



I grew up viewing prayer as something rather mysterious. I felt woefully inadequate with this occasional activity and had no idea how to think about it, much less how to do it.

I would hear adults pray in King James English, using a lot of words I did not understand. They would pray, “Hallowed be Thy Name” – *What in the world does that mean?* “May we walk circumspectly” – *Are we walking in circles? I don’t get it. What are they talking about?*

During college days I was introduced to a book by Rosalind Rinker, called *Prayer: Conversing with God*. In 2006, Christianity Today named this book the most influential book with evangelical Christians over the past 50 years. It was most certainly a game-changer for me.

She pointed out that when the King James Bible was translated, there were two kinds of English spoken. There was the language used by the common person (thee, thou) and the language used by the royal family and nobility (you, me). The King James Bible was written in the common language of the people. Oh wow! I do not need to learn a different language to pray! King Jimmy is not required!

She also helped me understand that prayer is not supposed to be a monologue, a wishlist, a Hail Mary, or a rote religious thing. And it is most certainly is not to be the last resort if all else fails.

Prayer is supposed to be a conversation with God. God says he will answer us when we speak with him (Jeremiah 33:3). I had never thought of prayer being a conversation.

### **Jesus’ Way of Praying Was A New Way**

Mark 1:35: *Rising up a great while before day, Jesus went out into a solitary place and there prayed.* The context of this verse is very early in the disciples walk with Jesus. They wake up one morning and wonder where Jesus is. They look for him and find him out

away from everyone praying. Since this was not a typical place or time for prayer, they were confused.

The disciples had grown up in the Jewish faith. Prayer was a regular part of their lives. Prayers were recited in the synagogue, at the Temple, and at the weekly sabbath. Prayer wasn't a new thing for them, but how Jesus approached prayer was profoundly different.

The disciples kept watching Jesus pray in this very different way. In Luke 11:1 we read that Jesus was alone praying again and when he finished, one of the disciples, who had been watching and listening to him pray, asked Jesus if he would teach them to pray like that.

He then gives them a model to follow that we are very familiar with. It's called the Lord's Prayer or the Model Prayer. I did not understand this was intended to be *a* model, not *the* model.

### **The Lord's Prayer is *A* Model, Not *The* Model**

A model is just that – a model, a recipe, a blueprint, a game plan, a template – a means to an end. So concerning prayer, Jesus gave the disciples, and us, a model to follow. The model is supposed to be a starting point that helps us intentionally engage in conversations with God.

There are a couple of practical things I do that help me be more conversational as I pray. First, my daily conversations with God involve two questions. Initially, my question is, *What first?* Then continually throughout my day, I am constantly asking, *What next?*

The Bible is the living and enduring word of God (1 Peter 1:23). When I read the Bible, I am not just reading a book. I am actually listening to God speak. So the second thing I do is interact out loud with God while reading his word. For example, I may say something like, *Okay, that does not make any sense to me. What does that even mean?* Other times something like, *Wow. I see. I did not understand that this was so important to you. Thank you for making that so clear to me just now.* Speaking out loud with God while reading Scripture helps me recognize I'm having a conversation.

As I said earlier, understanding that prayer is to be an ongoing conversation with God has been a game-changer for me. It will be for you as well!

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