



**3 METHODS
OF PRAYER
THAT WILL
CHANGE YOUR LIFE**

PHILIP KOSLOSKI

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3 Methods of Prayer That Will Change Your Life

Do you struggle with prayer? I know that I do and it took me many years before I felt confident in prayer and understood the many movements of God in my heart. For much of my life I knew that I had to devote myself to prayer, but I didn't know *how* to pray.

That is why I am eternally grateful for the 3 methods of prayer that I will share with you in this short eBook. It is my hope that you will also benefit from them and continue on in the struggle to be saints in the modern world.

Before I start, let me say one thing: **discovering how to pray is a lifelong adventure** and the methods I describe are only a starting point, a map that can point us in the right direction.

Let us also remember that prayer is not meant to be rigid and full of formulas we must use. If we restrict ourselves to saying “100 Our Fathers and 400 Hail Marys” every day and look at going to daily Mass as another box on our “checklist” of prayer, we are missing the whole point.

Prayer, above all else, is a relationship. As Saint Therese so eloquently put it,

“For me, prayer is a surge of the heart; it is a simple look turned toward heaven, it is a cry of recognition and of love, embracing both trial and joy (*Story of a Soul*).”

This quote was deliberately put at the very start of the *Catechism's* section on “**What is Prayer**” and should always be kept in mind. **Prayer is an action of the heart**, as we cry out to God and lay before Him all of our needs and worries.

God is the bridegroom and we are all His bride. Prayer is the way in which we can respond to the bridegroom's invitation to the wedding feast of the Lamb.

Also, prayer is an adventure in loving God. He leads us in different ways and almost never in the same way. He is always challenging us and beckoning us to follow Him to go “**farther up and further in.**” He is also the Lion of the Tribe of Judah and as C.S. Lewis depicted Him in the Chronicles of Narnia, “**He's wild, you know. Not like a tame lion.**”

God is wild in a good sense. One cannot simply pin Him down and treat Him like a machine that dispenses candy; “If I pray 10 Rosaries today, my prayer will be answered.” God wants to teach us how to love him and **love is always an adventure.**

With that said, here are three methods of prayer that have the power to change your life. I am not saying that you must use these methods and do so in a systematic way. I am simply offering these to you to take on your quest to draw closer to the heart of God.

1. Heart to Heart

The first method we should explore is a simple heart to heart conversation with God. It is the simplest and hardest way to pray. It consists of talking to God as if you were talking to the person you trust the most. This means not just talking about surface feelings, thoughts or desires, but more importantly talking about what is really bothering you in your heart.

There might be a deep wound that is still there from your childhood or a real doubt that God exists because of a profound evil that has happened in your life. Above all else, take everything to God, especially the deepest desires and hurts of your heart.

There is no formula in this method of prayer. It is a simple conversation with God, where we must speak, but also listen (and often the answer does not come immediately or in audible words).

St. Teresa of Avila said, “For mental prayer in my opinion is nothing else than an intimate sharing between friends; it means taking time frequently to be alone with Him who we know loves us.”

It requires patience and honesty on our part. God wants to hear from us, but He also wants to speak to us.

It is not always easy to see, but God desires our wellbeing. He does not hate or scorn us. He does not inflict evil upon us. As God said through the prophet Jeremiah:

“For I know the thoughts that I think towards you, says the Lord, thoughts of **peace**, and not of affliction, to give you an end and patience. And you shall call upon me, and you shall go: and you shall pray to me, and I will hear you. **You shall seek me, and shall find me:** when you shall seek me with all your heart. And I will be found by you, says the Lord.” (Jeremiah 29:11-14, emphasis added).

The main problem from our perspective is that we only see a particular moment in time. We cannot always connect the dots and see the bigger picture. That is why faith and trust are essential to prayer. We pray to God in hopes that our prayers will be answered, but we do so trusting that His answer is always for our benefit.

In particular, God desires above all else our salvation. This means that God’s answer will always be in relation to our eternal destiny.

It is helpful to envision God as a Divine Physician, who only gives us medicine that speeds us along the path to eternal life. Saint Augustine put it this way:

“He who faithfully prays God for the necessities of this life, is both mercifully heard, and mercifully not heard. For the

physician knows better than the sick man what is good for the disease.“

2. Acknowledge. Relate. Receive. Respond (ARRR)

This next method comes from the wisdom of Saint Ignatius of Loyola and those involved with the *Institute for Priestly Formation*. Jim Beckman sums them up in his book *God, Help Me: How to Grow in Prayer*:

“First we get in touch with what is moving in our hearts, particularly at the deepest level – **acknowledge**.

Second, we **relate** those movements to God in prayer.

Third, we listen and **receive** whatever he desires to give us in response to what we shared.

Finally, we **respond** to what we just received, which is typically a natural movement, not something forced or burdensome.

By doing these actions, we speak to God and discern what He is doing in our hearts and respond to wherever He is leading us.”

Here is another way of formulating this type of prayer (<http://austinvocations.com/a-r-r-r-prayer>):

“**Acknowledge** – Openly and honestly with out prejudice acknowledge how you are before God. What you are experiencing? What is moving in your heart?

Marian Example: At the Annunciation Mary was ‘troubled’ and pondered what the words of the Angel meant.

Relate – Bring yourself as you are into relationship with God by relating your experience to Him. Speak to him from your heart.

Marian Example: At the Annunciation Mary asked, ‘How can this be?’

Receive – Listen to what God is doing with the movements of your heart. Receive his presence and the constancy of his love.

Marian Example: ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you.’

Respond – What we receive impels us to respond in gratitude and with renewed heart.

Marian Example: Mary’s fiat, ‘May it be done unto me...’”

3. Lectio Divina

A great way to start recognizing how God is speaking to us by way of the ancient practice of *Lectio Divina*. Pope Benedict XVI spoke about the importance of this art of prayer a few years ago:

“I would like in particular to recall and recommend the ancient tradition of ‘Lectio divina’: ‘the diligent reading of Sacred Scripture accompanied by prayer brings about that intimate dialogue in which the person reading hears God who is speaking, and in praying, responds to him with trusting openness of heart’ (cf. “*Dei Verbum*,” n. 25). If it is effectively promoted, this practice will bring to the Church — I am convinced of it — a new spiritual springtime. (*Dei Verbum and Lectio Divina*)

Lectio Divina or “divine reading” is a method of prayer that involves reflecting on Sacred Scripture and immersing oneself in the scene, discovering what God wants to tell us in a specific passage. Here is a great resource that describes the various steps in Lectio Divina and gives a worksheet on how to do it.

As a note, you can practice Lectio Divina on a daily basis by reading the daily readings for Mass or by simply walking through one chapter a day of the Gospels.

There are certainly many other methods of prayer, but these three are at the center of a deep relationship with God. We must not be afraid to be vulnerable with God and to talk to Him about all the cares and worries of our life.

I am sure after reading this you were hoping for something more complicated: a formula that said “Do this, this and this and you will experience a divine ecstasy.”

Prayer is not like that.

Prayer is like the story that Saint John Vianney relates of a parishioner. He found a man sitting in his church in front of the tabernacle and asked him what he was doing. The man famously responded,

“I look at him and he looks at me.”

That is prayer.

Certainly we can use formula prayers and we should. We should pray the Rosary every day, but that should not be the only type of prayer we engage in.

Remember, prayer is a relationship. It is an adventure. The real trick is allowing God to lead us and following Him with complete trust. We must have faith and hope that God knows what we need and that He knows the way to Eternal Life. In fact, He is the Way.

Appendices

i. Resources on Prayer

Resources to Get Started:

33 Days to Morning Glory: A Do-It-Yourself Retreat In Preparation for Marian Consecration by Fr. Michael E. Gaitley, MIC (Marian Press)

Oremus: A Guide to Catholic Prayer by Fr. Mark Toups
(Ascension Press)

***Note: This is an excellent eight week retreat that can be done as a group or individually. This is a DVD guided study on prayer that is one of the best I have ever seen. Has content both for the beginner as well as the seasoned veteran of prayer. I highly recommend to start here.**

God, Help Me: How to Grow in Prayer by Jim Beckman
(Servant Books)

Praying Scripture for a Change: An Introduction to Lectio Divina by Tim Gray (Ascension Press)

Searching for and Maintaining Peace: A Small Treatise on Peace of Heart by Fr. Jacques Philippe (Society of St. Paul)

The Discernment of Spirits: An Ignatian Guide for Everyday Living by Timothy Gallagher, O.M.V. (Crossroad)

The Little Oratory: A Beginner's Guide to Praying in the Home by David Clayton and Leila Marie Lawler (Sophia Institute Press)

Augustine on Prayer by John E. Rotelle (Catholic Book Publishing Co.)