

THE PRACTICE OF PRAYER

In Kids Church we spend a lot of time thinking about the stories in the Bible. Those stories help us to know about God and about God's plan for the world. Obviously, I think that's important! But it's only part of following Jesus. It's also important for each of us to be able to feel close to God and feel God close to us, and to have a good relationship with other people. Those things can come from the ways we chose to live our lives, helped by something called spiritual practices.

One form of spiritual practice comes straight from Jesus. Jesus's friends and people who respected his close connection with God asked him how they should pray. Jesus is someone who didn't always answer questions, but he did answer this one! And his answer gave the world a prayer that billions of people have recited countless times over the past 2,000 years, a prayer we now know as the Lord's Prayer or the Our Father. It goes like this:

Our Father in heaven,	Give us today our daily bread.
hallowed be your name,	Forgive us our sins
your kingdom come,	as we forgive those who sin against us.
your will be done,	Save us from the time of trial
on earth as in heaven.	and deliver us from evil.
	For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours
	now and for ever. Amen.

I wonder what you notice in that prayer? And I wonder why it has been so valuable to so many people? There are lots of ways to pray; can't we just pause for a moment and tell God, in our own words, what we're thinking about? Sure, sometimes we can! But there are also a few reasons people might want to have words they already know, and, in particular, use the words of the Lord's Prayer.

Number one, saying the Lord's Prayer can help us to concentrate and focus when we're praying. I know that sometimes I have a hard time calming down my mind when I want to pray; sometimes saying it to myself reminds me that I'm trying to feel close to God and lets me get ready to talk to God and listen to God.

Two, it can connect us with other followers of Jesus. There's something wonderful about going into an unfamiliar church and getting to join in with strangers who are saying a prayer that you already know. All the more when you think of how many people have said the same prayer throughout history: when you say the Lord's Prayer you're praying along with them too!

Finally, it can help us connect with God and with Jesus. We're saying Jesus's words, and nobody knows more about talking to God than Jesus. When he answered his friends, Jesus gave them a prayer that has all the parts we need to center our relationship with God. We'll have a chance to talk about those parts in a few weeks.

Now of course, the Lord's Prayer isn't the only way we have to connect with God. And in fact, when he told his friends how to pray, Jesus also told them not to just repeat the same thing over and over without paying attention to what they're saying! We'll be looking at some other spiritual practices over the next couple weeks. But the Lord's Prayer—those words that Jesus gave us—seems like a good place to start!

flip over for more!

Wondering Questions

I wonder if you have a prayer you like to repeat? Have you ever said the Lord's Prayer?

I wonder what helps you when you're trying to concentrate on something?

I wonder what feels helpful to you about praying in general?