

Central and fundamental to our lives as Christians is a relationship with God, our heavenly Father, through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. As we build any relationship, it is important to spend time together and to talk to one another, sharing what is in our hearts. Currently, our ability to spend time with those we love has been harshly curtailed, but we are finding new ways to reach out and communicate.

There are three main ways we build and grow our relationship with the Lord – worshipping together, reading the bible and prayer. Happily only one of these ways has been heavily impacted in our current circumstances. And even then, we are finding new ways of worshipping together!

In many places in Scripture, we are told to bring our worries to God, to thank Him and glorify his name through prayer. We are encouraged to pray for others and the world. But when I was returning to my faith in my adult years; I found it so difficult to pray. What should I say? Where should I be? Did I need to be in church to pray? Would my prayers only be heard there? How should I be? Did I need to lie face down on the floor in complete supplication? Did God only listen to special words said in a perfect way? It was a great comfort to me that I was not the only one that asked these questions and that others too found it difficult to pray. So much so that there is even a “Christian Prayer for Dummies” manual for sale!

If you research how to pray, it can get very complicated. Many sources say that the perfect prayer has 4 or 5 parts: adoration, thanksgiving, confession, intercession and supplication. As a new Christian, I had to look up what some of those words meant in the Christian context. And their meaning differs depending on the denomination of the author. If you are like me, you are listening to this and feeling exhausted by it all and thinking well maybe it’s just easier to not pray.

But to not pray is missing out on a wonderful part of our relationship with God. Praying is a time when we can really show God our heart, bring to him everything on it and ask Him for His guidance and His plan for us. If we are still long enough and take the time to listen, we will hear His answers to us. As my faith has grown, I have found great comfort in prayer and the very fact that I am here today, talking to you all, is God’s answer to one of my prayers.

As the Scripture does with so many of the difficult questions we have about how to live as Jesus would want us to live, to be true Christian, the Bible is really the only resource we need. Our reading today gives us the answer to that burning question of how do we pray.

There are four ‘secrets’ if you like that you can take from this passage that help to answer most of the questions I had. The first is to pray in secret. Really what the Bible is trying to tell us here is that we are not rewarded because we are seen to be praying, but rather we are rewarded by deepening our relationship with God through our prayer. Secondly, thankfully, it is the substance of our prayers that is important not the form. We don’t need to use special words in a special place with our bodies in a special position. It is the very heart of our prayers that matter to God. Thirdly, as the prayer in our reading begins with Our Father in Heaven, hallowed be thy name, so too should our prayers begin by showing reverence to the Lord. And lastly, to take note that this prayer is prefaced with the sentence: This is HOW we should pray... not WHAT we should pray. So not only is this prayer important as a prayer in itself to be repeated by us, but it is also important as a model for our own prayer life.

Over the next two months, Cheryl, Alison and I will unpack, line by line, our understanding of what The Lord’s Prayers means and how it can be used as a model for our own prayers. In all the tension, sadness and fear of our lives at the moment, we have been given a wonderful gift. Many of our lives are slower and we have more time to spend in prayer and reading scripture now, meditating to hear God’s words speaking back to us. Make good use of this time to deepen your personal relationship with God and your own sense of spirituality.