

"If you want to strengthen your daily prayer life, grab this book!"

CRAIG GROESCHEL

Pastor of Life.Church and author of *Divine Direction*

ADAM WEBER

The cover features several decorative speech bubbles of various shapes and sizes, some overlapping, scattered across the right and center areas. One bubble on the right contains the name 'ADAM WEBER'.

# TALKING WITH GOD

WHAT TO SAY  
WHEN YOU DON'T  
KNOW HOW TO PRAY

**Praise for**  
***Talking with God***

“Do you ever feel inadequate to be used by God? Insecure? Unsure of yourself? If so, Adam’s new book *Talking with God* will build your faith in the power of God. If you want to strengthen your daily prayer life, grab this book!”

—CRAIG GROESCHEL, pastor of Life.Church and author  
of *Divine Direction*

“Adam is a friend and a great leader who loves Jesus. I mean loves Jesus with everything in him. Seeing Adam’s faith and relationship with Jesus expressed in a book on simple prayer, has me all in! I’ll be giving a copy to everyone on my team at Catalyst because I think it’s that important to read!”

—TYLER REAGIN, executive director of CATALYST

“I love this book because I love the author! Adam is so easy to talk with and in the pages you are about to turn, he’ll help you realize that talking with God is easy too. Accessible. Practical. Biblical. This is a must-read!”

—JON WEECE, author of *Me Too*

“We cannot thrive without the depth and intimacy of prayer that Adam describes in a beautifully simplistic way. *Talking with God* is both refreshing and insightful. This is a book we all need to read.”

—JARRID WILSON, pastor and author of *Love Is Oxygen*

“It’s been said that ‘prayer is to the soul what breathing is to the body.’ If that’s true, most of us are spiritually asthmatic. In this delightful book, Adam Weber offers a bit of spiritual ‘respiratory therapy.’ *Talking with God* is disarming, helpful, and inspiring. It will leave you wanting to pursue a deeper and more regular prayer life.”

—ADAM HAMILTON, pastor and author of *Creed*

“Prayer has always been a place of connection for me but also a place of some confusion, if I’m honest. Adam does an incredible job of walking us through what it means to have a conversation with God, to talk and to listen, and to embrace the mystery that comes with it.”

—ANNIE F. DOWNS, author of *Let’s All Be Brave*

“*Talking with God* is a book on prayer for prodigals and the imperfect. Adam speaks on prayer not as someone who has it all figured out but rather as someone who’s on the journey. He reminds us that regardless of who we are or where we’ve been, we can talk with God.”

—MIKE FOSTER, author of *People of the Second Chance*

“This book on prayer will be an answer to prayer for many. Adam is a guy who loves people and loves helping them navigate difficulties and messes of life to connect to what really matters. We’ve overcomplicated communicating with the God who made us and loves us. This book is a gust of encouragement that will reconnect you to what really matters in this life. It’s been a gift to me, and I hope this book finds its way into the hands of anyone else looking for a true lift.”

—BRAD MONTAGUE, creator of Kid President

“I’ve known Adam for years. He understands that in order to truly make a difference in this life, he, along with you and I need to be in constant conversation with Jesus, the One who is able to change everything. This is a book on prayer for those who intend to change the world but are aware they can’t do it on their own.”

—BRAD LOMENICK, author of *H3 Leadership* and *The Catalyst Leader*

“Adam is a dear friend. We often make prayer too complicated. The emphasis on honesty and brevity is great. Every follower of Jesus should read this book!”

—ROGER FREDRIKSON, pastor and author of *Learning to Dance*

“If you’ve ever struggled with prayer and wondered what to say, Adam Weber provides an easy-to-read, accessible guide. He takes you by the hand and leads you to the Father with gentleness and encouragement every step of the way.”

—MARGARET FEINBERG, author of *Fight Back with Joy*

“I laughed. I cried. I read it out loud to my wife. In *Talking with God* Adam Weber does the seemingly impossible: he makes the topic of prayer fun, approachable, and imaginative! *Talking with God* will not just encourage your prayer life, it will kindle the fires of intimacy with God.”

—DR. TIMOTHY D. WILLARD, author of *Veneer* and *Home Behind the Sun*

“Adam is currently the pastor of one of the fastest growing churches in the country, yet he is quick to share that he is a work in progress. His success as a spiritual leader is due to his humility and authenticity born of his own prayer life. What a joy to know that at any point and time we can talk with God!”

—BISHOP BRUCE R. OUGH, The United Methodist Church

“I promise, if you read this book and put the words into practice, your life will change, your work will change, your conversations will change.”

—JEFF SHINABARGER, founder of Plywood People and author of *More or Less*

“*Talking with God* is not only a phenomenal book, it’s an important book. In a world that is making a lot of noise, *Talking with God* presents an encouraging, challenging guide to turning that volume down and conversing with our Creator. I don’t know where I’d be without Adam Weber, but I know I’d be further from Jesus. This is a MUST read.”

—LUKE LEZON from @HoodJesusYo

“This is a book on prayer for the person who has heard it all or possibly nothing at all and simply wants their prayer life to grow.”

—LISA WHITTLE, author of *I Want God* and *{w}hole*

“Adam delivers to us a practical guide to conversations with God. And when I say practical, I mean that I have NEVER felt like I’ve had a handle on a consistent prayer life. Through this book Adam has helped me take a major step toward just that. Consistency in prayer.”

—CARLOS WHITTAKER, author of *Moment Maker*

**TALKING  
WITH  
GOD**

ADAM WEBER

# TALKING WITH GOD

WHAT TO SAY  
WHEN YOU DON'T  
KNOW HOW TO PRAY



WATERBROOK

## TALKING WITH GOD

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Details and names in some anecdotes and stories have been changed to protect the identities of the persons involved.

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*Bec.*

*As the kids say, "We'd be in trouble without you."*

*Thanks for being my best friend, biggest cheerleader, and wife.*

*Love you so much.*

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Everyone else. xv

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**Me: How would you best describe prayer?**

**Roger Fredrikson:  
Talking with God.**



# Everyone else.

A few weeks back, I received an e-mail from a friend asking if we could get together. I could tell by his words that there was something specific he wanted to talk about.

We checked our schedules and through nothing short of a miracle, we both somehow found forty-five minutes to connect over coffee the next day. We made plans to meet up at one of my favorite coffee shops in downtown Sioux Falls.<sup>1</sup>

I arrived a few minutes early, ordered the usual—dark coffee with one Splenda—and found a table near the front that was perfect for people-watching. Twenty minutes later, my friend arrived. He apologized for not being on time. His life is busy as he tries to be seventeen different places at once. He's getting his career off the ground. He's a dad to two young kids. And then there's his marriage. "I never thought it would all be so much work," he shared with me. He wore a smile, but you could tell his life was crazy. He was overwhelmed.

Now as a pastor, I've heard it all. Nothing really surprises me anymore. As he updated me on the status of his life, I wondered if he was struggling with something more. Had he made a mistake? Was he having an affair? I wasn't sure where our conversation was going or what he wanted to say or ask. We small-talked for ten minutes or so, and then he finally said it:

“Well, I'll just get to why I wanted to get together. I feel foolish for asking this, since I'm a grown adult. I grew up going to church, and this is something *everyone else* probably knows but me. It just looks so easy for others. But I just want to ask: How do you pray?”

He paused, took a breath, then quickly continued: “I should probably know this, right? But I don't. I feel stupid, and I wasn't sure who to ask. And again, this probably comes easy for everyone else. But again, how do you pray? Like, what do you say? Do you start with, ‘Hey, God, it's me’? Is there a right or wrong way to pray? Can I screw this up?”

As my friend talked a million miles an hour, I was hoping he'd take another breath so he wouldn't pass out. I could tell he was embarrassed and felt foolish, yet he was curious and wanted to know how to pray.

I was grateful my friend was so candid and real, and honored that he trusted me enough to ask his question. But, honestly, this wasn't the first time I've been asked this question. Far from it.



“Everyone else” . . . they probably have prayer figured out. At least the faithful churchgoer does. And if no one else, the pastor does, right?

I can't speak for others, but I know I don't. And I'm paid to know this kind of thing.

When you open the Bible, it's clear that Jesus' followers didn't know how to pray either. In one of his first sermons, Jesus talks about and tries to explain prayer.<sup>2</sup>

"When you pray," Jesus said, "don't do it to be seen. Don't do it to impress others, like hypocrites often do. They might sound impressive, but they actually have it all wrong. Yup, they've missed the boat. Prayers do not need to be long, and there's no need to use big words. God isn't impressed with how we pray or the things we say. In fact, he already knows what we need, even before we start."

"Instead, when you pray, just pray like this: 'Our Father . . .'"

Again, even *followers of Jesus*—the people who hung out with Jesus himself—didn't have prayer figured out. Jesus wouldn't have talked about it with them if they had.

I'll go out on a limb and say that the majority of "everyone else" doesn't have prayer figured out either. They have questions. They feel unqualified or inadequate. They avoid prayer altogether. After all, how do you talk with the Creator of the entire universe without feeling a little intimidated?

And so, I offer this book to you. It's a book on prayer for everyone else. It's for the church outsider. The recognized sinner. The baptized and confirmed Christian. The faithful churchgoer. The follower of Jesus who feels like she falls short and the Pharisee Christian who thinks he doesn't.

This book is for those who, just like my friend, have a crazy life. It's for those who have a bunch of questions and very few answers when it comes to prayer. It's for everyone who isn't looking for a textbook explanation, a theological discussion, or even a definition of prayer. But instead is looking for a conversation about prayer they can understand and relate with. A conversation that meets them right where they are, not where they feel like they should be.

This book is for everyone else who is curious about prayer.

This book is for everyone else who wants to talk with God.

This book is for me. This book is for you.

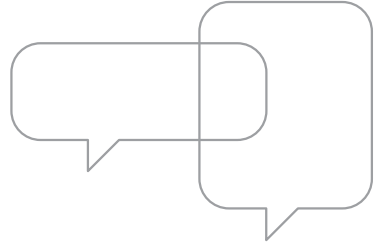


**THE GOD  
WE TALK  
WITH**



1

# Found a friend.



Tell God all that is in your heart, as one unloads one's heart, its pleasures and its pains, to a dear friend.

—François Fénelon

Eyes closed. Hands folded. Don't move. And be as quiet as you possibly can. At least as quiet as a five-year-old can be.

“Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest. Let this food to us be blessed. Amen.”

“Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. Amen.”

When I was growing up, prayer was something we did only before we ate and before we slept. Even though my mom has always been a bit of a wild driver, we never prayed before driving anywhere. Even though bullies were a legit concern for me at recess, we never prayed before going to school. We never prayed randomly throughout the day. We prayed *only* before eating and sleeping.

*Is there something I should know about the food I'm eating?*

*What is wrong with this meatloaf?*

*This is meatloaf, right?*

*Is this my last meal?*

*Maybe monsters really are real and they come out once it's dark?*

*Is someone trying to kill our family at night?*

*Is there a reason we pray only before we eat and sleep?*

And when we prayed, we prayed the same exact words each and every time. We recited the words having no idea of what we were really saying. Repetitive. Redundant. It's just what we did.

Before bed, because my dad typically worked late, my mom would come into our room to pray with us. When we were kids, my two brothers and I shared a bedroom on the second floor of our old house.<sup>1</sup> The three of us were busy! *Busy* is putting it nicely. That was until we prayed. We had to be serious when we prayed. We knew we shouldn't talk or move. Or even breathe. Thankfully, our prayers were always short and sweet.

In church, however, it was a different story. And my family, the Webers, never missed church. Ever. All of us dressed in our Sunday finest. Shirts tucked in. Hair combed. Walking through the old front doors, my parents knew everyone, including the pastor. Green hymnals. Red carpet. A large wooden pulpit thing up front. An organ was off to the side. And there were wooden pews that made your rear hurt. My family sat on the right side of the room. In the same pew every week.

At good ol' American Lutheran, we prayed the exact same words each Sunday. Unfortunately, there were a lot more words than in the prayers we

said at home.<sup>2</sup> We were supposed to keep our eyes closed, but I was a rebel and kept one eye open, scanning the room. People yawned. People mumbled. People checked the time. If Facebook had been around thirty years ago, I would have seen people checking that too. You get the point. It seemed like everyone couldn't wait for the hour to pass. I couldn't wait to talk again. I couldn't wait to run freely again. Even at five, I knew that life is short, and I couldn't wait to *live* again. Sixty minutes seemed like eternity.<sup>3</sup>

I sat with my short legs swinging back and forth under the pew, staring at the gray hairs on the neck of the person in front of me. To pass time, each week I counted every light on the ceiling of the sanctuary. I used to think, *If there is a God, we have to be boring him out of his mind*. I wondered if he actually listened to our prayers, because when we spoke to him, it wasn't like we expected a response. We didn't expect anything to happen. When we prayed, it seemed to be more about a box we checked. A hoop we jumped through to make some far-off being happy with us.

Who or what were we praying to? Ourselves? The thin air? I didn't know.

From an early age, I thought all of it was strange. Praying. Church. God. Baby Jesus. All of it. Weird!

My questions and doubts only continued to grow. If God was truly amazing, if he was really awesome, why were we so miserable every time we talked about him? Why didn't this supposed all-powerful God ever seem to do anything? Other than the one hour on Sunday mornings and a few quick prayers before eating and sleeping, why was he absent from our lives? Away from Sundays, it felt as if we were embarrassed to even mention God.

Even as a fourth grader, I knew that if something was awesome—a cute girl, a cool old car, next week’s football game—it impacted me. I mean, with a cute girl, I couldn’t talk straight around her. She was so cute and beautiful and awesome. She didn’t bore me at all. Just the opposite. I couldn’t stop talking about her.

By my freshman year of high school, I started to become more vocal about my questions. I also started what every Lutheran kid does: confirmation. A required two years of learning the basics of the Christian faith. At the end, you “confirm” your faith in God. It was two years of pure agony. *Lord, help!*

My clearest memory from confirmation is of having to pick a memory verse. I picked John 11:35, the shortest verse in the Bible—“Jesus wept”—but was told by my pastor I couldn’t pick that one. I had to choose another. Ironically, I can’t remember the other verse I chose, but I still remember John 11:35. That was the extent of what I learned in confirmation.

The day I got confirmed, my family showed up early at the church to save seats. For our small church, this was one of the biggest Sundays of the year. My friends and I wore white church robes. We each had a carnation pinned on just right. The church began filling up with family. My godparents came from North Dakota. Family came that I didn’t even know I had.

During the service, my friends and I marched to the front of the church and declared our belief in God. Following the service, we had a reception at our house. After eating cake and hugging a bunch of people I barely knew, I watched as everyone left the house. It was then that I told my parents what I had been thinking the whole time. “This is the biggest lie I have ever told. And to so many people at one time.” During the service, I had said that I believed in Jesus, but I clearly didn’t.

We stood in our living room with the reception tables still set up. The paper plates, cups, and plastic forks still needing to be picked up. I then told my parents, “I can’t wait till I get to college, when I’ll be able to make decisions on my own, because God and church will never be a part of my life again.”

My parents were heartbroken. Mom even cried, “Don’t say that, Adam!”

They had done everything right. They faithfully brought their kids to church every Sunday, and yet I wanted nothing to do with it.

From that moment on, my parents began looking for a church that I would connect with. They set aside their own preferences and everything they knew when it came to church. We tried every church in Clark, South Dakota,<sup>4</sup> all six of them, and then we looked at every church outside of town. There was a tiny country church where the sermons were only eight or so minutes long. I didn’t mind that one, solely because of the shorter service.

After being invited a few times to a church in another town about thirty minutes away, my parents decided to try it.<sup>5</sup> I thought they were nuts. Thirty minutes one way? That seemed absolutely crazy.

But I’ll never forget our first Sunday there. Walking up to the church, I followed behind my parents, telling them just how stupid this was. Why in the world did we just drive thirty minutes for church? Who does this?

As we walked through the large front doors, I immediately felt like a foreigner in a strange land. We were obviously the “new people,” and this church was clearly different<sup>6</sup> from any church I had ever been to.<sup>7</sup>

It was the first nontraditional worship service I had ever attended. They weren't speaking in tongues or handling snakes, but for this Lutheran, the people all seemed nuts. I felt like a kid at a zoo, seeing strange-looking animals for the first time. People were clapping, one person had his hands in the air, and they all looked happy. Maybe a little too happy.

*Are they serving Kool-Aid?* I wondered. *You can't smile in church. Stop smiling!*

They didn't have hymnals. My backside didn't hurt from wooden pews. And the music didn't make me want to cry tears of boredom either. Where was I?

I also noticed that they prayed differently. It was as if they were speaking *with* God, not *at* him. I had never heard people pray like that before, let alone done it myself. Ever. So strange.

Even though I thought they were all crazy, I also couldn't help but notice all the cute girls in this church.<sup>8</sup> They attended Watertown High School, which was much bigger than my own. Watertown was the big city to this small-town kid. I wasn't into Jesus, but the Watertown girls? That was a different story.

I wasn't counting ceiling lights in this church. Now I was counting cute girls. Knowing that going to church was an inevitable reality until I went to college, I told my parents we should come back to this church each and every week. They were thrilled that I was so interested in girls. I mean, church. Obviously.

Regardless of my reason for wanting to attend that church, God used it to slowly begin working in my life. For the first time, the pastor's words no lon-

ger flew over my head each week. Instead they began to hit me in the heart. The pastor was doing a great job selling something I didn't believe in. And over time, something began to change.

Each Sunday, it was like he was speaking right to me. As if he were reading my mind or something. How did he know so many of the things I had felt but never spoken?

I started hanging out with some of the girls and a crew of the guys, and after a while they began to invite me to their youth group on Wednesday nights. What was a young guy to do? Choose to attend only the Weber family requirement of Sunday morning church *or* possibly see more of these cute girls? Hormones won, and I gave in.

I remember thinking: *I am actually choosing to go to church? Am I feeling okay? What am I doing?*

That night I went to youth group hoping to meet a girl. Little did I know that I would end up finding a friend.

The room was packed full of kids my own age. Everyone was having a blast. They actually wanted to be there. We sang a few songs and then the youth pastor began to talk. He was right out of college and seemed normal—the first normal pastor I had ever seen. And that night, out of all things, he began to talk about prayer.


Really? Prayer? The very idea of prayer made me want to fall asleep. I had been closing my eyes and mumbling prayers my whole life; what else did I need to know about it? But what he shared about prayer that night was different from anything I had heard before.



He said, “When talking with God . . .”

Wait! *When talking with God . . . ?*

I thought this message was about prayer, about saying the same thing I had said my entire life before eating a meal or sleeping. I thought this was a talk on rambling through the same old words each Sunday while trying not to fall asleep. But he said *talking with God?*



We can talk with God just like we do with a friend. As if he’s sitting right next to us.

“When talking with God, there are different ways to pray.” He continued, “Sometimes you have to sing because you’re so excited and thankful for what God has done. You can’t hold it in; you have to sing it.

“Sometimes when you pray, you need to get on your knees. Because you’ve made a mistake and you’re saying you’re sorry, or you’re pouring out your heart to him.

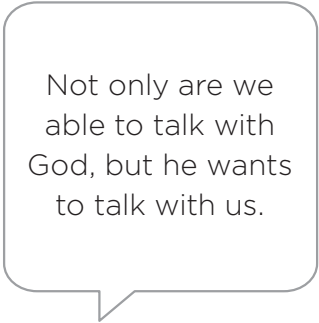
“And other times,” he said, “we can pray and talk with God just like we do with a friend. We can talk with God as if he’s sitting right next to us.”

It was the last thing I heard the youth pastor say that night.

*You can talk with God? Like a friend? Really? The God who supposedly set the stars in place? The One who supposedly created me? You can talk with him? This is what prayer is?*

It might seem like common sense to you, but to me it was foreign. This was different from anything I had ever heard about prayer. It was different from anything I had ever heard or known about God.

The moment I heard it, it was as if my heart leapt within me. I felt like I had found something I had unknowingly been searching for my whole life. The remainder of the night, I sat emotionless, trying to process what I was being told. *We can talk with God?*



Not only are we able to talk with God, but he wants to talk with us.

On one occasion, Jesus was with a group of his followers and shared some things with them about who he is. He said that he is the way, the truth, and the life.<sup>9</sup> That he's the vine, and they are the branches.<sup>10</sup> And then he told them, "I don't call you servants. . . . Instead, I call you friends."<sup>11</sup>

Now God is still God. A God so holy that angels cover their eyes when in his presence.<sup>12</sup> And yet he makes it clear:

*Approach me. Come near to me. Talk with me. As a friend.*

Crazy, huh?

It gets better. A wise Canadian once said, "*We do not make friends with God; God makes friends with us, eh?*"<sup>13</sup> (The "eh" was my addition.)

Hear this: not only are we able to talk with God, but we can speak with him

as we do with friends. And not only are we *able* to be his friend, but he initiates that friendship with us. He initiates it with you. With me.

Again, maybe this is no big deal to you. Maybe you're totally secure with who you are as a human being that you haven't ever struggled with finding friends. But I've always struggled with wondering whether or not I fit in. Do I belong? Am I liked? Beyond that, am I loved by others? Do people want to be my friends?

Instead of having to impress people. Instead of wondering if they approve of you and enjoy hanging out with you as much as you do with them. Few things feel better than hearing someone say he wants to be your friend.

Instead of having to say it first. God initiates the friendship.

He speaks first, "I call you friend."

Not only are we able to talk with God, but he wants to talk with us.

Not only are we able to be his friend, but he wants to be ours.

That Wednesday night after youth group, halfway through the thirty-minute drive back home, I pulled my 1966 Ford Falcon Futura to the side of the road.<sup>14</sup> I opened my car door, got out, and just stood there as the other cars passed. Even the skeptic in me couldn't deny what I felt inside. It wasn't hormones. Something was happening within me. My heart and mind were racing with questions.

*We can talk with God? Like a friend? Really?*

Standing outside of my car that night, in the middle of nowhere South Dakota,<sup>15</sup> the stars were so bright, I felt like I could reach out and touch them. I wanted to talk with God but wasn't sure where to start. My entire life, I had never prayed a prayer that wasn't written out or memorized. With so much to say to God. With so many things bouncing around within me. The only thing I was able to say, the only thing I was able to get out:

“Lord, I just want to know if you're for real.”

Looking back, it was the first time I ever truly prayed.

It was the first time I had ever really talked *with* God.

In that moment, I just wanted to know if he was who he said he was. If he existed. If he was real. I just wanted to know if I could talk with him.

My first time at youth group, I was hoping to meet a girl. Instead, I met someone who would end up becoming a friend. A guy named Jesus. I didn't know then it was a friendship that would change my life.



Prayer seems like it should be simple. Yet when it comes to actually praying, it often feels awkward and complicated.

*I mean, what should I actually pray about?*

*What do I say?*

*Is there anything I should or shouldn't say? Do I have to speak out loud? Do I need to schedule a time with God's assistant before I can talk with him? I don't even know where to start.*

To make matters worse, we've heard about prayer for so long that we feel stupid asking about it. It's like having to ask a person's name after knowing her for years. Because I really should know her name by now, I can't ask.

Then comes the craziness that is my life. And probably yours as well.

Between work, changing diapers, walking the dog, texting friends, trying to keep up with the neighbors—and the laundry—who has time to pray?

But the truth is, prayer *is* simple.

Kids are great at it. It's like talking with a good friend. It's like breathing. And what we may not know about prayer is the best part. Whether we're in the middle of a storm, living in Crazytown, or stuck in the mud, God can't wait to talk with me. With you.

Long to connect with God but don't know how? Have a job, family, schedule, kids, deadlines, a full inbox, a million things to do, yet you're curious about how to talk with God?

Do you wonder what it really looks like to pray in the midst of your life, or what to say when you don't know how to pray?

I'm asking the same questions.

Let's talk.

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