



Department for Mission
Lutheran Church - South Australia / Northern Territory

LCA SA/NT District Department for Mission

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Different approaches to Prayer

Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples. Luke 11:1
Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you. 1 Thess 5:16-18
I desire, then, that in every place the men should pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or argument. 1 Tim 2:8
Therefore confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The prayer of the righteous is powerful and effective. James 5:16

There is no doubt about it. We should all pray. We all need a real devotional life. However, we do not all pray the same way and we all find some styles of prayer easier than others.

The following four types of prayer are named after classic practitioners and related to Meyers-Briggs personality types.

<p><u>Augustinian Prayer</u> [NF] Saint Augustine has had a powerful influence on the church in the west. Those who pray in this way make strong use of intuition and feeling, see the Bible as a personal letter from God and ask, "What do these words mean to me in my present situation?" They seek the hidden meanings in events and relationships. They are creative and imaginative and have a natural hunger and thirst for the spiritual. Of all these groupings they are usually best cared for spiritually; but they also need this special care, because without spiritual growth and development they wither, fade and die just like a plant without water. They are not adverse to risk and experimentation.</p>	<p><u>Thomistic Prayer</u> [NT] Saint Thomas Aquinas is best known for his scholarly approach to prayer characterised by an orderly progression of thought from cause to effect. Those who pray in this way seek to attain the whole truth about the subject chosen for consideration. They take a virtue, fault or theological theme and "walk around it," studying it from every angle. It is similar to the approach of a detective trying to solve a mystery. They are intuitive and may see connections not obvious to all. They bring an investigative, analytical approach to Scripture. They want to connect with the wisdom of God. To others this may seem more like study and reflection than prayer.</p>
<p><u>Ignatian Prayer</u> [SJ] Saint Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuit Order, was a great teacher of this way of praying. He taught his followers to strive to participate in the actual event by projecting themselves back into the historical happening. Discipline, order and the historical perspective are highly valued. They see the journey of faith as a spiral which again and again comes back to the same point, but at a deeper level. They often find following the liturgical year to be helpful and practices like the stations of the cross assist them to walk with Jesus through his passion. They can become gloomy and need to also focus on resurrection themes.</p>	<p><u>Franciscan Prayer</u> [SP] Saint Francis of Assisi practiced an attitude of openness to the leading of the Spirit. He wanted all his actions to be marked by a free-flowing, spontaneous, informal praising of God and a loving dialogue with God. Prayer is not seen as a routine and set forms and the lectionary may not be much help. They prefer free-flowing informal prayers and worship that is spontaneous and action-filled; involving art, movement and the senses. They pray best when doing something with their hands – shaping clay, painting a mandala, making a church banner etc. They see God in creation and find it easy to meditate on a flower, a tree, a waterfall or other natural things.</p>

This is based on Chester P Michael and Marie Christian Norrisey's book *Prayer and Temperament and Personality Type and Religious Leadership* by Roy M Oswald and Otto Kroeger.

God has made us different and we do not find that the same ways help all of us to relate to him. We need each other because no one approach is complete in itself. As we learn from one another our walk with God is deepened and enriched. We need one another!