

Let's try praying like this...

{#11 – Study}

What's it like?

It's like using your mind to help you pray. It's like digging into something, using the Bible, hymns, or some other book or resource, and letting your brain turn the new information into prayer. Sometimes it's just paying attention more closely to something before praying. It's like waking up your brain before you pray.

What's it for?

It's for when you want to study something to give you ideas for prayer, or for when you have to study something anyway and it ends up inspiring you to pray. It's for when you're more of a "head" person than a "heart" person, and your head needs some fuel to help you figure out some things to pray, especially if it's not easy for you to talk about emotions and stuff like that. It's for helping anyone's head and heart to pray together, since God made heads and hearts both.

When could I use it?

You could use it pretty much anywhere. You could pick up a Bible, a textbook (give thanks for the wonders of science or how God has gotten us through rough parts of history), a hymnal, a magazine, or you could go read something on Wikipedia or some other corner of the internet. Find something to study or learn about, and use that to inspire your prayer.

Where could I use it?

You could use it anywhere you had access to something to study. All you might need is a smartphone and Wi-Fi. Or a book, or a magazine. You could use it in church, at the library, at home, at school, at work, you name it.

How it works...

Well, first you learn something. If you're using a Bible, that might mean using a study Bible, with lots of notes in it about when and where the Bible stories take place and what the original Bible languages were saying. It might mean going to a Bible study, and learning from the experiences and insights of others. It could be used alone or in a group. Mainly, whichever format or resource you use, you want to stimulate and use your mind, and then use your new insights and knowledge to help shape your prayer.

Try it!

For practice, try the simplest kind of Bible study, one where you don't even need extra information (but if you can find some study Bibles to check out to see what they're like, go for it). All you'll have to do is listen and pay attention. This is something called *lection divina*. It's a very simple and ancient practice: you read the same Bible passage out loud three times, and you listen carefully. If you have more than just yourself, have a different voice read each time. The first time, listen for one word that stands out for you, that catches your attention. Share your words around the room if there's a group, or write it down if you're alone. (Don't say *why* that was your word. Just share the word.) The second time, listen for one whole phrase or sentence. It could very well be something different than your first word, especially if you heard it from a different voice. Share again. The third and last time, listen for what God is trying to communicate to you in this Bible passage, how God is asking you to live. If you're comfortable doing so, share that. And that's it! Take your time through this process – if you rush it,

you're not engaging your mind sufficiently. Today, try this out on Matthew 17:1-8. And then try studying or learning something that *isn't* the Bible and see how that inspires your praying, too.

What did you think?

Learning goal: To show that prayer is an act of your whole, integrated self, not just your heart or just your mind. Different people naturally emphasize different parts, but it's all still connected.