Bradford North Prayer Column: May 2026

Why do we have to pray?

I can think of several reasons. First, the Bible tells us to. Believers are to "pray without ceasing and give thanks in all circumstances, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thes 5:17-18). So learn how. Make it a habit. Join (or form) a group to help you and get practiced.

And then we often want to. When driven to distraction or despair by problems or anxieties and there's no one else to turn to, then we may feel driven to pray, even if we're not sure that God's there! Our words may not be neatly ordered. They may be less devout requests, and more angry protests at feeling unfairly put upon. But we're praying.

Another reason, not dissimilar, is that we may be driven to it by terror. As is often said, there are no atheists in a foxhole, as soldiers cower under enemy fire. "God help!" is a prayer.

But though we may not be driven to extremities like that, we do often face problems, and feel the need of help, or guidance, or understanding, and God alone can reliably answer those needs, and give us peace while he does. It's silly not to pray when divine aid is on offer.

Then, going back to the "pray without ceasing" command, prayer is a means of keeping close to God – living in his presence. And that's good. He wants us with him, and we benefit hugely from close contact. Not least, it wards off the devil, who flees from God's presence (Jas 4:7-8). Bad things may still happen, but they are meant to develop our faith rather than destroy it. God's peace reigns throughout it all.

Roy Lorrain-Smith

A prayer for each week

Lord God Almighty, you're in charge of the cosmos. Nothing happens beyond your control. Please give me faith to pray, whatever happens. Amen.

God, if you're there, help me! I don't know what to do, I can't cope any more. Can't you do something, or send someone, or, I don't know what?

Lord God, help us. Shield us from attack. Don't let them get us. There's no one else to help but you. So please Lord, keep us safe, keep us safe. Amen.

Heavenly Father, please help with this problem. Show me what to do, or who to go to. Calm me down with your peace, so I can think, and listen. Amen.

Loving Lord, I just need to be near you, to feel your presence and hear your voice within. For to you I belong. You called me and I am yours. Amen.

Your own prayers