

Praying for an hour

As we grow to enjoy spending time with our loving heavenly Father, an hour with him can fly by. Maybe you haven't prayed straight through for a whole hour before and that amount of time seems intimidating. The purpose of this booklet is to offer some structure to help you not limit you, to free you, not control you.

We've based this resource on the Lord's prayer, taking it not as a block to recite, but to use phrase by phrase, as a pattern to shape your hour. This is only an example, there are many other ways to shape the time.

Take your time, don't rush, this is a joy not a duty. You can take a break as you go along. I prefer to pray somewhere quiet and comfortable with a cup of coffee (or better still walking on top of a hill!).

There are no detailed timings for the hour - it isn't meant to be prescriptive. There are 12 sections and 60 minutes in an hour, but don't let the clock be in charge!

Many of us can get distracted through an extended time of prayer, particularly when we remember things we need to do. Why not have a pad of paper nearby and make a note of those things as they pop into your head. You can then leave them there and tend to them at the end.

Abba, Father

Begin by connecting with the one you are praying to.

Before we rush into what to pray for, take time to engage your heart that you are with God. He is real, He is with you, He listens to you, He loves you as a Father. Take a moment of silence and meditate on God as your Father. Then speak straight to him, calling him Father, or Abba, or Dad, or Papa. Find the word which helps you draw close to him. As you

approach God, remember that you are welcome, because He loves you. Get to that place of believing the truth (however you feel) that He loves you, welcomes you and wants to be with you.

In heaven

Imagine the throne room, where God is seated. That's where your prayers are being heard. They leave this fallen, broken world with its pains, disappointments and frustrations, and reach a place of eternal joy, confidence and celebration of God's goodness and power.

It might help to read Revelation 4 - a description of God's throne

Hallowed be your name

The next step is to pray for God's name to be hallowed.

To hallow, means to make holy, to revere, honour. The motive for our prayers is for God to be honoured, glorified, recognised for who He is. As you pray this, think of the ways in which the world could see how good and powerful God is. I take time to express to God my heart longing that our community would honour Him, I find it realigns my motives for prayer.

Stop and praise. [Some suggestions]:

- Use a worship song or hymn - sing it, or listen to it.
- Read a Psalm.
- Write a list of the names of God, which express how great he is.
- Write a list of aspects of God's character, which express how great he is.
- Write your own song or Psalm of praise, praising and thanking him.
- Just let your tongue flow in shouts or song, pouring out words of praise to God.

Think of some places or groups of people who you would love to honour God and see Him for who He really is. Think of some things you'd love to see happen that would lead to people loving God more.

Take those places, people or events and tell God how much you want to see Him hallowed.

Your kingdom come

When we pray for God's kingdom to come, we're praying for His rule and reign on earth. This is a good moment to pray for people you know, who don't yet know Jesus, praying to ask God for their salvation. Name them before God, stir up inside you your desire that they are saved by Jesus. Pray for God to bless them and ask the Holy Spirit to give them a hunger for God.

Then pray for your street. Pray for God's kingdom to come there. For all those who live there to be protected by God and for them to come to living relationships with Him. Ask Him to break into their lives.

Your will be done

Now we bring to God the things on our hearts.

Part of prayer is wrestling with God. Our hearts desires are not always his; even Jesus had to wrestle in the garden of Gethsemane between what He wanted and what His Father called him to. One of the deepest places of prayer is this wrestling between our will and God's will when they are not the same. To live as part of God's family is to live surrendered to Him as Lord. He is in charge. I find that a big part of prayer for me is sorting through the various thoughts, emotions, perspectives in my head and digging down to recognise what I want and

then what God wants. The more we know God and His word, the clearer His will becomes.

Some of the most significant moments we experience in prayer are when we submit our will to God's will. This can be painful, it can feel costly, we can want to cling to our own will, but God calls us to submit and trust Him. His ways are best.

In what part of your life do you need to submit & pray "your will be done"

On earth as in heaven

We began our hour by recognising that we're praying on earth, but joining in with God, who is in heaven. When we pray 'your kingdom come, your will be done', we're praying for heaven to invade earth.

What does that mean?

In heaven, God is in charge and there is perfect love, peace, joy and the fullness of life. There's no sickness, division, pain, anger, fear etc. When we pray 'on earth as it is in heaven', we're asking God to make earth more like heaven, to change things around us, so that the good things of heaven's culture, become more real on earth.

How can that help you pray today?

Take 1 place/group. For example your workplace, home, a club, school, the gym. Then ask the Holy Spirit to help you imagine what that would be like if it was more heavenly, and less earthly - maybe fewer arguments, less tension, more kind words, more creativity or joy.

Then ask God to bring heaven to earth in that place.

Give us today our daily bread

This ancient prayer, is a simple prayer of asking God for provision. The idea of asking God for daily bread goes right back to the Israelites eating Manna in the wilderness. Many of the crowd Jesus preached to probably lived hand-to-mouth, so asking God for daily provision was a practical way of living in trust. You may be able to go to Aldi and buy a loaf of bread today, but we all have needs and God is our provider.

What do I need today? – What can I ask God to provide today?

And forgive us our sins

As well as our practical provision, we all need God's forgiveness. Jesus taught us to ask for forgiveness and then He made that forgiveness possible by dying on the cross to take the punishment for our sin. What a wonderful, beautiful truth this is, that nothing we have done is too much for God to forgive us. We simply come to him to ask for His forgiveness and receive it from Him.

In our Lent focus on Spiritual disciplines we looked at confession of sins. It might be helpful to revisit that and consider the beauty of confession.

As you sit alone with God, bring to Him those things on your conscience, bring to him the sins you know you have committed, those things that could be a barrier between you and Him, those things which you regret or are ashamed of.

Pause, sit still in silence and know that you are forgiven. Let that forgiveness and cleansing sink into your heart. Know that God delights to give forgiveness as a gift, not something we deserve, but a gift, freely given. His ability to forgive is greater than our ability to sin.

I find praying through Psalm 51 really helpful when I want to borrow words to receive God's forgiveness.

As we forgive those who sin against us

God has forgiven you. - Now it's your turn to do some forgiving.

Is there anyone you need to forgive today?

Check in with your heart – anyone you realise that all is not well between you and them. Right now you can't fix how they are treating you, all you can fix in prayer is how you want to treat them.

Anyone you are feeling hurt by, angry with, let down by.

Anyone you are feeling resentment or bitterness towards.

Do you want God's best for them? Do you want them to experience God's love or judgement? One way we can forgive others is to hand the wrongs done to us over to God and let Him be the judge. Choose to pray "*I'm not their judge, I hand the judgement to you*".

I find it helpful (if alone) to pray out loud – "*[their name], I choose to forgive you for... [name the wrong they've done]*". *I choose to keep no record of wrongs.*" – Then I pray for God to bless them.

Forgiveness isn't easy, but in God's family it's what we do.

Lead us not into temptation

At times I've found this an awkward phrase in the Lord's prayer. Does God lead us into tests and temptations? Would He do so unless we specifically ask Him not to?

In James 1v13 we read '*When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone*'

So this is about asking God to protect us and lead us away from tests and trials. It's a request that God leads us and that the direction he takes us is further from the influence of evil, and closer to His kingdom.

Take some time in prayer to give your day to God.

Before considering tests and temptations, begin by asking Him to lead and guide you today. Ask him to be in charge and surrender your day to Him.

Then ask Him to protect you from temptation. I find this is a good moment for honest self-reflection in the light of God's presence, to consider '*where/when might I be tempted today?*' The best way to deal with temptation isn't in the heat of the pressure of a moment of dilemma, but in the calm place of prayer. Maybe there are situations you need to avoid. Maybe there are times in the day when you are more vulnerable to temptation and you want to ask God to be close with you in those.

Think ahead over the next 24 hours and bring each part of it to God. Ask Him to lead you away from temptation and towards greater wisdom to make right decisions when the time comes.

But deliver us from evil

We live in a battle and the Bible tells us that the devil prowls like a roaring lion, seeking to devour. (1 Peter 5v8)

So ask God to protect you today. To be close to you and to surround you with His love. Is there anything in the next day or so of which you're afraid?

Anything where you're nervous or anxious?

Bring that to God and trust it to Him. Ask Him to take charge and to protect and guard you and give you confidence and courage.

He doesn't always take us out of the situation, but He does protect us and strengthen us through the tough times. *Psalm 91* is a beautiful Psalm of asking God for protection.

For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory

We end our hour where we began, with praise. We remember that God is in charge, and we are serving his kingdom and his purposes.

We recognise that it's His power which changes things and not ours. When we've both prayed for personal things and interceded for others, then we return to declare that God is powerful and I find it really helpful as a prayer time ends to reaffirm that God's power makes a difference.

'The glory'. This is a great declaration and it re-centres us ready for the rest of the day. By praying, we are choosing to live not for our own glory, or reputation, but for His. We pray, because we want the world to know that God is great. Finishing our time of prayer with that as our focus brings things together nicely.

And finally...

Are you ready to finish? Ready to transition back 'down to earth'.

Before you do, just take deep breath and some time in silence, some wordless prayer. Let God come close and fill you afresh by His Holy Spirit and move into the next part of your day when you're ready.