

How to Pray: Hello, Help, I Love You

A simple way to start talking with Jesus, for brand-new believers and anyone who feels stuck

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

PHILIPPIANS 4:6

AT A GLANCE

BIG IDEA	Prayer is simply talking with Jesus. You don't need fancy words. Say hello and thank Him, ask for what you need, and tell Him you love Him.
SCRIPTURE	Philippians 4:6-7 · Matthew 6:5-13 · 1 Thessalonians 5:17 · Hebrews 4:16
LENGTH	About 15 minutes, plus time to practice praying together
BEST FOR	Middle school, new believers, and students who feel awkward praying; works for younger kids too
YOU WILL NEED	Bibles and three index cards per student

Start here: why prayer feels awkward

Ask: "Has anyone ever felt nervous about praying out loud? Or not known what to say?" Most hands will go up. Many of us think prayer requires special words, a holy voice, or a long speech. Jesus said the opposite. He warned against people who pray just to be seen and against piling up empty words, "for your Father knows the things you have need of before you ask Him" (Matthew 6:8).

Prayer is simply talking with Jesus. If you can talk to a friend, you can pray. Here is a simple pattern with three parts.

A Say hello and thank Jesus

Start the way you would with a friend: say hi! "Hi, Jesus." "Good morning, Father." Then thank Him for something. It can be big ("Thank You for saving me") or small ("Thank You for pancakes this morning").

Paul says to pray "with thanksgiving" (Philippians 4:6). Starting with thanks reminds us who we're talking to and how good He has been. When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He began with God's name and greatness: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name" (Matthew 6:9).

B Ask for what you need right now

Next, tell Jesus what you need today. Help with a test. Courage to talk to someone. Peace about a problem at home. Healing for a friend. Forgiveness for something you did. Nothing is too small or too big.

"Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need." **HEBREWS 4:16**

Jesus taught us to ask: "Give us this day our daily bread... forgive us our debts... do not lead us into temptation" (Matthew 6:11-13). God wants to hear about your real life. And look at the promise that comes with it: "the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7).

C Tell Jesus you love Him, and say goodbye

Finish by telling Him you love Him: "I love You, Jesus. Thank You for listening." Then say goodbye the way Christians have for thousands of years: **"Amen."**

WHAT DOES "AMEN" MEAN?

Amen is a Hebrew word meaning "truly," "it is so," or "so be it." When we say it at the end of a prayer, we're saying, "I really mean this, and I trust You with it." Jesus often began His teaching with "Amen" (translated "Assuredly" or "Truly, I say to you").

And here's a secret: with Jesus, "goodbye" doesn't really mean He's leaving. He promised, "I am with you always" (Matthew 28:20). That's why Paul could say, "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). You can keep talking to Him all day long: in the hallway, on the bus, before a game, or lying in bed at night.

TRY IT TOGETHER

Give each student three cards labeled *Hello & thanks*, *Help*, and *I love You*. Have them write one sentence on each card. Then form groups of three and let each person pray their three sentences out loud (or silently, if they're not ready). Celebrate: they just prayed!

A sample prayer

“Hi, Jesus. Thank You for my family and for being with me today. Please help me with my math test this afternoon, and help my friend Sam, whose grandma is sick. I love You. Thank You for listening. Amen.” **A FIRST PRAYER**

That's it! As you grow, your prayers will grow too. You'll learn to praise God, confess sin, pray for others, and listen for His leading. But it all starts with a simple conversation: hello, help, I love You.

TALK IT OVER

1. What makes prayer feel hard or awkward sometimes?
2. Why do you think Jesus said we don't need lots of fancy words when we pray?
3. What is one thing you are thankful for today? What is one thing you need help with?
4. What does it mean to "pray without ceasing"? What could that look like during a school day?
5. Who could you pray with this week?

TAKE IT HOME

Use the three-part pattern every day this week, morning and night: say hello and thank Jesus, ask for what you need, and tell Him you love Him. Keep your three cards in your pocket or by your bed as a reminder.

Hello. Help. I love You. Amen.

From fifty years of youth ministry by **Ron Whittam**. Share freely with your students and leaders. · The Youth Ministry Living Room · qrprogramming.com/livingroom

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