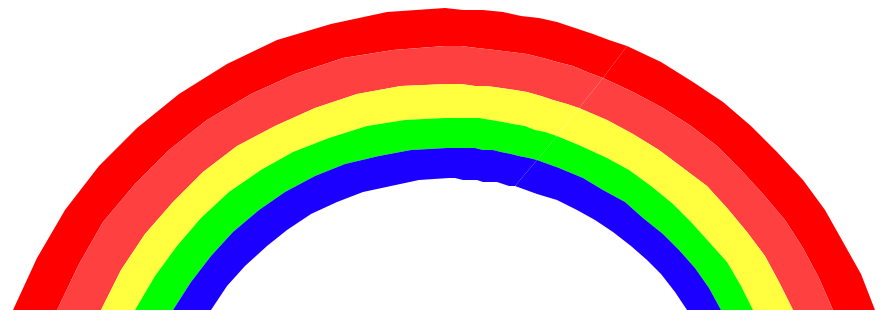


# How to Talk to God

## *A Guide for Daily Prayer Based on the Lord's Prayer*

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Our Father which art in heaven,  
Hallowed be thy name. Thy Kingdom come.  
Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our debts,  
as we forgive our debtors.  
And lead us not into temptation,  
but deliver us from evil.  
For thine is the Kingdom,  
and the power and the glory,  
forever.

Amen

## INTRODUCTION

### Love Means Talking and Listening

When you love someone, you talk with them, really talk. I don't know how we can truly show our love or grow in it without communication, without talking - and listening.

When you love your spouse, you talk with her, really talk, and you also really listen and let her talk.

I have a comic strip in which a man is sitting in a chair and reads out loud to his wife, *"It says here that married couples don't talk enough to one another."* In the next frame we see that his wife's chair is empty. She's not even there.

When you love your children, you talk to them, and you encourage them to talk back by really listening.

When you love God, you talk to God.



I love the movie "Fiddler on a Roof." It's about a Jewish man named Tevye and his family living under the oppression of the Czar in Russia around the turn of the century. Tevye loved God. You know how you can tell? Right. Everywhere he went, he talked to God - right out loud! Every problem he faced, he shared with God. Every joy, he talked with God (there were not a lot of joys for him). Tevye had an intimate, growing, loving relationship with God that was fostered largely with talk, with prayer.

### Talking Isn't So Easy

But it's not always easy to talk with your spouse, is it? For whatever reasons, you can't get through, you don't know what to say, or you might just be afraid, afraid of what you will hear, afraid of intimacy.

It's not always easy to talk with your children, is it? Or, for children to talk with their parents? For whatever reasons, you can't get through, you don't know what to say, or you just might be afraid, afraid of what you will hear, afraid of intimacy.

And it is not always easy to talk with God, is it? For whatever reasons, you can't seem to get through, don't know what to say, or just afraid, afraid of what you might hear, afraid you just might get through and find yourself in the intimate presence of God and then what are you going to do?

## Learning to Talk

How did we learn to talk to begin with?

It was through listening and looking at others - our parents, our siblings & friends (and sometimes what you repeat learned from them isn't the kind of talk your parents would like). We have to learn how to talk.



I saw a mother holding her young child recently. She was talking with her and the little one was staring intently at her mothers lips, trying to form those same sounds and words, and did pretty well with some but mostly just made noise. I knew in time that if she kept listening and modeling her mother, she would learn how to talk.

When it comes to talking with God, often we, too, are infants, still needing to learn how to pray, knowing some of the words and sounds but feeling sometimes that we are just making noise.

Fortunately, we, too, have someone to model in learning how to talk with God - Jesus. His disciples had seen Jesus praying and were so impressed by his intimacy with God they asked him to teach them to pray like that. Wouldn't you like to learn that too? The remainder of this book will help you to watch his lips and learn how to talk with God.



## Father

Jesus says, begin with, "*Father...*"

I remember trying so hard to get Michael to say, "Daddy." "*Say 'Daddy,' Michael,*" I would say to him over and over. And I remember that fateful day when I said it again, "*Say 'Daddy,' Michael,*" and he puckered up his little lips and said with a grin, "*Mommy.*"

Jesus says, when you talk with God, say, "*Daddy.*" In other words, imagine that God is a loving parent, Jesus tells us. In fact, the word used here for "Father" is "*Abba*" and could be translated as, "Poppa" or "Daddy." The image is that of a child climbing onto the lap of a parent and pouring out her heart into attentive ears. To pray "*Father*" reminds us that the transcendent God is here, is approachable, and can be trusted to listen and help.

However, this image is not one that can be meaningful to everyone. If you have had parents who loved you, who were always there, protecting, listening, providing, then it is easy to think of God in those terms. But what if the very word "Father" brings back bitter memories of abuse and pain? I could not help but think of them when I read how Jesus asked, "Is there anyone among you who, if your child asks for a fish, you give a snake instead? Or asks for an egg, but gives a scorpion?" And the answer would have to be "Yes!" There are indeed parents like that. Some parents leave their children with poisonous and painful stings that can stay with them all their lives. And perhaps we would be surprised at how many of us right here today still feel those stings.

So if it is too painful for you to think of God as "*Father,*" then think of God with some other image - "*Mother,*" or "*Grandmother,*" "*Sister,*" or "*Best Friend.*" When you talk with God, picture God as the most loving person you have ever known in your life, the One you trust completely and who you know is always there for you. For that is truly who God is.

**Jesus said that we begin to talk to God by saying, "Father."**

**Who is the most loving, caring person you have ever known in your life? He or she is...**

**Imagine that person is God sitting right down beside you.**