

4 Creative Ways to Pray

How to Take Your Praying Beyond the Norm

By Paul Covert



Many believers struggle with prayer—often because they lack variety. They remind me of a friend who went shopping and bought ten pairs of black cotton cargo pants and 15 blue T-shirts. He wears the same thing every day. There's no variety. His morning routine never changes.

Some Christians use the same method of prayer they were taught decades earlier—even if it does not fit their personality or interests. So their prayer lives feel routine or even foreign to the way they are wired.

Over the last decade, in an effort to bring new life to the prayers of Christ followers, I have collected many creative ways to pray. Here are a few you might try privately—or with friends in your small group.

1. Praying the Pictures of the Scripture

I enjoy praying word pictures of Jesus from the Bible. The vivid pictures of Jesus throughout the Gospels can stimulate prayer. I am not talking about the illustrations in the back

of a Bible but rather the glimpses of Jesus' life so real they create pictures in our minds.

For example, in Luke 9:37–43 Jesus comes down from the Mountain of Transfiguration and a great crowd gathers. A man whose only son is harassed by a demon cries out to Jesus, "Look at my son, for he is my only child." The man explains his desperation: "I begged your disciples to drive it out, but they could not."

Jesus calls for the boy to be brought to Him. Even before the child reaches Jesus, the unclean spirit throws the boy to the ground. Jesus rebukes the demon and gives the child back to his father.

I love to "pray this picture" by personalizing it for Annie and me with our own three sons. "Lord, will You look upon our sons and heal them in their struggles?" The image of Jesus giving the son back to his father is fabulous. Some people have a child who is ill or estranged from them, and the picture of Jesus giving their child back, completely healed and whole, takes my breath away.

Practice it: There are hundreds of word pictures in Scripture and many ways to pray each one in fresh ways. Here are a few to get started:

- Peter walking on the water (Matt. 14:22–33)
- God informing Moses that His name is I am (Ex. 3:14)
- Jesus with the little children on His lap (Mark 10:13–16).

You'll know you have it when . . . your mind starts to see pictures of Jesus and God all through the Scriptures and you can pray them freely. This will open a new realm of prayer for you.

2. Blessing Others

Blessing is the act of communicating approval or encouragement to others we care about. It is a powerful concept in the Scriptures.

- God blessed Adam and Eve when He created them and placed them in the garden (Gen. 1:27–28).
- Before Jacob died, he gave a blessing to each of his 12 sons (Gen. 49).
- • In Genesis 27:26–29, Isaac blessed his son Jacob: “Ah, the smell of my son is like the smell of a field that the Lord has blessed. May God give you heaven’s dew and earth’s richness—an abundance of grain and new wine.”

One of the joys of my life is gathering my grandchildren on my lap and praying a prayer of blessing over each one. I pray for such things as their safety, their walk with God, their future spouses, strong health, sensitivity to the Spirit of God, love for their siblings, and favor with God and man. Then I give them each a kiss and a huge hug and send them home with their parents. This family tradition has become a happy time for all of us.

The concept is transferable. You can pray a blessing over your husband or wife before he or she leaves for work in the morning. You can pray a blessing over your children at night before bed.

Praying a blessing over your neighbors—or even your enemies—is a healthy and spiritually mature thing to do.

Practice it: This week look for someone you can bless. It may be a family member or friend, but select a different one each day. Place a hand on him or her (if that is appropriate) and pray a blessing over that person. Choose a place where he or she will not be embarrassed, and pray over such aspects as health, future, relationships, and walk with God.

You'll know you have it when . . . blessing others is part of your daily routine. Imagine how many people can be refreshed and strengthened by such prayers.

3. Kingdom Praying

We all pray many kinds of prayers, including casual prayers like, "God, I am late for the doctor's appointment. Please turn all the lights between here and there green." Or sometimes we pray crisis prayers that have a different kind of urgency: "Oh, no, I have cancer. Please heal me, Lord!"

There is nothing wrong with either kind of prayer, but don't forget to add Kingdom prayers to this mix. Kingdom prayers are prayers that extend the Kingdom of God. For example, "God please stop the killing of innocent babies by abortion."

Kingdom prayers take an aspect that is right in the Kingdom of God—and then ask God to make it right here on earth.

Practice it: Following are a few Kingdom-prayer starters to try this week. Pray one each day, adding your personal thoughts to the starter. Create Kingdom prayers of your own for the following:

- "God, please stop the terrible practice of sex trafficking in our country and our world."
- "Father, please stop the human injustices carried out by North Korea."
- "God, please help the American Church regain more passion for prayer."
- "Lord, please raise up strong Christian leaders from among our young people to take the Church into the next generation."

You'll know you have it when . . . Kingdom praying is part of your regular prayer times.

4. Praying Jesus

Have you ever thought about using the body of Jesus as prayer prompts—His eyes, ears, hands, arms, or feet? I have found great comfort in doing this as I pray over myself or others.

If you are in a situation where you don't know what to do, for instance, pray like this, "Jesus, I know You can see things I will never see. So I am asking You to give me Your eyes in this situation so I will know what You want me to do—and do it with confidence." Identify with Jesus in a personal way that prompts you to pray creatively.

Practice it: Pray for

- His ears to hear what only He can hear.
- His hands to help another.
- His feet to flee from temptation.
- His eyes to see the way He sees.
- His mind to give you the wisdom you need.
- His mind/thoughts to speak the right words.
- His smile to comfort another.
- His attitude in the midst of suffering.

You'll know you have it when . . . you find comfort in the presence of Jesus and all His abilities and personal characteristics.

Beyond the Routine

This kind of variety can take prayers beyond the obvious "fix-this-or-that" approach. Use these prayer starters in groups to teach others to grow deeper in prayer.

Don't let your prayer life fall into a rut. Find creative ways to stretch your own prayer life and encourage others as you model fresh ways to pray.



—PAUL COVERT is an author who leads schools of prayer and prayer events across the U.S. and internationally. He consults with churches in the areas of prayer leadership and prayer strategy. The ideas in this article are taken from Paul's new book *52 Creative Ways to Pray* (PrayerShop Publishing 2018).

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