BY JEN J KELLY

ROOM TO PRAY



An honest prayer guide for when you don't know what to say

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A NOTE FROM JEN

Through the ups and downs, the celebrations and the losses, the goals and the deadlines, making time to pray has always seemed to be both an external and internal battle. Some days I show up, and it feels like God and I pick up right where we left off. But most days I'm a wrecking ball of emotions and prayer is the last thing I want to do ... even though I know deep down it's exactly what I need to do.

I've got every excuse in the book not to sit down, bow my head, and connect with the God of the Universe. I'm also living in a day and age when the world is constantly begging for my attention somewhere else. Anywhere else. Plus, anyone else struggle with focus?

And the older I've gotten, the questions, doubts, and fears I've carried about God haven't necessarily disappeared. They've just resurfaced in different ways, shaped by the complexities of my life and my own insecurities. This makes me feel guilty. Shouldn't I be past this by now? Or shouldn't I know what I already know about God? This in turn causes me not to want to pray. It turns out, I really am my worst enemy.

WHEN MY GIRLS WERE LITTLE

When my girls were little, I can remember praying for their health and wondering if God saw me in the mess of motherhood. Did He see how exhausted I was? Did He see how desperately I needed a moment to myself? Was there ever going to be room in my life for me?

NOW THAT THEY'RE OLDER

Now that my girls are older, I still pray for their health and vitality. But if I'm honest, I also wonder if God sees me in the swirl of hormones and the hot mess of perimenopause. I'm utterly exhausted in a different way. I'm curious if there is ever going to be room in my body for me.

I could give countless examples like these. Different seasons, different circumstances, different responsibilities, but the questions we bring to God often remain strangely familiar.

"Hi God, it's me again. I'm sorry, Please help, Thank You so much"

So, I think it comes down to this: For many of us, at different points throughout our lives, we simply don't know how and what to pray. Even when we feel like we should. Maybe, we're embarrassed by our fragility, our instability, or our inability to simply bring our whole selves before God.

Sometimes we don't have the words. Sometimes we're overwhelmed by the circumstances. Sometimes we're wrestling with questions we aren't sure we're allowed to ask. And sometimes, if we're really honest, we're not even sure what we need.

That's why I wanted to create Room to Pray.

Not another devotional to keep up with. Not another spiritual discipline to measure ourselves against. And certainly not a guide to getting prayer right.

Just a place to begin.

A place to bring the questions, the exhaustion, the gratitude, the fear, the ordinary details, and the things we don't quite know how to say.

Because prayer doesn't have to begin with the right words. Sometimes it begins with simply showing up.

And that, my friends, is more than enough. God and you and you and God. Maybe in the silence or in the tears. Practicing the presence of a wild God that loves you immeasurably more than you could possibly imagine.



Jen

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MAKE A LITTLE ROOM

> *"When you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen."*
>
> MATTHEW 6:6 (NIV)

Here are a few physical spaces I've really learned to pause, breathe, and reconnect with God. Please know, friend, these are merely suggestions. If you already have a favorite prayer closet, then do your thing! Also, reimagining these spaces as a place to connect with God is really cool, because then they become holy ground.



1

THE TABLE

For the everyday:

Coffee, an open Bible, a notebook, and a few uninterrupted minutes. A place to bring what's on your mind before the day takes off. Also, I love to think about the sweet people who have gathered around my table or who I haven't connected with and integrate them into my prayer time with God.



2

THE CHAIR

For the slowing down.

A familiar place to sit, breathe, read, listen, and let yourself be still. No agenda required. Usually a chapter out of Psalms becomes a prayer here out loud.



3

THE BED

For the beginning and the end.

Before the notifications, responsibilities, and noise. Or at the end of a day when all you have left is a conversation with God. I like to lift up gratitude and make sure my phone is not anywhere near.



4

THE FLOOR

For the desperate plea:

Getting comfortable with being uncomfortable. Sometimes you need to sit with your thoughts, cry, stretch out, kneel, or curl up, bowed all the way down before God. There's no prescribed posture, usually just the Spirit praying with you when you don't have the words to pray (Romans 8:26).

NO ROOM REQUIRED

Here are three additional ways to connect with God that don't require a designated space.

WALK *(my favorite)*

Pray while moving. Let the outdoors quiet some of the noise. You can turn on a song or say the Lord's Prayer. I actively practice Walk + Worship + Pray. It's my favorite time with God. It looks so different given the season. I get to marvel at God's creation. This is just God and you and you and God walking like friends who have a lot to say.

FOLLOW MY WALKS: #WALKWORSHIPPRAY ON INSTAGRAM

WORSHIP

Let music give words to what you can't quite express. I have a saved worship list with some of my favorite songs. When I praise God with my heart and my mind, I often find there are other things for us to talk about.

PAUSE

Stop for a moment. Breathe. Practice silence. This is something we all need to work on so much more. Actively listening to what God has to say to us.

So, here's a little permission slip.

PERMISSION SLIP

You don't need a dedicated prayer room, a quiet house, an hour of uninterrupted time, or the right words. You don't even need to feel particularly spiritual. Find a little room, wherever you are. God isn't waiting for you to create the perfect conditions to meet with Him.

You don't have to recreate someone else's quiet time. Find a way to meet with God that makes sense in the life you're actually living.

What's been standing between you and God?

I give myself permission to _____

THE PRACTICE

I can't stand it when people say: Prayer doesn't have to be complicated. Really? Thanks so much. Then why is it so hard for me to pray sometimes? So, here's a format that has helped me with some learnings along the way ...

When you don't know where to begin, use this simple practice as a place to start. Move through each step slowly. Stay longer where you need to. Skip around if you want to.

This isn't a formula to get right.
It's an invitation to connect.

1 SETTLE IN

2 SAY HIS NAME

3 PRAY THE WAY JESUS TAUGHT

4 LISTEN

5 CLOSE WITH TRUST

1 SETTLE IN

Give yourself permission to pause. Put down your phone, release the mental to-do list, and let your body catch up with where you are.

Take a slow breath in. Let it out.

You don't have to fix anything in this moment. Just be here.

SHORT ON TIME? *Try the five-minute version: settle in, say His name, ask for what you need today, and close with trust. That counts.*

2 SAY HIS NAME *(This was a game-changer for me)*

Abba. Lord God.

Abba · אַבָּא

My beloved Father. The One who welcomes me, knows me, and loves me. The word Abba (אַבָּא) is Aramaic, the everyday language Jesus spoke. Abba wasn't just a word used by small children. Adults used it, too. It communicates the closeness, affection, trust, and relationship between a child and their father.

Jesus prays it in Mark 14:36, and Paul uses it in Romans 8:15 and Galatians 4:6.

Lord God

The One who is greater than me, the One I trust with what I cannot control. Yes, God is intimate and approachable (like a good Father), but also, God is sovereign. He is Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end (Revelation 22:13). God is worthy of our trust.

Come to Him as both your loving Father and your Lord.

Jesus didn't begin by teaching people how to approach God through a long list of titles, formalities, or religious language. He invited people to connect to God as a Father.

You don't need an elaborate opening. Start with His name.

Dear _____

3

PRAY THE WAY JESUS TAUGHT

Matthew 6:9–13

Jesus gave us a beautiful place to begin when He taught His disciples to pray. I often use His words as a guide for my own conversation with God.

THE ORDER MATTERS.

DRAW NEAR *Our Father*	I belong. I am invited into relationship.
PRAISE *Hallowed be Thy name*	You are holy. You are worthy. I recognize who You are.
SURRENDER *Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done*	Your purposes matter more than my desire to control everything.
ASK *Give us this day our daily bread*	Now I bring You what I need.
CONFESS & FORGIVE *Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors*	I'm honest about where I've fallen short, and I let go of what others owe me.
FOLLOW *Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil*	I can't walk this road on my own. Keep me close and lead me well.
GIVE THANKS *For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory*	It all comes back to You. I trust You with everything I brought.

HALLOWED *ἁγιασθήτω*

GOING DEEPER *Praise*

"Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name."

MATTHEW 6:9

We talked about this in Say His Name. Acknowledge who God is. What do you know to be true about Him? What can you thank Him for simply because of who He is? I can't begin to tell you how many times my own perspective on an issue, emergency, relational difficulty, or situation immediately changes when I remind myself who God is.

Before you ask God for anything, pause and acknowledge who He is.

The word hallowed means holy, sacred, set apart. (In Greek, hagiasthētō, from hagiazō: "to make holy, to set apart.") When Jesus taught His disciples to pray this way, He was inviting them to recognize and honor the holiness of God.

BUT WHAT DOES THAT ACTUALLY LOOK LIKE?

God's name represents His character, His identity, and everything He has revealed about Himself. He is

compassionate *gracious* *faithful* *merciful* *just* *loving*

When you say, "Hallowed be Thy name," you're declaring that God is worthy of your attention, your reverence, and your worship. Not because everything in your life is going well, but simply because of who He is.

> You're also making room to remember that
>
> *your circumstances don't define God's character.*
> *Your unanswered questions don't diminish His faithfulness.*
> *Your fears don't make Him any less trustworthy.*

Before you bring Him your needs, take a moment to recognize His presence.

TRY THIS *Finish one or more of these sentences:*

God, You are... _____

_____

I know You to be... _____

_____

Even though I don't understand _____ *, I believe You are...* _____

_____

Today, I want to remember that You are... _____

_____

You don't have to come up with something profound. Start with what you know to be true.

A PRAYER TO BEGIN

God, You are holy. You are bigger than my circumstances, greater than my understanding, and worthy of my trust. Help me see You for who You are, not just through the lens of what I'm experiencing today. Let Your character shape the way I see myself, the way I treat others, and the way I move through this world. May Your name be honored in my heart and in my life. Amen.



SURRENDER *(this one is hard for me)*

"Thy kingdom come, thy will be done."

MATTHEW 6:10

Release your grip on the things you're trying to control. I know, it's so hard. A good question I ask is where do I need His direction, wisdom, or willingness to trust? A lot of times I simply say, "God, take it, (this person, situation, thing, etc ...) it's yours."

Also, Thy kingdom come, thy will be done is a gut-punch, accountability check. Is the thing I'm bringing before God about peace, about Him, about the good of others, or is it just a selfish agenda issue on my part? Remember, we can bring anything to God, and we should ... but the remarkable part of prayer is that it should change us (mold us to the image of Jesus). I know I've prayed a lot of selfish prayers (and thank God I did) and it was in those sweet moments, the way a father gently corrects his child, that God changed my heart.

God, take it. It's Yours: _____

ASK

"Give us this day our daily bread."

MATTHEW 6:11

Bring your actual needs. The big ones, the little ones, and the ones you're almost embarrassed to say out loud. Ask for what you need today.

CONFESS & FORGIVE

"Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."

MATTHEW 6:12

Be honest about where you've fallen short. Bring your guilt, your resentment, your hurt, and the things you're having trouble letting go of. Receive His forgiveness and ask for help extending it to others.

FOLLOW

"Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

MATTHEW 6:13

This part of the prayer can sound a little confusing. Is Jesus asking God to keep us from temptation? Isn't God good? Would He ever lead us toward something that causes us to stumble?

The original Greek word translated temptation is peirasmos. It can refer to temptation, testing, or a trial. The meaning depends on the context. And, my friends, context matters! We get so much of the Bible twisted because we take verses out of context.

James l:13 reminds us that God does not tempt anyone toward evil. Temptation can arise from our own desires, our circumstances, and the things that pull at our hearts.

SO WHAT ARE WE ASKING WHEN WE PRAY THIS?

We're acknowledging that we're human. We have weaknesses. We have patterns, insecurities, desires, and places where we're more vulnerable than we'd like to admit.

Sometimes temptation looks obvious. Other times it's much quieter.

> *It's the urge to control everything because we're afraid.*
> *It's looking for validation because we feel rejected.*
> *It's holding onto resentment because we've been hurt.*
> *It's reaching for something to numb the exhaustion instead of addressing what's underneath it.*

And sometimes it's simply forgetting to turn toward God when we're struggling.

Jesus knew our human vulnerability. In Matthew 26:41 (NIV), He told His disciples, "Watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Pay attention. Stay awake. Pray.

When you pray "Lead us not into temptation," you're asking God to help you recognize what might pull you away from Him, protect you in your vulnerable places, and give you strength when you're tempted to choose something other than His way.

And when you pray "deliver us from evil," you're asking for His protection from the evil that exists around us and the evil that can take root within us.

> *You aren't asking for a life without challenges. You're asking not to face those challenges without His guidance and protection.*

Where I need His protection: _____

GIVE THANKS

"For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."

MATTHEW 6:13 (KJV)

Notice the ways God has provided, sustained, encouraged, or carried you. Even in a difficult season, what can you recognize as a gift?

4 LISTEN

"Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."

1 SAMUEL 3:9 (NIV)

Prayer isn't only about what we say. It's also about making space to listen.

Sit quietly for a few moments. Read a passage of Scripture. Pay attention to what is stirring in your heart.

NOT SURE WHERE TO START? *Psalm 23 · Psalm 139 · Matthew 11:28–30 · Philippians 4:6–7 · Lamentations 3:22–23*

You may not hear an answer. You may not feel anything extraordinary. That's okay.

You aren't responsible for manufacturing a moment with God. Simply make room to be present with Him.

What I read: _____

What's stirring: _____

5 CLOSE WITH TRUST

You can finish with an Amen, another thank-you, or simply a moment of quiet.

Leave knowing that you don't have to carry everything you brought into this time alone.

PERMISSION SLIP

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding."

PROVERBS 3:5 (NIV)

What is making it hard to trust God, or what has in the past?

I give myself permission to trust You with _____

PRAYER CARDS

Print, cut out, and keep them where you'll see them.

"Hi God, it's me again.
I'm sorry, Please help,
Thank You so much"

ROOM TO PRAY

Abba. Lord God.

ROOM TO PRAY

"God, take it.
It's Yours."

ROOM TO PRAY

"Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening."

1 SAMUEL 3:9

ROOM TO PRAY

"Thank You so much for loving me.
I trust You because
You are a good God."

ROOM TO PRAY

"Help me see You for who You are, not just through the lens of what I'm experiencing today."

ROOM TO PRAY

BEFORE YOU GO

I hope somewhere in these pages you've found a little room to breathe, to be honest, to ask questions, to bring the things you've been carrying, and to reconnect with the God who has been present all along. And it's okay if you didn't. We'll try again tomorrow. Remember, sometimes just showing up is enough.

But before you close this guide, I want you to take something with you:

You don't have to get prayer right.

You don't have to find the perfect words, establish an impressive routine, or carve out an hour of uninterrupted quiet. You don't have to wait until life settles down, your circumstances make sense, or you feel more spiritually put together. I actually think that the awkward beginnings, the messy, real, honest prayers are where a strong foundation is built.

You can pray at the kitchen table, in the car, on a walk, in the middle of the night, or on the floor when you just don't know what else to do.


THE TABLE


THE CAR


A WALK


THE NIGHT


THE FLOOR

You can bring God your celebrations and your disappointments, your questions and your doubts, your gratitude and your grief.

And when all you have left is a simple, desperate, honest "Help," remember that "Help" counts. And simply showing up and saying nothing at all is okay, too. This is about God and you and you and God together.

My hope is that you leave these pages not with another thing to accomplish, but with a little more freedom to show up as you are.

Keep making a little room. Keep asking questions. Keep listening. Keep bringing your actual life to God.

He's not waiting for a more polished version of you.

He's inviting you into relationship, right here, right now.

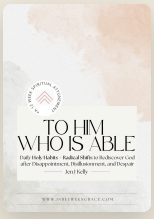
And that is always a good place to begin.



For you,

Jen

ALSO FROM JEN



TO HIM WHO IS ABLE

Daily Holy Habits + Radical Shifts to Rediscover God after Disappointment, Disillusionment, and Despair. An 84-day journey through Colossians, 1 Peter, and 2 Peter.

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MAKE ROOM

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Tell me where your little room is. Tag **@jenjkelly** or reply to one of my emails. I read every one.

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A FINAL PRAYER

Abba, Lord God,

Thank You so much for meeting us here.

Thank You that we don't have to have all the answers, say all the right things, or pretend we're doing better than we are. Thank You that we can come to You with open hands, honest hearts, and sometimes nothing more than a few words.

Abba, remind us that we are loved. When we feel forgotten, remind us that You see us. When we're overwhelmed, remind us that we don't have to carry everything alone. When we're uncertain, help us trust Your character even when we can't understand Your ways.

Lord God, hallowed be Your name. May we recognize Your goodness, honor Your presence, and learn to see our everyday lives through the truth of who You are.

Teach us to surrender what we cannot control, ask for what we need, receive the forgiveness You freely offer, extend grace to others, and recognize the gifts tucked into ordinary days.

And when we don't know what to pray, meet us in the silence. When we struggle to listen, quiet some of the noise around us. When we wander, remind us that we can always come back.

May prayer become less about all the things we have to do and more about a relationship we get to live in with You. That's holy ground: life with You, because You are Emmanuel, God with us (Matthew 1:23).

Give us room for You in the middle of our real, messy, beautiful, unfinished lives.

We love You. We trust You. And we are grateful that we never have to find the perfect words to come to You.

Amen.

"When you pray, go into your room,
close the door and pray to your Father,
who is unseen."

MATTHEW 6:6 (NIV)



What if prayer wasn't another thing to get right?

What if you could bring God your actual life — the exhaustion, the questions, the uncertainty, the gratitude, the mess — without having to find the perfect words first?

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