

Dear God...

What's the deal with prayer?

Q₁. What is prayer? How does prayer work?

A₁. Prayer is conversation with God. Good conversations take time and involve respect, honesty, listening, and vulnerability. *Think: Relationship.*

“When you pray, don’t be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you. When you pray, don’t babble on and on as people of other religions do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. Don’t be like them, for your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him! Pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us today the food we need, and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us. And don’t let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one.” (Matthew 6:5-13 NLT)

Q₂. How do I know what God is saying to me?

A₂. God speaks to us through the Bible, others, our conscience and circumstances. *Think: Relationship.*

“All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right.” (2 Timothy 3:16 NLT)

“So we are Christ’s ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, ‘Come back to God!’”
(2 Corinthians 5:20 NLT)

“Your own ears will hear him. Right behind you a voice will say, ‘This is the way you should go,’ whether to the right or to the left.”
(Isaiah 30:21 NLT)

Q₃. Why are my prayers answered sometimes but not others? Is there a right way to pray?

A₃. God is infinitely smarter than we are. He knows our motives and what is best for us in every situation. We must trust Him. *Think: Relationship.*

“...you don’t have what you want because you don’t ask God for it. And even when you ask, you don’t get it because your motives are all wrong—you want only what will give you pleasure. (James 4:2-3 NLT)

“Now glory be to God! By His mighty power at work within us, He is able to accomplish infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or hope.”
(Ephesians 3:20 NLT)

“Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to grow. So let it grow, for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete, needing nothing.”
(James 1:2-4 NLT)

“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of Him.”
(1 John 5:14-15 NIV)

Q₄. Why should I pray if: (God already knows what I need?) or (if His will is going to be done anyway?)

A₄. Prayer is more than getting stuff from God (or getting our own way). The time we spend in conversation with God is vital to help us know Him, experience his peace, and learn His ways. *Think: Relationship.*

“For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God’s Spirit when He adopted you as His own children. Now we call Him, ‘Abba, Father.’ For His Spirit joins with our spirit to affirm that we are God’s children. And since we are His children, we are His heirs. In fact, together with Christ we are heirs of God’s glory. But if we are to share His glory, we must also share His suffering. Yet what we suffer now is nothing compared to the glory He will reveal to us later...And the Holy Spirit helps us in our weakness. For example, we don’t know what God wants us to pray for. But the Holy Spirit prays for us with groanings that cannot be expressed in words. And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God’s own will.” (Romans 8:14-17, 26-27 NLT)

“Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank Him for all he has done. Then you will experience God’s peace, which exceeds anything we can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.”
(Philippians 4:6-7 NLT)