving thanks for all the people who have gone before you, the saints who join us in the great communion every Sunday.

PRAYER PYRAMID

Take one of the 4-letter acronym prayers (back a few pages) and make a tetrahedron from a piece of paper (look online for help to do this). Write one letter of the acronym on each side of the tetrahedron. Use it like dice to guide your prayers. Cubes with “Sorry”, “Please”, and “Thank You” work too.

HELPING HANDS

Cut out paper hands. Write the things you want to pray about on the hands (you can write more than one thing on each hand). Post the hands somewhere you can see them. This reminds us that God's work happens through our hands, whether it's God using us to answer prayers or because our hands were folding in prayer to God.

Or trace hands on a poster board that says "Jesus, Please Help Us" on the top. In each hand, write or draw something we want Jesus to help us with. Where in your life do you need help?

MUSIC SMART (MUSICAL) PRAYERS

REPEATED SONGS

Find a short song, like “Jesus, Remember Me,” and sing it repeatedly. Sometimes stop singing and just hum or listen to the music if someone’s playing. Speak a pray after every few repetitions.

WRITE YOUR OWN LYRICS

It’s really easy to write your own lyrics to some songs. “Earth and All Stars” is a great example. Add as many verses as you like. “We are Marching in the Light” is another good one to use.

PLAY MUSIC

Play a Christian song or hymn. Just listen to it and consider the words more carefully than normal.

If you can play an instrument, play an instrument as a way of praying to God.

CHANT

Almost all of the Bible and the liturgy (the words we use in worship) can be chanted. The psalms work especially well. Either sing everything on one note, like a drone. Or start on one note, and change notes at the end of each sentence (stay on the note “la” and for the last three syllables change to “da ti da!” Go back to “la” for the next sentence or whatever sounds good).

RAP

Turn a prayer you have into a rap.

MEDITATION MUSIC

Sit in a chair or lie on the floor and listen to soft background music, piano or jazz or saxophone or chant. Keep the volume low. Clear your mind and just let the music carry you. When you are finished, thank God for creating music.

LITANIES

Open to hymn #237 or #238 in the hymnal. These are some of the best prayers ever!

MUSICAL PRAYERS

Play this like musical chairs. Turn on some music that makes everyone want to get up and move around. When the music stops, call out a prayer idea, like:

- Shout a name for God three times
- Thank God for your best friend
- Be silent for 30 seconds
- Shout out one thing you are grateful for
- Stop, ask God what he wants to say
- Tell God about your day
- Ask God for something you want / need
- Ask God for something for one of your friends
- Thank God for one person in your life
- Tell God something you want forgiveness for
- Tell God someone you want to forgive

PRAYER CIRCLE DANCE

The psalms tell us to praise God with dance. In Jewish communities, people do large circle dances as a form of prayer. Everyone gets in a circle and put their arms on or across each other's shoulders. Then they move around in a circle or do some leg kicks. Lively songs are helpful for this prayer, but swaying songs work as well. The song "Shalom" works great with this, slowly increasing the tempo as you repeat.

INTERPRETIVE DANCE

For those who like to move, if you have a song you want to prayer that has many vivid images and actions, you could do an interpretive dance. Slower songs work better. While the song is playing, dance to the shape of the music or mime the images or actions. Use your body to express your prayer. In the church, we call this liturgical dance. Ribbons and flowing banners can be used to enhance your prayer.

SING A SONG

Just sing any song that's about your faith and says what you want to tell God as this moment. Singing is one of the most powerful forms of prayer. That's why we have so many hymns. But then there's Christian pop music as well, and lots of other music you hear on the radio is actually a prayer to God.

BODY SMART (BODILY-KINESTHETIC) PRAYERS

OUTSTRETCHED HANDS

Pray with your hands lifted in the air. Lift one or both straight above your head as if you're reaching as close to God as possible.

Or reach out to the sides so that they form a really wide "U". This is roughly the position Jesus' arms were on the cross. Feel the weight of your prayers as you pray.

EXERCISE

If you know yoga, it's been used for prayer for years. Use any exercise where you feel open to God's presence as a prayer.

UPLIFTED HANDS

Sitting or standing, hold your hands in front of your body, palms up. Overlap your hands if you desire, maybe even letting one hand rest in the other. Feel the weight as you pray. When you finish, lift your hands slightly above your head, as if you're releasing your prayers to God. Picture incense or smoke rising, a sweet-smelling offering to God.

PRAYER POSTURES

Use your body to express your relationship to God and God's relationship to you. This is best done with a leader guiding the prayer. For example:

- Show me with your arms how you feel about God.
- Show me with your facial expression how you think God feels about you.
- Show me with a sound how you are feeling about your life right now.
- Show me with your hands how you feel about how much God cares for you.
- Show me with your whole body what kind of life you think God wants you to live for him.

CROSS PRAYER

Pray while holding a cross. Slowly rub your fingers along the cross while you pray. If you can find a "Holding Cross," these were made for this kind of prayer.

POPCORN PRAYER

Hold hands in a circle, and have each person pray, one at a time. When you're finished praying, gently squeeze the hand of the person beside you to tell them it's their turn. When your hand is squeezed, if you don't want to pray simply squeeze the next person's hand. You don't have to pray out loud (just let everyone know you're going to pray silently so that they don't think you're lost), but it's helpful if you do.

MUTUAL SUPPORT PRAYER

This is like the popcorn prayer, but to start, have everyone put their hands in front of them, thumbs pointed up. Then have everyone turn their thumbs to the left. Now one palm should be facing up and one palm should be facing down. Put the palm facing down upon the hand of the person beside you. Now everyone in the circle is supporting someone and being supported by someone.

THE HUG PRAYER

This is like the popcorn prayer too, but a little harder to setup (well worth it!). Have everyone get in a tight circle and put their left arm in front of the person on their left. Then, have them put their right arm in front of the person on their right (to do this, every right arm will also have to go in front of someone else's left arm). With your right arm, grab the hand of the person two to your right. Then, when each person finishes praying, the two people beside him/her lift their arms over that person, in effect hugging them. When you're finished praying everyone will be hugging.

Before you start and after everyone's holding hands, the person to the right of whoever starts the prayer is going to have to take their left arm and put it over the starting person's right arm.

COOKING

Cook a meal for someone as a gift or make communion bread. Work your prayers into the food and let the aroma waft up to God. God loves a good smelling prayer! Really, see Psalm 141:2 and Malachi 1:11.

LUTHERAN ROSARY

Get a rosary or a beaded bracelet, and divide into various sections. Hold the bracelet and as you move from bead to bead, change your prayer. For every large bead, pray the Lord's Prayer. For five beads in a row, repeat the Apostles' Creed, or the Ten Commandments, or focus on the cross, baptism, or communion. For ten beads, do confession and for ten more beads ask for God's forgiveness.

BASKETBALL PRAYER

Go shoot hoops, and before each shot, pray for something. Simple say "I pray for my dog" and take a shot. Then say "I pray for my little sister" and take a shot. Or make all your prayers thanksgiving prayers. Say "thanks for air" and take a shot. Then "thanks for my coach" and take a shot.

This can easily be done with a variety of sports.

PRAYER STATIONS

Take one or more prayer ideas and make them into multiple stations that people can travel to, one by one. Maybe setup a number of stations for a variety of people throughout the world, one with a picture of the poor, one with the hungry, one with the wealthy, one with the famous, one with the imprisoned, and so on.

PRAYER POSITIONS

Have you ever tried different positions to pray in? How about lying on the ground on your back. Or on your stomach. Have you ever prayed while kneeling? What about kneeling and bowing so low your face is touching the ground? Do you pray while balancing on one foot?

What about your hands? Do you fold them? Or place them flat together? Or rest them on your knees? Or hold them against your chest? Or cover your eyes with them? Or fold them on top of your head?

A lot of these positions have meaning. Standing with arms stretched up is used for praise. Confession is often with your head bowed and hands folded. What type of prayer does each position suggest to you?

SIGN LANGUAGE

Learn how to say the Lord's Prayer in sign language. Or other simple prayers, like "Thank you, Jesus."

HOP SCOTCH PRAYER

Make a list of ten prayers, and while playing hop scotch, pray the prayer your stone lands on.

ST. PATRICK'S BREASTPLATE

This prayer is attributed to St. Patrick and is great with actions. Say the following:

- Christ be with me (cross hands to each shoulder and hug yourself)
- Christ within me (still hugging shoulders, twist to the right and left)
- Christ behind me (stretch arms behind, grasping hands behind the back)
- Christ before me (reach arms straight in front)
- Christ beside me (stretch arms like an airplane, tilt to the left and right)
- Christ beneath me (crouch and touch floor with fingertips)
- Christ above me (reach for the sky)
- Christ in hearts of all that love me (end with a warm hug)

ANGRY BALL PRAYERS

Sometimes we're angry or frustrated and we just need to yell at God. Don't worry, God can take it. The psalms yell at God a lot. Get a stress ball that you can squeeze. Or get a basketball and find a wall you can safely throw it at without damaging the wall. Or if you have a punching bag, that works too. Something that lets your body safely express your anger with you. Tell God what's making you angry or upset. After every sentence, squeeze the stress ball or throw basketball at the wall.

When you're done praying, or you feel like you've gotten all your anger out, or you're too worn out to be angry anymore, at least for a while, ask God to take your anger and give you his love back in return.

PEOPLE SMART (INTERPERSONAL) PRAYERS

INTERCESSIONS

Pray for everyone and everything on your mind. Just start naming things and telling God what you'd like. Pray for people you know and people you don't, places near home and places really far away. Trust all your prayers to God.

NEWSPAPER PRAYER

Get a newspaper or magazine. It can even be a celebrity magazine, if you like. Pray over every headline you see, giving thanks or asking for help.

CONVERSATIONAL PRAYER

Sit in a group, and have one person offer up a prayer topic, telling people what they'd like prayed for. Let everyone else jump into the prayer and pray for every part of that topic they can think to include.

For example, maybe someone says their grandmother is in the hospital and says a short prayer for their grandmother. What all could be included in this prayer? Maybe someone jumps in and prays for all of Grandma's friends. Maybe someone prays for the doctors and nurses. Maybe someone prays that Grandma gets good food to eat. Another person starts praying for the person who shared the concern and all of Grandma's family. Another person thinks about the part of Grandma's body that's hurting and starts praying for that specific part of her body. And so on.

PRAYER REQUEST BOOK

Keep a prayer request book. Let everyone write their requests anonymously if they like. Maybe pick one prayer to pray as a group and leave the book available for everyone to pray out of on their own time. Tell people to write "Prayed" beside each request after they pray it. Requests can be prayed multiple times, but this time everyone knows the requests are being prayed for.

LAYING ON HANDS

Have everyone lay hands on someone who has a prayer request for themselves (ask their permission first!). If the prayer is for an injury, like pain in your left leg, have everyone put their hands on that leg. As you pray, focus your mind on that person. This works great for blessings as well!

PRAYER PARTNER

Find someone you trust and see regularly. Pray with them once a day or once a week. Do it by telling them things that are going on in your life that you want prayed for and then have them pray for you. Then have them tell you wants going on in their life and you pray for them. It works best to hold hands when you're praying. Or you can do this by mail, writing your prayers and sending them to each other.

PRAYER IN A HAT

Put everyone's name in a hat. Then have each person draw a name out and ask them to pray for that person this week.

Or put everyone's prayer request in a hat and have each person pray for that specific request.

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

We can tell God about things going wrong in our lives, but it's really helpful to have someone who can speak God's word to us and tell us we're forgiven. Find someone you trust (it doesn't have to be a pastor, it can be a teacher or even a friend). Pray with them. When it's your turn, pray out loud by telling God the things that you're sorry for. Then have you friend put your hands on your head and tell you that God forgives you for everything you've done wrong. Do the same for your friend if they want to make a confession.

GROUP LETTER PRAYER

Pick a person that everyone is going to pray for this week. Maybe someone in the hospital. Have everyone write their prayers on a card or letter, and mail the prayers to that person. You may do it all on one card, but sometimes it's better to send many cards. This is a great way to let people know you're praying for them.

TEAM HUDDLE

For a quick prayer, have everyone gather in a tight huddle. Ask “what do we want to thank God for” and let people answer. Then ask “what do we want to ask God for” and let people answer. Then say, “On the count of three, everyone say ‘Amen.’ One, two, three, Amen!”

QUAKER PRAYER

Quaker prayer starts in silence. Simply say “Let us pray. If the Spirit moves you to offer a prayer aloud, offer the prayer. Otherwise listen in silence.” This is a great way to listen for God. In Lutheran circles though, this prayer often ends with someone so uncomfortable with the silence that they finally say a prayer aloud to end the silence. When the Spirit moves you, say “Amen”.

SELF SMART (INTRAPERSONAL) PRAYERS

PRAY FOR YOURSELF

Did you know you can pray for yourself? Tell God about your day, all the good things and all the bad things. Tell God about your morning and the food you had, about where you went and what you did throughout the day, and about all what you're looking forward to tonight or tomorrow. Tell God about what made you happy and what made you sad. Tell God anything about yourself and your day you'd like God to know.

WALK A LABYRINTH

Slowly walk a labyrinth, or, if you aren't near a labyrinth, find a finger labyrinth and slowly walk your finger along the piece of paper. Go all the way to the center and then slowly come back out. As you go, think about your journey through life, the people you've met along the way, the things you've done, the challenges you've had, and where God's been throughout.

REPEATED PRAYER

Repeat a word or phrase over and over again, slowly. Either pick a word that focuses you on God or a word that fits a prayer concern you have. Repeat it slowly, letting your mind go quiet.

If you're having a hard time picking a word or phrase, read a Bible story and use whatever word jumps out at you. Psalms work great for this. Or use one of the really, really short songs you know. Like "Jesus, Remember Me." Or use one of the following:

- Have mercy, Lord
- I love you, Jesus
- Lord, hear my prayer
- Come, Lord Jesus
- Bless the Lord, O my soul
- Jesus, be with me
- Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner

SEATED PRAYER

Sit with your hands on your lap, palms facing up, and your feet flat on the floor, shoes off if possible. Feel yourself open to God's presence.

BE SILENT

Just be silent for a while. Close your eyes and see what comes to you. (This is the type of prayer we do during confession on Sundays, as well as after sermons and during the offering or communion)

EXAMEN

This is not a test! Think about the past day, week, month, or year. What moments are you most glad you had? Which ones do you wish didn't happen? When did you share God's love? When did someone share God's love with you? Were there times you needed God's help? Where was God during various moments? When did you walk away from God? Let your mind wonder over these questions and see where they take you. Do it with another person if it helps you and you can trust that person. Finish by giving thanks to God for the gift of today and ask God to be present in your life.

GOD'S PRAYER

Do this in a group, if possible. Take five minutes by yourself (be silent, go off to your own corner, walk around, whatever you need to do to have your own space with God) to ask God what God would like you to pray about. Come back together and write down all the topics somewhere where everyone can see. Then go through the prayers as a group (split into smaller groups if there's a lot of them).

MIRROR PRAYER

Stand in front of a mirror and pray. Pray for all the parts of your body you don't like, like pimples! Pray for the parts of your body you like, like the wrinkles on the palm of your hands! Pray for people to see Jesus when they look at you. What would change in the mirror if you were the reflection of Jesus? When you're finished, say "I am a child of God" to remind yourself that you are made in God's image.

SIGN OF THE CROSS

A simple prayer is to make the sign of the cross on your forehead or body, saying “In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” as you do it. You may do this repeatedly to remind you of God’s love. It’s an easy prayer to pray at any time you need a quick reminder that God loves you. Remember, this is the sign you received on your forehead at baptism.

PRAYER SHAWL

Wrap yourself in a blanket as if you’re being hugged by God. Feel God’s love warming your body.

PRAYER SPACE

Sometimes we just need a space to pray by ourselves. If you’re in a place where you’re always going to be in a group, setup an area in the room where anyone can go and spend time in prayer by themselves whenever they need to, even if it’s in the middle of an activity. Tell everyone this is our prayer space, and can be used when you need a moment to be alone with God. Let them know that a leader might come over and ask if everything’s all right, because sometimes we also need a prayer partner to help us pray, but it’s too scary to ask for one.

WHISPER PRAY

Cup your hands together and whisper your prayers into your hands. When you are finished praying, release your hands upward as if you’re releasing your prayers to God.

NATURE SMART (NATURALISTIC) PRAYERS

TAKE A WALK

Take a walk and just notice God's good creation all around you. Sometimes say prayers for the things you see, giving thanks for what you like and naming your concern for what you don't like. Other times, silently enjoy the wonder of all God created. Gardens and nature trails are great places for prayer.

BREATHING

When God gave Adam life, the Bible says God breathed into him. Just take time to notice your breathing and remember that you have the breath of God in you.

WALK BAREFOOT

Take off your shoes and feel the earth between your feet. Walk so softly that you listen with your feet. As you walk, remember that God made you from the earth, and you'll return to the earth someday. Remember all God provides you through the earth – food, minerals, beautiful things, and more.

MEDITATE ON AN OBJECT

Pick up a natural object nearby or sit down beside one if it's too big. Focus on it a while, feeling it, turning it over in your hands, even smelling it. If it's edible, maybe taste a small part. Maybe even see what types of sounds it can make. Why did God create this thing? Admire everything about it, and consider what a gift it was for God to create it. Imagine how much joy God must have had making it!

SIT IN THE SUN

Grab a warm drink or something that soothes your body and sit in the sun. Bask in the warmth of God and just let yourself feel how much God cares for you.

NORTH, EAST, WEST, SOUTH

Face a direction and pray for anything you can think of that's in that direction. Then face a different direction and do it again. If you're in a group, you can all pray in the same direction or pray in every direction at the same time.

FIRE PRAYER (OBJECT PRAYER)

Light a candle or a bonfire and use it to focus your mind on God. You know God's often described like fire: alive, active, moving, warm, able to burn. Imagine how the fire tells you about what God's doing in the world.

This prayer actually works with many things. God has so many names in the Bible and is compared to so many things (more than are listed): Father, a mother, an eagle, the King of Kings, a mother hen, wind, breath, the one who sees, a lamb, friend, a vine, bread, a rock, a shepherd, even a gate. Pick one, find a picture of it or go somewhere you can see a real example, and use it to focus your prayer. See if you can find a Bible verse that uses that image even. Then you'll know why the Bible calls God a vine or fire.

And truthfully, anything can reveal a part of God to you because everything was made by God. That doesn't mean God is a rock or a vine, but because they are God's creations, they show us something about who God is. Of course, like any person who can mess up, you'll find things in everything that are nothing like God as well. For example, God's bigger than any rock you'll find.

FIRE PRAYER 2

Write down anything that you've done wrong today on a piece of paper and ask for God's forgiveness. Write only one item on each piece of paper. Light the paper on fire as a symbol of God's forgiveness.

You can do this with sand instead, writing a word in the sand and then wiping it out as a symbol of God's forgiveness.

FIRE PRAYER 3

Gather in a group around a bowl or box filled with sand. It's helpful if the room is somewhat dark. Pray out loud or silently and light a candle for each prayer. Light a candle when you pray for Mom. Then light another candle when you pray for Dad. And another for your dog. And another for owls. And so on.

CLOUD WATCHING

Ever look for shapes in the clouds? Look for shapes that remind you of something you want to pray for, even if it's just rain.

WATER PRAYER

Sit by a stream of water (or get in a small boat, or just take a shower). Think of all the ways God has used water throughout the Bible and in your life. Imagine all water tells you about who God is.

WATER PRAYER 2

Water is a sign of our baptisms. Get wet, dip your fingers in water or splash around, and then say "I am a child of God" or mark your forehead with the sign of the cross. Better yet, get your fingers wet and mark someone else's forehead with the sign of the cross, saying "Remember your baptism." When we remember our baptisms, we remember all God's promises to us. Water helps us remember.

PRAYER WITH STONES

Gather around a cross. Get stones the size you can hold in your hand. Pick up a stone, pray for something that's weighing heavy on your mind, and lay the stone at the foot of the cross. If you want to, you may write your prayers on the stones.

This works great if there's a place where you can permanently leave the stones, like if there's a cross in the ground outside. In the Old Testament, people would pile up stones to remind them of their prayers and all God has done for them. This pile would be somewhere they could return to again and again.

PLANT SOMETHING

Do you have a prayer that you know is going to last for years? Plant a tree or another plant that will live a long time as a reminder of your prayer. That plant will be a place where you can pray that one special prayer. Often people do this so they can always remember to thank God for all the days they got to spend with someone who has died. Or maybe you know you're always going to be praying for your sister because she's your sister? Or maybe it's a prayer that's only going to last this year, so a plant that only lives one year will work.

EAST AND WEST PRAYER

For a long time before people were baptized, they would face west (toward where darkness began) and reject everything evil and then face east (toward where the sun rises) and confess their faith in Jesus.

Face west and name all the things you don't want to have anything to do with, telling God about all the bad parts of your life (both bad things you've done, the bad things other people have done to you, and even the things you just don't like), asking God to wipe all of it away.

Then face east and name all the wonderful things you are glad God put in your life and thank Jesus for being your Lord and Savior.

BUBBLE PRAYER

Get bubbles, and for each prayer, blow some bubbles up toward the sky, as if you're blowing the prayers to God. When the bubbles pop, that's God saying he heard your prayers (you can help God hear them by popping them yourself, celebrating God's joy in hearing prayers). When all the bubbles are gone, say "Amen".

NEIGHBORHOOD DRIVE

Walk or drive around your neighborhood. When you come to a significant place, like the firehouse, the jail, the hospital, the school, the poor neighborhood, the rich neighborhood, your friend's house, the orphanage, the nursing home, or whatever, stop there and say a prayer for that place.

PRAYER WALL

In Jerusalem, people write prayers on paper and stick them in cracks along the wall of the Temple Mount. Find a wall around church or your home that has tons of cracks in it. Write your prayers there and stick them in the cracks. If you can't find a wall, you can make a prayer net instead.

PRAISE RAINBOW

Rainbows are a sign of God's love and promises. Make a large rainbow, one you can hang on the wall, and have everyone write everything they are thankful for that day on it. This activity works particularly well on a day when everyone seems to have a lot of reasons for joy in their lives.

PRAYER TREE

This works great in the winter or if you have a small dead tree outside, though it can work with trees that have leaves. Find a short tree with lots of low branches. Trees over eight feet tall might be too big, but they can work if you can reach the branches. Get a lot of brightly colored ribbons. Hang a ribbon on the tree for each prayer you have. Come back to the tree again and again, hanging more ribbons every time you pray (even if you hung a ribbon for that prayer before). If you don't want to do this prayer outside, get a potted tree with lots of branches that you can keep inside. You can write the prayers down on the ribbons, or tie paper prayer to the tree instead if you like. Attaching the paper with clothespins on a clothesline work as an alternative.

WHAT'S THAT I HEAR?

Go outside and listen. Use the sounds you hear – birds, lawn mowers, sirens, cars, people – to guide your prayers.

PRAYERS WE OFTEN FORGET

CROSSES!

When you were baptized, the pastor marked the sign of the cross on your forehead. Even though you can't see the cross, it's always there. When you start or finish praying, use your hands to make a cross on your body, touching your forehead, your chest, and both shoulders. Or use your thumb to make a cross on your forehead. While making the sign of the cross, we often say these words: "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." You could say "In the name of Daddy, and of my Big Bro, and of the Holy Spook" if you like.

When blessing someone or praying for healing, mark the spot on the body being prayed for with a cross.

BLESSINGS

Everything needs to be blessed now and then (and always). Bless a pet. Bless your home. Bless the new day. Bless your big toe. Bless each other. If you feel you need to be blessed, ask someone to bless you (we never bless ourselves). And when you bless, if you can, put your hands on the thing you're blessing.

Blessings usually start by thanking God and then asking God to send his blessings upon the thing. Be sure to tell God why you want this thing bless. For example, "Send your blessing on this house, that it may protect us from cold in the winter, keep us dry when it rains, and give us a place to share our love with our family and friends."

ENEMIES

Jesus tells us to pray for our enemies (he even tells us to bless them). In fact, it's one of the only things Jesus tells us to pray for. That must mean it's important!

This one is hard, because if we pray for someone we hate, we often ask God to punish them or to show them how stupid they're being. But that's praying against your enemy. A simple test is to decide if you'd want someone saying that prayer about you (the Golden Rule); would you want them praying that God punishes you? To pray for our enemies is to ask God to love them.

OURSELVES

We pray for everyone else a lot. Do we remember to pray for ourselves? You can always pray for yourself. In fact, you're the person who best knows what you need prayers for.

THANK YOU!

We say thanks at meals. When else might we thank God?

PRAYERS WE PRAYED A LONG TIME AGO

Is there a prayer you had a year or ten ago that still matters today? Maybe for someone who's loved one died. Or maybe a thank you for being born. Come back to your old prayers once in a while. God may know everything, but God also really likes reminders.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is God's presence in us. We pray at baptisms that people be filled with the Holy Spirit. It's great to remind God again and again to fill us with the Holy Spirit.