



How do I get better at praying out loud?

September 5, 2021 * Langford Community Church * Graham Gladstone

This morning we have another great question to consider and one that's very practical:

Whenever I attend a prayer meeting, I really want to pray out loud but can't get up the nerve to do it. How do I get better at praying out loud?

That's a great question and one that I can totally identify with. My experience growing up was probably like many of yours. You go to church, the minister prays and the people just bow their heads. My mom prayed with me before bed every night, but beyond that, I don't really remember any occasions where other believers prayed together.

But then I got to university and came to faith through InterVarsity Christian Fellowship there and I found myself surrounded by people – my age – who would freely and eagerly pray out loud. And there was an earnestness and a sincerity and a closeness with God in their voice that went beyond anything that I had ever heard in church. And so I thought 'I want to be able to do that too.'

And I remember, multiple times, being in a circle with a bunch of other believers, deep in prayer, thinking – 'Next time there's a pause, I'll pray' and 'ok, just pray before someone else starts praying' and 'well, it's ok, I'll just pray out loud next time.' I chickened out a bunch of times.

But over time, I did get more comfortable praying out loud. (Clearly). How? How did I get from there to here? How did I get to be comfortable praying out loud with other believers? And more importantly, how can YOU get more comfortable praying out loud with others?

I'm going to share with you three thoughts this morning from my own personal experience. They're nothing profound but they're thoughts that have helped me to feel comfortable praying with other people and so I offer them to you in the hopes that they will help YOU to feel comfortable praying with others.

1. You're talking to God.
2. You don't have to be fancy.
3. You just have to try.

So let me unpack those one by one.

First, you're talking to God.

When you pray, you're talking to God. The God who created all things.ⁱ The God who knit you together in your mother's womb.ⁱⁱ The Father who has lavished His love upon you,ⁱⁱⁱ who knows what you need before you can ask.^{iv} The God who is utterly committed to you.^v When you pray, you are talking to HIM and He delights to hear from you.^{vi}

Do you feel comfortable talking out loud to your parents? To your children? To your friends? Then really there's no reason not to feel comfortable talking out loud to your Heavenly Father. He is the very definition of a forgiving audience. When we pray out loud, we are communicating with the God who

loves us with an unconditional love. Let that unconditional acceptance motivate you to speak freely with God.

Now, as I was reading up for this morning, I came across a writer who made a point that I hadn't really thought of, one that I thought was kind of a given, but it's worth saying. To feel comfortable praying out loud, you need to be comfortable praying by yourself. You have to have an active prayer life to begin with.

Kara Beth (joybecausegrace) writes:

"Begin by simply praying silently by yourself. This is probably what you're used to, but I think that in order to be comfortable with praying out loud we must first be comfortable with praying in general. Maybe you pray silently in your head. Maybe you use a prayer journal. All that matters though is that you pray. Grow in your relationship with the Lord... Once you're comfortable with praying, practice praying out loud. Don't know what to say? Just have a conversation with the Lord. Tell Him about your day. Tell Him what you're thinking or wondering. Mention how you're learning how to pray out loud and ask Him to give you boldness.^{vii}

When we pray, we are simply opening up to have an honest and real conversation with the God who loves us.

But I can admit that when you add other people into the mix, it can be a bit nerve-wracking. It's here that you have to remember this point – we're talking TO GOD, not to them.

You don't have to impress them; they're not going to judge you (at least they shouldn't, and if they do, that's their problem) and besides, unless you're asking for wine, women and wealth, there's no such thing as a 'bad prayer.' Remember, first and foremost, you are talking to God and so there is no need to worry about or try to impress the other people that you are praying with. There's no need to worry about saying the wrong thing. Certainly you want to pray loudly enough that others can hear you and you want to stay focused so that you're not rambling in prayer, but in the end, it's not about impressing people but communicating with God.

And so – here's our second point – you don't have to be fancy. You don't have to impress us or dazzle us with your words. You don't have to adopt a special prayer voice which sounds more holy or stately than your usual voice. The point is open and honest communication with God and so it doesn't make any sense to gum that up with words or expressions or vocal tones that you wouldn't use with people in everyday conversation.

And I think that this is the sort of thing that Jesus warns against when He's teaching His disciples to pray in Matthew 6. Matthew 6:7 Jesus says; 7 And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words.

Empty religion loves to fill up what's lacking with pomp and verbosity; their 'big' words mask the 'smallness' of their faith. True faith simply comes to talk openly and honestly with the Father.

Megan Hill (an editor for the Gospel Coalition) writes: "In a group, the prayer of one person becomes the prayer of every person. When I lead in prayer, it is not my job to impress the other people. I don't have to wow them with my eloquence or amaze them with my theology. I don't have to prove my

spiritual stamina with long prayers or my spiritual brokenness with short ones. It's not about me. Instead, I have the privilege of praying aloud while my brothers and sisters stand with me, praying the same thing in their hearts."^{viii}

Really I think that the KISS principle is at play – Keep it simple sweetie! You don't have to be fancy; you just have to talk to God.

Now I suspect that you already know those things, and so really it comes down to the last one – just try. When I started praying out loud in groups of people, I remember thinking 'I'm talking to God; I'm not trying to impress people; I'm just going to pray one thing.' I knew in my head that it was valuable to pray out loud and so I set myself that simple goal of praying one thing to get over the hump. And then one thing became two things and two things became three things and then somehow in the providence of God here I am. Just try.

And actually, there's an even simpler way to get started, and that's saying 'Amen' out loud at the end of prayers. See, there's a really unique thing happening when we pray together. Think about our pastoral prayer time. All of us are praying even though I'm the only speaking. In your mind and in your heart, you are hearing those words and making them your own prayer and a really good way to say 'I agree with that; I pray the same thing, God' is to say 'Amen' at the end. Really easy to do, real easy way to get over the hump of saying something out loud in prayer.

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2. You don't have to be fancy.
3. You just have to try.

Now I'll tell you – usually when I'm preaching, I try to find a passage of Scripture to root what I'm saying in, but try as I might, I couldn't really find a passage that says 'here's why you should pray out loud.' That being said, almost every time somebody prays in Scripture, it's out loud. From Peter to Paul, from Jesus to the early church, people are constantly praying out loud.

There's an example of that in Acts 4. Peter and John have been arrested for preaching the Gospel; they're released and they go back to the church and Acts 2:24 says "... they raised their voices together in prayer to God."^{ix} And so I don't think that the 'pastor prays, people listen' model is the only way to go. There's a place for that, but it's valuable to for us to pray together as believers.

Simply saying 'Amen' is a good place to start. If you're already there, make it your goal to come to a prayer meeting and pray one thing. And before you know it, praying out loud will become as natural as singing out loud in church. You might not be a great singer, but you still do it. You don't have to be a great prayer, but you can do it. How you you get better at praying out loud? Remember:

1. You're talking to God.
2. You don't have to be fancy.
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ⁱ Psalm 121:2 My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.

ⁱⁱ Psalm 139:13 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.

ⁱⁱⁱ 1 John 3:1 How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

^{iv} Matthew 6:8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

^v Romans 8:38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

^{vi} Palm 149:4 For the LORD takes delight in his people; he crowns the humble with salvation.

^{vii} <http://joybecausegrace.com/become-comfortable-praying-loud/>

^{viii} <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/how-to-pray-aloud-in-a-group>

^{ix} 23 On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and elders had said to them.

24 When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and everything in them.

25 You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David: " 'Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?

26 The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One...' (Act 4:23-26 NIV).