

Align Week 2 - Prayer
Bethany Church Long Beach

Intro: What part of the message did you find the most challenging?

Icebreaker: On a traditional scale of 1-10 how do you feel about your prayer life and why?

1. **Read Philippians 4:6-7.** When you are anxious, struggling, worried, or confused, what should you do? Do you go first to God in prayer when you have a decision to make or when you are struggling? Why or why not?
2. What sin challenges exist in you that might be hindering your prayer? (**Mark 11:22-25; 1 Peter 3:7** for ideas).
3. What do you need to do to make prayer a greater priority in your life, in your spiritual community? List one thing you can change this week to pray more often. (Examples are: wake up 5 minutes earlier every morning to pray, turn the radio off while you drive, pray for one person in your Small Group, Life stage class or Community Group, etc.)
4. How can you make your prayer life more God-centered instead of needs-based or self-centered? Is Jesus' prayer in **Matthew 6:9-13** God-centered or man-centered? As you reflect on your own prayer life, do you pray as Jesus teaches us to pray or is it more about yourself? Why or why not?
5. Read **Matthew 6:5-8.** What is your motivation to pray? Is it to appear holy and spiritual, or is it because you want to have an honest conversation and connection with God? Explain.
6. Read **Hebrews 4:14-16.** When we pray, does Jesus understand our needs and struggles? Do you live with the reality of this verse evident in your life?
7. Where and how do you currently pray? What is your posture or method? Can you pray standing, sitting, lying on the ground, with eyes open or closed, or with your hands folded or stretched to the sky? **(It's all of the above 😊)**
8. Read **1 Thessalonians 5:17.** How often should we pray? What does this mean, "without ceasing"?
9. **Pray as a Group** - Take a longer period of time to pray as a group maybe even trying a new idea for prayer (walk and pray, break up into partners, throw prayers in a hat and draw and take time silently pray and pray for the need throughout the week). Refer to page two for more ideas on new ways to pray.

8 New Ways To Pray – Christianity Today

1. Journal your prayers.

But don't just journal requests. Write out questions, heartaches and struggles. Don't forget to journal praises, too. Be creative. Put your prayers into poems. Write a letter to God. Then go back and read your journal entries in a week or a month. There's a good chance you'll be reminded of how God has answered your prayers. And when you're feeling down, your past praises remind you of God's goodness and love for you.

2. Take a prayer walk.

Hike in a forest preserve and praise God for his beautiful creation. Walk around your neighborhood and pray for the family in each home you pass. Or take a "prayer walk" on the sidewalk around your school.

3. Pray over your calendar and schedule.

Got a test coming up? Pray for peace of mind. Pray for the players of Friday night's basketball game-both sides. Ask God to bring non-Christians to your winter youth retreat.

4. Pray Scripture.

Let's say that during your Bible reading time you come across 1 Peter 5:7: "God cares for you, so turn all your worries over to him". Turn that verse into a prayer: "Lord, I'm going to trust you and give you all my worries. I know you will take care of me." Do this with Scriptures that express needs and also with those that praise or thank God. Hey, why not personalize the Lord's Prayer? Take each sentence or phrase from this well-known prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) and write it in a way that applies directly to your life.

5. Pray about the news.

When you read or hear about a troubling issue, pray for the people involved. Pray for politicians and other national and community leaders who make the news.

6. Partner up.

Find someone to pray with regularly. Plan to meet at a coffee shop once or twice a week, or get together before school. Praying with a friend is great for personal accountability. It's also a cool way to take a friendship to a deeper level.

7. Be quiet with God, take a silent retreat with God.

If prayer is a conversation, then you also need to listen in silence. And silence means getting away from distractions like music and TV. A quiet, little-used corner at the library could be the best place. As you listen, don't expect to hear a voice. But do expect God to tug at your heart, move your conscience, or help you realize something you need to do or change.

8. Keep a prayer on your lips.

Dozens of thoughts pass through your mind daily. You daydream. You may think bad or gossipy thoughts. Turn those daydreams and not-so-great thoughts into prayers. Ask God to help a person hurt by gossip. Ask him to forgive you for thoughts that take your mind places it shouldn't go. Turn daydreams and other passing thoughts into moments to recognize God's

Copyright © 2016 by the author or Christianity Today/ Ignite Your Faith.