



# Talking with God

WEEK 02

# Overview

In Week 02, we begin to learn how to talk with God. Praying pre-made prayers is a beautiful way to pray. It's where we start our prayer journey, and it's a place we revisit all through our lives. But at some point in our life of prayer, we desire to pray our own words to God — to share what's on our mind, our heart. Our pain, our joy, our hopes and fears. We can't help but desire to interact with God in a more authentic, personalized way.

We break down this next stage of prayer into three subcategories.

- 01 **Gratitude** — talking with God about what is good in your life and world
- 02 **Lament** — talking with God about what is evil in your life and world
- 03 **Petition and Intercession** — asking God to fulfill his promises to overcome evil with good

Each one of these three dimensions of talking with God is like a vast territory we can explore for a lifetime and yet never see it all.



# Practice

## WEEK 02: TALKING WITH GOD

### 01 Fine tune your daily prayer rhythm

It can take a very long time to figure out your daily routine for prayer — where to pray, when, how long, etc. And it's a moving target in the different seasons of our lives. So we're always fine tuning; what's working, what's not?

Here are two things to consider incorporating into what you started last week.

- **Find an aid to “transition” in and out of prayer**
  - Think of this aid as a micro-ritual to begin and end your daily time. You could light a candle, sit in silence for a few minutes, take ten deep, slow breaths, go for a walk, or utilize music. It can be *anything* that helps you un-hurry and recenter on God's presence.
- **Use your body in prayer**
  - We have an embodied faith and a wandering mind, so posture matters a lot in prayer.
  - Biblically, the most common way to pray is not sitting or even kneeling, but standing up and lifting your hands. But you can also pray sitting on the floor, kneeling, lying face down, walking, or, like Jesus did, climbing a mountain!
  - Different postures are more conducive to different types of prayer. For example, standing and lifting your hands is ideal for intercessory prayer. Kneeling or lying facedown on the floor are fitting postures for confession, repentance, or surrender. Walking can be a great posture to unburden your heart to God. Sitting cross legged on the floor or in a firm chair to aid deep breathing is very helpful for quiet, contemplative prayer. There's no “right” way. Just experiment with your body and your daily prayer rhythm.

## 02 Begin and/or end your day with gratitude

While there's no "right" way to practice gratitude, we encourage you to use your imagination and creativity to "give thanks in all circumstances," as written in 1 Thessalonians 5v18.

Here are a few ideas.

- Begin your daily prayer time by giving thanks for three gifts of the day.
- Give thanks during everyday moments like while you commute to work, take a shower, or walk your dog.
- Keep a gratitude journal.
- Write out three gratitudes on a small piece of paper each morning, and then carry them in your pocket all day long.
- Go around the table at dinner with your family, spouse, roommates, or community and say what you are thankful for.

However you do it, at *least* once a day, pause, and give thanks for at least three good things in your life.

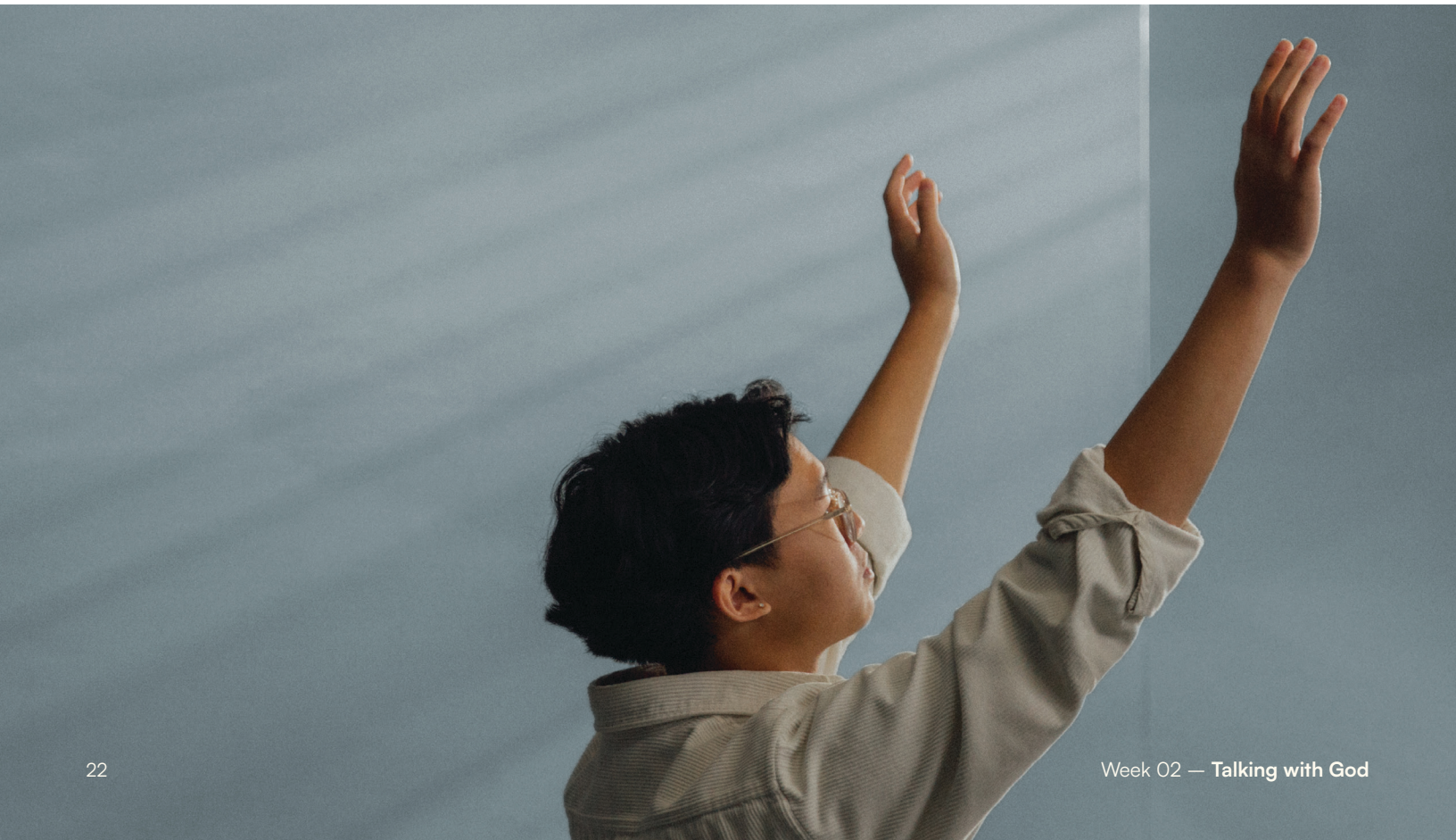
## 03 Ask

Step into petition and intercession, and ask on behalf of yourself and others.

We have two recommended exercises to do this.

- **Prayer Cards**
  - Make a deck of index cards with names or situations at the top of each card (or you can do one card with the most important people and situations in your life). We challenge you to consider including your enemies or those you are struggling to forgive, as praying for them can set your heart free to love them.
  - Flip through your cards and linger over each one for a few seconds to a few minutes, offering up specific prayers to our Father. Remember, generic prayers make it harder to see God's hand in our life.
- **"Pray the Room"**
  - This is a form of imaginative prayer that combines intercession with waiting on and listening for God. The goal is to pray what the Spirit of Jesus is already wanting you to pray from deep within.

- Get to a quiet, distraction-free place if at all possible. Take 5-10 deep, slow breaths.
- Close your eyes and imagine yourself in a room with the Father or Jesus. Take a moment to visualize the room. If no specific room takes shape in your mind, use your memory of a room you love and experience God in.
- Ask the Spirit to bring into the room anyone or anything that he wants you to pray for. Wait and see what comes into your field of vision.
- How do they look? Are they happy? Sad? Bruised? Tired? Scared? Lost? What else do you notice about their appearance or demeanor?
- Then, pray for that person. Make your intercession as specific as possible. You can pray whatever is on your heart for them, or ask the Spirit for further insight into what to pray for them. If you don't know what to pray, just hold them before God with love.
- Consider reaching out to that person to check in or offer a word of encouragement or sense of God's heart for them.



# Reach Practice

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## Reading

Read chapters 4-5 of *Praying Like Monks, Living Like Fools* by Tyler Staton (pp. 69-114).

## Podcast

Listen to episode 2 of the Prayer series from the Rule of Life podcast by Practicing the Way.

## Exercise: Praying your own lament

Praying lament is a deeply personal experience. This exercise has been designed to help you connect with your own feelings and experiences so you can freely express them to God. Don't feel like you need to go deep if you're not ready. Remember, honesty is where the real power is with lament, so try not to filter your emotions and words.

You can follow this QR code to a video tutorial from Strahan Coleman that will guide you step by step, using prayer prompts.

Or you can follow the written tutorial on the following pages.



- 01 **Become aware** — To start, make yourself comfortable and take a few deep breaths. Become aware of your surroundings, the sounds, the temperature, how your body is today. Open up to God.
- 02 **Focus on a feeling** — Let yourself feel your present emotional state, your difficult situations and griefs and losses. You may have a few in your life. See if you can bring your focus to one of those emotions or situations that you're currently feeling hurt or angry about.
- 03 **Sit with it** — Sit with that feeling, without judging it or telling yourself it's good or bad. Just notice how it feels. Can you locate it in your body? Your gut? Chest? Back? Shoulders? What is it like to hold that within you?
- 04 **Bring it to God** — Now, imagine holding it out in your hands as you stand before him, so you can both see it. Tell God exactly how you feel, without a filter, and allow God to feel what you feel in this moment, to acknowledge the pain and grief that exists. Be raw, honest, and vulnerable. Let God hear all that's in your heart. Remember, you're taking your pain to him, on a quest for deeper intimacy, not rebellion. And know that God can bear it, and that he knows what it's like to hurt. Hebrews 4:15 tells us that God sympathizes with us. Give God consent to sympathize with your lament.
- 05 **Express your desires and needs** — Plead with God to act, to change what is, to redeem or vindicate or heal or save or fight on your behalf. Wrestle with God if you feel the permission to do so.
- 06 **Give God your trust** — Then, let go. You might want to say, "Even though I feel [insert your emotion or lament], you are good and I trust you with it." Or "I trust you, help my lack of trust!" Or use the ending to Jesus's own prayer of lament, "Not my will, but yours be done."
- 07 **Be still** — For a few minutes, be still before God and allow him to respond. You may feel a lightness or a peace, you may see a picture or hear a word in your mind or imagination, or you might not. Notice how you feel after letting God hear your lament. Whatever happens, allow God the opportunity to meet you in this moment.
- 08 **Give thanks** — Finally, take a moment to thank God for being with you in this space. For listening, and for caring.

**Reminder: Start with where you are.** As an alternative to the tutorial above, you can simply pray one of the Psalms of Lament. Scholars argue approximately two-thirds of the 150 psalms are prayers of lament.

Here are a few we recommend to pray: Psalm 10, 13, 22, 42, 74, 77

# Prayer Reflection

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Before your next time together with the group for Week 03, take five to ten minutes to journal out your answers to the following three questions.

01 Where did I feel resistance?

02 Where did I feel delight?

03 Where did I most experience God's nearness?

**Note:** As you write, be as specific as possible. While bullet points are just fine, if you write it out in narrative form, your brain will be able to process your insights in a more lasting way.