

Pray this way  
A few words form deep within  
Father, we begin

“Pray this way.” In Matthew’s account, this is how Jesus introduces the Lord’s Prayer to his disciples. He doesn’t offer the pray in response to them asking him how to pray, but he offers the prayer in contrast to those who pray with many words. I am reminded of a professor who started class with long prayers. One day, a plane flew over in the middle of the prayer, and he said, “And thank you, Lord, for airplanes.” Instead of prayers that contain everything a person can think of, Jesus offers the Lord’s Prayer. He also suggests that it is to be prayed in private. You may want to read the accounts of this gift from Matthew 6:9-13 and Luke 11:1-4.

We use this prayer often. We pray it every Sunday in church. We mumble the prayer at the end of meetings. It is a go to prayer in many places where Christians gather in public. One only needs to start it and others join. We use it so much that we may pray it without thinking about it. I know that I sometimes do.

In his devotional book, *We Make The Road By Walking*, Brian McLaren, gives a helpful explanation of the Lord’s Prayer. He speaks of the Lord’s Prayer as having “four simple, but profound moves.” I think they’re helpful to us as we think about the meaning of this prayer. He writes:

1. “We orient ourselves to God. We acknowledge God as the loving parent whose infinite embrace puts us in a family relationship with all people, and with all of creation.”
2. “We align our greatest desire with God’s greatest desire. We want the world to be the kind of place where God’s dreams come true, where God’s justice and compassion reign.”
3. “We bring our needs and concerns---our physical needs for things like food and shelter, and our social and spiritual needs for things like forgiveness for our wrongs and reconciliation with those who have wronged us.”
4. We prepare ourselves to face the world. “We ask to be guided away from the trials and temptations that could ruin us, and we ask to be liberated from evil.”

As he said, it is a simple prayer with deep meaning. I believe that thinking about these four movements when we say this prayer will help us recapture the blessing of this prayer. It was a gift that Jesus gave us to change our hearts. Perhaps thinking about the prayer in a brand new way can do just that.

Pastor Parnell