

# Prayer in the Making

Trying it, talking it, sustaining it

**Lyndall Bywater**

Foreword by Roy Searle

## **The Bible Reading Fellowship**

15 The Chambers, Vineyard  
Abingdon OX14 3FE  
**brf.org.uk**

The Bible Reading Fellowship (BRF) is a Registered Charity (233280)

ISBN 978 0 85746 801 7  
First published 2019  
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 0  
All rights reserved

Text © Lyndall Bywater 2019  
This edition © The Bible Reading Fellowship 2019  
Cover image © Thinkstock

The author asserts the moral right to be identified as the author of this work

### **Acknowledgements**

Unless otherwise acknowledged, scripture quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version (Anglicised edition) copyright © 1979, 1984, 2011 by Biblica. Used by permission of Hodder & Stoughton Publishers, a Hachette UK company. All rights reserved. 'NIV' is a registered trademark of Biblica. UK trademark number 1448790.

Scripture quotations marked 'MSG' are taken from *The Message*, copyright © 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002 by Eugene H. Peterson. Used by permission of NavPress. All rights reserved. Represented by Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.

Scripture quotations marked 'TPT' are taken from The Passion Translation. Copyright © 2017 by Passion & Fire Ministries, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved. **thePassionTranslation.com**

Scripture quotations marked 'NLT' are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2007, 2013. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked 'ESV' are taken from the Holy Bible, English Standard Version, published by HarperCollins Publishers, © 2001 Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture quotations marked 'NASB' are taken from the New American Standard Bible, copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. **Lockman.org**

Scripture quotations marked 'AMP' are taken from the Amplified Bible (AMP), copyright © 2015 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission. **Lockman.org**

Every effort has been made to trace and contact copyright owners for material used in this resource. We apologise for any inadvertent omissions or errors, and would ask those concerned to contact us so that full acknowledgement can be made in the future.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon CR0 4YY

# Prayer in the Making

---

Trying it, talking it, sustaining it

---

**Lyndall Bywater**

Foreword by Roy Searle



# Contents

Foreword by Roy Searle .....	7
Introduction .....	9
<b>1 Encounter</b>	
Face-to-face .....	17
Heart-to-heart .....	23
<b>2 Worship</b>	
Presence and praise .....	28
Grief and gratitude .....	33
<b>3 Listening</b>	
Recognising God's voice .....	39
Listening with the senses .....	45
<b>4 Stillness</b>	
Making space to stop .....	51
Feeling and filling .....	56
<b>5 Action</b>	
Prayer beyond words .....	62
Doing and making .....	67
<b>6 Intercession</b>	
Shoulder prayers .....	73
Heart prayers .....	79
<b>7 Strategy</b>	
Prayerful planning .....	85
Prayerful persevering .....	90

<b>8 Restoration</b>	
Inner healing .....	97
Forgiveness.....	102
<b>9 Voice and body</b>	
Praying with your body.....	109
Praying out loud.....	115
<b>10 Scripture</b>	
Power and promise.....	120
Justice and kingdom.....	125
<b>11 Warfare</b>	
Opposition strategies.....	131
Victory strategies.....	137
<b>12 Resilience</b>	
Building a rhythm .....	143
Growing a relationship .....	150

# Foreword

If you are hesitant or put off by books on prayer, this isn't one of them. If you're looking for a weighty treatise on the subject of prayer, this is not the book for you. But if you're looking for a practical and encouraging book on how we might pray, this book will be very helpful. It's clearly written by someone who both prays and encourages and facilitates others to pray.

In this follow-up book to her *Faith in the Making*, Lyndall inspires, enlightens and encourages readers to engage with prayer not out of obligation or a sense of guilt or duty, but in response to following Jesus and to a deepening relationship with him and the world.

Thank God there is no claim here to some special revelation, new wave, latest trend or a one-size-fits-all mentality. Rather, this book is a carefully considered and helpful guide to prayer. Like the best guidebooks, *Prayer in the Making* is an excellent travelling companion for those who want to journey in prayer. Lyndall takes us on a tour of twelve different types of prayer, with each one linked to a different scripture or biblical character. We journey through the experiences of encounter, worship, listening, stillness, action, intercession, strategy, restoration, voice and body, scripture, warfare and resilience. Each chapter explores its theme, drawing from scripture and the wisdom and experience gleaned from other sources.

Lyndall writes poignantly from her own personal experience and explores the issues relating to prayer from various angles and perspectives. She introduces us to different streams of spirituality and methods of prayer, old and new, and she explores the relationship between prayer and our personalities and persuasions.

The aim of the book is clear: to build a sustainable, life-giving rhythm of prayer. As the title suggests, there are ingredients and elements that need to be explored and experienced in shaping a life of prayer, and each chapter helpfully includes explanations and examples, as well as a practical section that encourages the reader to try it and sustain it.

*Prayer in the Making* is accessible, down-to-earth, insightful and inspiring. Journey with it as a companion and find its teaching, suggestions and activities an invaluable resource to a deeper, more intentional, life of prayer.

*Roy Searle, leader of Northumbria Community, former president of the Baptist Union of Great Britain, tutor at Cranmer Hall, Durham, and member of the Renovare Board*

# Introduction

I was a student in my first year at university when I had my first brush with a cult. I had just navigated past that awkward bit where you try to work out whether you're friends with Jesus because your parents told you that it was a good idea or because it really is a good idea. I had decided it was, and I was passionate about my new-found 'adult' faith. So when a lady sat down near me in the college refectory and invited some other girls to a Bible study, I had no qualms about interrupting their conversation and asking if she'd like to come and study the Bible with me, too.

It only took two of those Bible studies for my fragile, not-so-grown-up faith to be blown apart. In two weeks, I went from zealous believing to anxious doubting. I felt as though a very important rug had been pulled out from under my feet, and I wasn't sure I could even call myself a Christian, given how far my life had apparently strayed from the 'right' path. It was then that I discovered one of the best reasons for finding Christian friends at university. I explained my dilemma to another member of the Christian Union, and she offered to join me at the next Bible study.

The study ran its usual course, with the lady explaining to us both why we were probably failing to meet the mark on a number of matters pertaining to life and godliness, and then she suddenly threw in a killer question: 'When you get up in the morning, how do you decide who you are going to evangelise to?'

Well, I was horrified. I might once have been a keen Jesus-follower – before the great dismantling had occurred – but I'd never been that keen on evangelism, and I certainly didn't do it every day. As I floundered in yet more guilt, my friend uttered one simple phrase



that entirely revolutionised not only the course of those Bible studies, but indeed the course of my whole life. She simply said, 'I ask God who he wants me to talk to about Jesus, and he tells me.'

The temperature of the conversation suddenly dropped by several degrees. New shadows of suspicion darkened the lady's tone as she asked, 'You hear God speaking?'

'Yes, of course. I talk to him and he talks to me,' said my friend.

'Through the Bible, of course...'

'Yes, through the Bible, but he speaks directly to me by his Holy Spirit, too. I hear his voice in my mind.'

The lady seemed stunned into horrified silence. Picking up her bag, she walked out of my room and I never saw her again. Perhaps that little snippet of conversation was enough to persuade her that my friend was beyond hope – and that I was, too, by association – but I can't help hoping that it lodged with her in some way, and that she has since found the truth of my friend's words for herself: that we have a God who can speak, who does speak and who loves to communicate directly with us, his beloved.

It may well have been that day that I fell in love with prayer. Christianity comes alive for all of us in different ways, but for me it was that realisation that to follow Jesus is to be part of a conversation. Suddenly I knew again that I was loved, that I was welcome and that I wasn't doing such a terrible job of being a Christian after all. If it's about talking and listening, then I reckoned I could manage that.

Prayer is simultaneously the simplest and the most complex thing I know in life. At its simplest, it is what my friend described: it is us talking to God and him talking to us. Yet it is also the story of tiny, insubstantial human beings communicating with one who exists outside of time and beyond eternity. It's as simple as the world's

most basic transistor radio picking up radio waves, but it's as complex as that same little transistor radio somehow tuning into the echoes of distant stars. If you think about it too much, it can make your brain fizz.

Prayer is a wonder, in every sense of the word. It is unfathomable and beautiful and joyfully real. The God we worship has always spoken, right from the very conception of creation, and he hasn't stopped. Jesus, God made man, spent the vast majority of his ministry talking and listening. He wasn't a guru who poked his head out of a cave every six months or so to utter something profound; he was the man who told stories and chatted at parties. When he was getting ready to face the cross, he told his followers what it would be like to have him around in spirit instead of in person, and the Spirit he described was a distinctly talkative one: one who would teach and tell and proclaim; one who would even hear us and communicate with us when we don't have the words anymore. Our God is ever and always in conversation with us, if we want him to be.

Some years ago, I worked for The Salvation Army as National Prayer Coordinator. The job took me all over the country, teaching and preaching on prayer, and I absolutely loved it. I was only a few months into the job when I began to discover a phenomenon that will be familiar to anyone who has ever taught on prayer. I call it the 'guilty prayer slump'. Picture the scene: you stand up in front of an eager congregation, all expectant for the deep wisdoms that the visiting speaker has come to share, and you utter the immortal words, 'Today I'm going to talk about prayer.'

In the heartbeat that follows, something in the room seems to shift. Shoulders sag, heads bow in mild embarrassment and you might even hear a few awkward coughs. I remember getting rather distressed the first few times it happened, but mercifully it didn't take me long to realise that this was no reflection on me; this was a common and widespread reaction to the idea of a talk on prayer. Mention that prayer is the chosen subject for the day, and suddenly

a maelstrom of guilt surges through the average congregation of faithful, dedicated Christians. It's not that we don't love prayer. Like me in those early university days, most people love the idea of that simple, two-way communication with a living God. It's just that we're sure we're not doing it properly.

Fast-forward to the coffee slot after the church service, and I would stand there with my cup of tea, looking forward to some inspiring conversations about prayer, only to find myself talking to person after person who wanted me to know how bad they were at it. Some 20 years on, I still have no idea what 'bad at prayer' actually means, but I have found one common denominator in all those conversations. When I ask people to tell me what they think their prayer life should be like, they all refer me to someone else's. It might be a hero of the faith, like John Wesley or Smith Wigglesworth, or it might be someone else in their church or family – a grandmother who prayed for several hours a day or a pastor who told stories of powerful encounters with God in his book-lined study. As they lamented their poor performance, there would always be a litany of comparisons. At the heart of most people's guilt over prayer is the profound belief that others are doing it better than they are.

In the days before his death, one of Jesus' strongest messages to his disciples was about the importance of them being themselves. In John 15, his words have a kind of refrain running through them based around the idea of remaining. They were to remain in him and he would remain in them. He had no designs on becoming some distant deity, and he didn't need them to become spiritual superheroes. He just intended to be right there, with them and in them, by his Spirit.

You only have to read a few chapters of the gospels to know that Jesus mixed with a huge variety of people. His best friends were fishermen, but he could hold his own with the religious academics of his day, and he was completely at ease with the smallest child perched on his knee. We can justifiably conclude that he was a

friendly, approachable man, but we can also conclude that he loved human beings – all sorts of human beings. History is full of holy men and women who gathered around them all the ‘right’ sort of people – people who fitted a certain mould, people who proved to be the best advert for their teachings – but Jesus was shockingly inclusive. His followers weren’t a slick set of beautifully homogenised mannequins, all displaying his brand; they were a disparate bunch of folk who probably wouldn’t even have interacted with each other if it weren’t for their love of the man who had the words of eternal life. Tradesmen mixed with tax collectors; aristocrats ate with one-time lepers; women and foreigners were included and honoured; and the whole colourful lot found themselves embraced in this new kingdom Jesus spoke of.

In fact, the only thing that got you disbarred was hypocrisy – that terrible art of pretending to be something you’re not. To him it mattered not one iota how flawed people were, so long as they were honest about their shortcomings and willing to learn. The one person Jesus apparently couldn’t work with was someone who had already decided they needed to fake it, pretending to be something they weren’t.

The way we’re each made is no coincidence. We are the work of a master artisan who has never made a mistake in his life. We are as varied as snowflakes and as complex as stars. He has no desire to make us all the same, but he does long to be in close, intimate relationship with each one of us. That leads me to conclude that his relationship with each one of us must look completely different. No one in all of history will ever reflect God’s beauty in quite the same way you do, and no one will ever have the same relationship with him that you have. So, if you buy the lie that you need to become someone else, someone better, in order to be close to him, then that precious, once-in-an-eternity friendship never gets off the ground. You miss out on him, because ‘faking it’ will always sour the connection; and he misses out because no one can ever be you quite as well as you can.

And if your relationship with him is unique, then so is your prayer life. Your communication with him has a flavour unlike anyone else's. Perhaps you bemoan how feeble and faithless your prayers seem, but to him they are exquisite.

When I was a child, I used to imagine heaven as a mighty sorting office of prayers. I would see prayers drift in like tiny fragments of paper, and then a host of dedicated angels would read each one, digest its contents and sort it to the most appropriate drawer in the filing cabinet, to be processed by the Almighty at his convenience.

One day, my lovely, tidy scene got thoroughly trashed. Suddenly the little fragments of prayers weren't paper any more; they were tiny, brightly coloured butterflies, and they were everywhere! Try as they might, the angels couldn't get a single one of them to stay still long enough to see what it was about. The whole thing worried me. How would my prayers get to him? How would he know what I needed? And then I saw a huge but gentle hand reach into the swirling chaos of wings, and it came out again with just a few butterflies perched on the fingers.

Even at that young age, I knew what God was trying to tell me. My prayers aren't boring little scraps of paper; they are unique, alive and full of colour. That's not because I'm good at prayer; it's because I'm me. The one I pray to doesn't need angels to read and file my prayers. He recognises them instantly, hears them immediately and knows them fully, because he made me. To mix the metaphors a little: when I pray, the notes that reach his ears are unlike any other notes he ever hears. When he created me and you, he designed us so that our voices would be unique, beautiful and instantly recognisable to his ears – not just our physical voices but our prayer voices too.

So how do you find your voice? How do you discover that intimate relationship with God that only you can have? Other people's advice will come in handy, but no one else's prayer life will ever be right for you. The heroes of past centuries may inspire you, the dedication

of previous generations may challenge you and the pastor's stories may make you reach higher, but none of them know anything about the prayer life God has in store for you. It's yours to discover and yours to enjoy.

If we're each unique, made by God himself for a never-to-be-repeated communion with him, then it stands to reason that our prayer lives will differ radically. For some of us, the methods of prayer that enliven us most will be the contemplative ones; for others, it will be the activist ones; for some, it will be structures and strategies, whereas for others it will be firing up the intellect. If your prayer 'diet' has been limited, then it's even more likely that you think you're no good at it, because chances are you've never tried the sort of prayer practices that suit your personality – you've not yet learnt to pray the way God made you to pray. Of course, there are disciplines to prayer – we don't always get to do what we enjoy most – but when we begin to access the endless variety and creativity of a one-to-one relationship with the God of the universe, we discover that there is more to prayer than we ever dreamed.

This book takes you on a tour of twelve different types of prayer, introducing you along the way to a whole host of people from the Bible, each of whom used at least one of these prayer practices, and each of whom learnt to find their own unique and precious connection with God. Before you panic that twelve sounds like a daunting amount of prayer types to learn, let me reassure you that you probably do most of them already, without even thinking about it. My hope is that introducing you to each one in a little more detail will help you to recognise it, explore it and see how it fits with all the others. As you work through each chapter, you will probably find that some types of prayer come more naturally to you than others. That is absolutely fine; it's all part of discovering how your personality shapes the way you pray. A full, healthy prayer rhythm should include all twelve types listed in this book, but it's normal for some to come easily and for some to require more discipline. The aim of the book is to help you build a sustainable, life-giving rhythm

of prayer, but, like any rhythm, it will start out feeling clunky and like hard work. Take heart, though: as you get to grips with each different type of prayer, you'll soon find that the rhythm turns into a dance. Before long you'll be moving freely between a whole host of different prayer practices without even thinking about it.

This book is designed to be read in any order you like, so if a particular type of prayer catches your attention and you want to know more, feel free to jump straight to that chapter.

Each section of the book ends with some practical suggestions. There's a 'Trying it' exercise, which you can do to get started on that particular type of prayer, and then there are three 'Sustaining it' exercises, which are designed to help you make that aspect of prayer a permanent part of your prayer rhythm. Again, not all of them will suit you, but I hope you will find plenty that do. Some types of prayer will always be a stretch, but as you try out the different exercises, you may just find one or two that fit your personality in such a way that they make that stretch a bit more joyful.

*Prayer in the Making* is almost entirely about personal prayer. It includes little on group prayer or prayer in church, but it may nonetheless be a useful resource for small groups who want to explore prayer together. There are 'Talking it' discussion questions at the end of each section, and a group prayer activity at the end of each chapter.

As you read this book, I hope and pray that you will be able to build for yourself a rhythm of prayer that is unique and life-giving. I pray that prayer will never again feel like something you fail at, and that you will never again live under the tyranny of needing to be more like someone else. I pray that you will know the astonishing joy of being one who walks and talks with God, and whose conversations with him change the world.

## 1

# Encounter

**Prayer is both conversation and encounter with God... We must know the awe of praising his glory, the intimacy of finding his grace, and the struggle of asking his help, all of which can lead us to know the spiritual reality of his presence.**

*Tim Keller, Prayer: Experiencing awe and intimacy with God (Hodder & Stoughton, 2014)*

## Face-to-face

**Hebrews 1:3; Revelation 1:9–20**

When I was about 13, I got to pin a geranium to Margaret Thatcher's coat. She was prime minister at the time, and I was one of two blind people chosen to visit 10 Downing Street, at 8.00 one morning, to raise the profile of the Royal National Institute of Blind People on its annual fundraising day. The geranium in question was like the poppies you can buy for Remembrance Sunday: a paper flower with a pin attached to the back.

I had never pinned one on myself before, let alone anyone else, and as I reached up to attach it to the lapel of her coat, I suddenly realised I had no idea how to do it. The fabric was so thick that I quickly gave up on trying to thread the pin through to bring the point out again. I just had to keep poking it in and hope for the best! There were no yelps of pain, so I assume I didn't puncture the formidable lady. She'd been in Moscow the day before for talks with Mikhail Gorbachev, the leader of the Soviet Union, and her plane had only



landed four hours earlier, but despite her lack of sleep and busy day ahead, she seemed keen to stop and talk to us. I was too young to understand much about the politics of the day, but I do remember being a little awestruck at meeting someone so important.

Human beings have always prayed. Prayer forms part of every religion on the face of the earth. Surveys show us that, no matter how ‘unreligious’ a population may seem to be, there will nonetheless be a high percentage of people who pray. Since time immemorial, people have voiced their fears and longings to a being more powerful than themselves, in the hope that he, she or it will be listening.

But that is not what Christian prayer is. Christian prayer is a face-to-face meeting with someone very important indeed. There’s a vast repertoire of spiritual practices on offer these days, all suggesting different ways to find peace within yourself and a harmonious connection to the rest of the universe, but that’s not what Christian prayer is. Christian prayer is a relationship with the one who created you, who loves you and who wants to be known by you.

The Bible is full of stories of people who set aside time to pray – to do their spiritual exercises or to pour out their anguish – only to find themselves in conversation with God himself. One of those people was the apostle John. He had known Jesus almost all his life. They were the best of friends during Jesus’ ministry on earth, and then John had spent decades teaching others to find and cherish that same friendship. In the last years of his life, banished to the prison island of Patmos for his faith in Jesus, John turned to prayer and found himself face-to-face with his friend again (Revelation 1:9–20).

John’s Patmos encounter was with Jesus, God in human form – albeit a breathtakingly glorious human form. Christian prayer is not invoking a force or petitioning a capricious deity; it is getting to know someone. Our creator knew that we would only truly be able to relate to him if he came to us in a form we would recognise, and so he came to us as Jesus, God made man. Christian prayer is about

getting to know Jesus, and so discovering the heights and depths of God himself. As the writer to the Hebrews put it:

The Son is the dazzling radiance of God's splendour, the exact expression of God's true nature – his mirror image!

HEBREWS 1:3 (TPT)

Of course, if you've done any praying in your Christian life, you'll know that it doesn't tend to result in visions of the risen, glorified Christ every time – though you should never rule out the possibility of that happening. In these post-Pentecost days, Jesus is present with us by his Spirit. In fact, Luke and Paul both call the Holy Spirit 'the Spirit of Jesus' (Acts 16:7; Philippians 1:19). In prayer, we interact with the Spirit of Jesus, even if we don't see him standing in front of us.

John's vision of Jesus is rich in symbolism, and if we can interpret some of those symbols, we get a very good idea of what Christian prayer is meant to be like.

The vision began because Jesus spoke to John (Revelation 1:10). That simple truth is at the heart of prayer. If you have any desire at all to communicate with Jesus, it is because he has first spoken to you, whether you realise it or not. When we pray, we don't make an application to God in the hopes that he'll deign to spare us a little of his time and attention. We hear the whisper of his Spirit drawing us in. He's the one inviting us; all we're doing is responding to his invitation to an encounter. He loves you more than you will ever love him; he cherishes your company more than you will ever cherish his. Prayer comes alive when you come to it knowing that the one who calls you is already there, longing to welcome you in.

If John's description of Jesus tells us anything, it's that he is indescribable. John was trying to find words for beauty and glory personified. The verses in Revelation don't tell us how long he spent in Jesus' presence that day, but I suspect he was lost in wonder for

a very long time before he could record any words at all. When the closest description you can find for someone's face is that it is 'like the sun shining in all its brilliance' (Revelation 1:16), then you know you are in the presence of supreme greatness. Christian prayer is not just bringing our needs and concerns to God; it is worship. It is stopping to gaze on the beauty of Christ. It is stepping aside from the world to give honour and praise to the one who holds all things together.

One of the first details John noticed about Jesus was his long robe and golden sash (Revelation 1:13). In scripture, gold tends to denote royalty and authority, and the sash was stretched across Jesus' breast. Did it make John think back to that night – that dark, painful night – when Jesus had eaten with them, just before his crucifixion, and when he, John, had leaned on that very same breast (see John 13:25)? Christian prayer is a perplexing yet exhilarating contradiction: we bow in awe of our great high king, yet we are drawn near to rest in his arms; we stand in reverent honour before royalty, because he is absolute goodness and purity, yet we are invited to lean in close enough to hear his heartbeat.

His gaze moving further up, John next noticed Jesus' hair, which was pure white (Revelation 1:14). In many cultures, white hair signifies wisdom: judges don wigs of white hair to symbolise the wisdom of their office, for instance. For Christians, prayer is where we expect to find understanding and revelation. It is a place of worship and rest, but it is also where we talk through our problems and receive wisdom from our 'Wonderful Counsellor' (Isaiah 9:6).

And then, all of a sudden, John met his Saviour's gaze. Jesus has eyes of blazing fire (Revelation 1:14). Those are the eyes that see you, no matter where you are, no matter what's going on in your life. When it's Jesus you're in relationship with, prayer is all about knowing you're not alone and you're never overlooked. He watches over you, and he sees everything. That may be simultaneously the most comforting and the most sobering news. Christian prayer will

bring your life into the clarity of God's gaze. If you'd rather not face the truth about yourself, then don't risk an encounter with Jesus. To be face-to-face with him is to be face-to-face with yourself. But it will also bring you the joy of knowing that he never loses sight of you. No matter how dark things may get, you'll always walk in the glow of those warm, fire-bright eyes.

I often wonder whether John found that fiery gaze a bit too intense at first, since the next thing he did was to look down at Jesus' feet – feet that were 'like bronze glowing in a furnace' (Revelation 1:15). Those feet had been tested in the furnace of obedience, walking the dusty roads of humanity, going wherever the Father sent them. Those were the feet of faithful obedience, and ours are the feet that get to walk in his footsteps. Christian prayer always has an exit sign: we step out of life, we go in to encounter the living God and then he sends us back out into the world. If you never want to be given a job to do, a mountain to climb or a person to care for, then avoid Christian prayer at all costs. If you spend any time at all with the one who lived and loved in this world, then he will send you out to do likewise.

Then, finally, there was the voice: that swirling tumult of tones and cadences (Revelation 1:15). Listening to that voice is the artwork of a lifetime. In Hollywood films, God is usually accorded one deep, sonorous voice with which to speak, but nothing could be further from the descriptions we find in the Bible. His voice is complex and multilayered, yet there is a sharpness to his words – the sharpness of a double-edged sword (Revelation 1:16). Christian prayer is the place where we learn to understand the intricacies of that voice and where we open our lives to the power of those words.

Christian prayer is always an encounter. Whether it's a five-second 'arrow prayer' to God at a difficult moment or a couple of hours in his glorious company, it is never just a religious duty or a psychological sticking plaster. It is a face-to-face, heart-to-heart, Spirit-to-spirit connection with him who is the first and the last, the beginning and the end, the king of kings, and the lover of your soul.

## Trying it

If Christian prayer starts with Jesus, then it can help to spend some time looking at a picture of him. If you enjoy using your imagination, you might want to picture him in your mind. What do you imagine he looked like while he was here on earth? Or perhaps you'd rather imagine what he looks like now, seated at the right hand of God the Father. Alternatively, you could look for some famous artworks that depict Jesus. You could do an internet search and look through a few images until you come across one that you like or find interesting.

However you find your picture of Jesus, spend some time looking at him. What would it be like to be in his company? What do you want to say to him? What do you think he wants to say to you?

## Talking it

- Who's the most famous person you've ever met?
- When did you first learn about Jesus? What do you remember liking most about him, when you first heard about him?
- Christian prayer is meant to be multifaceted. Looking at the pointers from John's vision, is there a facet of prayer you'd like to experience more of?

## Sustaining it

### 1 Become aware

Before you start praying, take a moment to become aware of yourself and what's around you. Sometimes we think we need to shut ourselves off from everything, in order to become aware of God's presence, but the Spirit of Jesus is more solid and more present than anything else in this world. He is more real than the air you're breathing, the chair you're sitting on or this book in your hands, so don't switch your senses off. Open your eyes, breathe deeply, let all your senses come alive and ask him to help you sense his presence.

## 2 Speak out loud

If you're someone who dreads the thought of praying out loud, don't shut the book just yet. Praying out loud when you're with others can indeed be daunting, but for now I'm just suggesting you speak out loud to God when you're alone. It may only be a few words, but it will help you to connect with the truth that you're communicating with someone else who is real and alive, rather than just talking to yourself in your own head.

## 3 Make a mini prayer station

When you're developing the habit of encountering the invisible Spirit of Jesus, it can be helpful to have things around you which you can see and touch, to help you focus on him. If you have a place where you usually pray – a favourite chair, for instance – you could put a table next to it with a few objects that are meaningful to you, and that make you think of Jesus. Better still, make up a prayer box that can go with you wherever you pray.

# Heart-to-heart

**Matthew 6:5–8; Luke 18:9–17**

If you were an ancient Roman, prayer was a complicated business. Firstly, you had to have a shrine somewhere in your home, preferably with a fire that burned 24 hours a day, and that's where you'd keep the statues of your favourite gods. You'd be expected to make time to pray at your shrine at least once a day, but it wasn't a straightforward business. You'd have to make sure you were clean and tidy, because dirt and unsavoury smells counted as bad omens, and they could cancel out any praying you did. You'd have to prepare your offering, to convince the gods of your sincerity, and then you'd have to make sure you knew exactly what you were going to pray. In fact, if you didn't have a friendly priest on hand to lead you through some top-of-the-range prayers, you'd probably choose to write a prayer out, to make sure it said exactly what you wanted it to say. The Roman gods were famous for being picky when it came to prayers; they would

---

Books on prayer can so often make us feel challenged but also guilty. Not this one!

*Prayer in the Making* is a book for anyone wanting to pray with more confidence. Because we are all different, we need to find the prayer life that fits with who God made us to be. Lyndall Bywater explores twelve different types of prayer, helping us to find the ones which best suit us and our lifestyles. She certainly challenges us, but leaves us ready to talk confidently with God.



Lyndall Bywater is a freelance speaker and writer, specialising in the subject of prayer. Having worked for ten years as The Salvation Army's UK prayer coordinator, she is now part of Connecting the Isles and works with the Europe team of 24-7 Prayer. She also heads up Canterbury Boiler Room, an interdenominational prayer community, and contributes to BRF's *Day by Day with God* Bible reading notes.

---

**Praise for the author's previous book, *Faith in the Making* (BRF, 2017):**

'The writer is heartbreakingly honest about the fragility of faith when faced with tragedy and atrocity in our world. For Christians bored with the mediocre and wanting to change the world, this book will inspire them to put more faith in what God can do where they live. It is full of enlightening stories, spiritual insight and the reality of how God makes his vision clear to those who dare to live by faith.'

*Major Andrea Still, Divisional Mission Enabler, Salvation Army*



[brf.org.uk](http://brf.org.uk)