

Talking to God - the Essentials for a New Believer
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If you're a new believer, uncertainty about prayer can inhibit the growth of the newest—and most important—relationship in your life. Fortunately, there are several things you can do—regular prayer, using the Bible as a starting point, not worrying about getting it “right,” and introducing variety into your prayer life. Doing these will help you enjoy your new relationship even more. And as you do, that relationship will grow and deepen, rooted firmly in your heart.

Praying regularly is one of those things that more people talk about than actually do. Jesus modeled what an active prayer life should look like. Despite the challenges, you need to make sure you set aside time—at least 20 minutes—every day to pray. Treat it like the most important item on your to-do list. Because it is.

As a new believer, you're already beginning to spend more time reading and studying your Bible. That's another great habit to cultivate—regular Bible study. A line or two of scripture that is particularly meaningful to you can be an ideal place to start your prayer. Keep it short, read it several times, out loud if you can. Then close your eyes and let the verse speak to your heart. Then begin to pray.

Whatever you do, don't let the fear of getting it “right” keep you from praying. The only wrong way to pray is to not pray at all. Everything else you do, from reciting prayers already written by someone else to long, eloquent prayers that seem to flow from your lips, to the silent utterances of your heart—it's all heard by the Father.

There are many types of prayer—praise, thanksgiving, confession, supplication, meditative. And several styles of prayer—formal, conversational, spontaneous, physical. You can pray while sitting, kneeling, prone (lying on your belly), flat on your back, while walking. You may develop a favorite or two, but don't be afraid to try other types, styles, and postures. The variety will keep your interest and passion for prayer high.

Finally, just focus on enjoying your time in prayer. Enjoy that aspect of your relationship with God. Over time, you'll notice an increased ability to actually “hear” from God, though His words may not be audible. Then it won't feel so much like you're doing all the talking. And just as it is with any good friend, sometimes it's nice to just bask in each other's presence without saying a word.

So there you have it—pray regularly, use the Bible as a starting point, don't worry about getting it "right," use a variety of types and styles of prayer, and focus on enjoying your time together with God. Because you're a new believer, you may feel that there's much more you don't know than you do know. Be patient. God will lead you at His pace as long as you faithfully remain open to His guidance. Having an active prayer life is the best way to position yourself to receive that guidance.

A vibrant, meaningful relationship with God--speaking to Him and hearing from Him--begins with prayer. Joe Vigliano has written ab