



**Let's pray:**

**February 2024**

How can we pray well as we head into this new month?



# Unlocking Honest Prayers

God wants our honest prayers, and teaches us how to pray them.

Learning to pray and growing in prayer is foundational for disciples of Jesus but is often something we struggle with: am I praying enough? Am I praying for the right things? Am I praying in the right way? Often the idea of prayer makes us feel guilt or inadequacy rather than anticipation and homecoming.

How good it is, then, that the Bible is full of teaching and examples of prayer in action, inviting us, and drawing us into prayerfulness.

Jesus spent time teaching his disciples how to pray (Matthew 6:5–15), talked about the importance of persistence in prayer (Luke 18:1–8), and modelled setting aside times for prayer (Mark 6:45–46). He even prays for those crucifying him (Luke 23:34).

John records a remarkable and rich prayer of Jesus from the night he was betrayed, where he prays for himself, the disciples, and those who would come to faith through their ministry (John 17) – spoiler alert: that includes you and me!

The Apostle Paul gave us a window into the kinds of things he prayed for the churches at the start of many of his letters (Eph. 1; Col. 1:3–14; 1 Thess. 1); these can offer great inspiration for our own prayers.

But the place I turn to the most to learn about prayer is the book of Psalms. It never ceases to amaze me how honest these prayers are. The psalmists have the remarkable capacity to view God with such awe and reverence, yet at the same time cry out to him and cry at him when they are in a place of danger, frustration or pain:



O LORD, how many are my foes!' **(Ps. 3:1)**

'Answer me... Give me relief... be merciful to me...' **(Ps. 4:1)**

'... consider my sighing. Listen to my cry for help...' **(Ps. 5:1-2)**

'My soul is in anguish. How long, O LORD, how long? ... I am worn out from groaning, all night long I flood my bed with weeping... My eyes grow weak with sorrow...' **(Ps. 6:3-7)**

I have to ask myself, 'Are my prayers that bold, that raw, that honest?'

In a recent [blog post](#) I wrote about why we need to recapture the language of lament; that we need to be honest with God, for our own sake and for others.

Now there are lots of other types of psalms, including ones of exuberant praise and celebration, but it is interesting that psalms of lament are the most common. These prayers of lament are important to pray for ourselves because they give permission and language for us to admit how we are really doing to ourselves and to God – another spoiler, he knew we were feeling this way already!

But they are also important because, even if we don't feel like the psalmist today, there will be people we can be praying for who are.

So over the coming month in prayer, let's let go of those doubts and fears about prayer, and let's just respond to God's invitation to spend time with him (in small moments and longer times). Let's bring more of ourselves and more of others to him.





# Points for Prayer

- 1.** **Let's pray** prayers of thanksgiving that it is often children and young people who teach us to be honest with ourselves and with God
- 2.** **Let's pray** for children and young people to know God loves them and invites them to bring their whole selves to him.
- 3.** **Let's pray** for those (perhaps including ourselves) for whom psalms of lament are where they are on this day or in this season
- 4.** **Let's pray** for supportive church communities that make space for bringing all of our experiences to God