I am Not Sure How to Pray

How should I pray, O Lord?
Should I wait until my life is cleansed and my spirit is hot?
Or should I come just as I am with my half-hearted commitment and my on-again, off-again faith?
How should I pray?
Should I choose my words carefully and phrase my petitions with discrimination?
Should I sit very straight and very still?
Or should I let my needs roll out and my doubts and difficulties show?
How should I pray, O God of the morning sun and the evening shadow? How should I pray in the high, hot noon of life?
I really do not know.
Once our Lord told us we should pray like this: "Our Father, who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name."
And then he poured out petitions about daily bread and forgiveness of others that we may be forgiven …
temptations to be delivered from …
evil to be spared.
Those are all things that press in upon us all.
So I do pray for daily bread.
I pray for the material things of life that I may have what I can use, and that I may use what I have.
I pray for the grace to exercise forgiveness where I have been wronged.
Deliver me from the stuffy, condescending attitude of self-righteousness.
Help me to have the honesty and the courage to accept my share of responsibility where broken relationships obtain.
Keep me from simply using words to cover a rejecting spirit.
I ask to be delivered from temptations and to be delivered from deceiving myself about my temptations.
For, too often, I only mean that I want to be rescued from the consequences of my behavior.

And the evil from which I desire to be spared is, too often,
the result of my headlong pursuit of my selfish whims.
I try to put burdens on you, O God, which are mine to bear.
I try to avoid the strain on my own will power and call upon
my sense of love by asking you to take responsibility.
I know I should not, and yet I do.
How should I pray, O God?
I do not really know how I should, but I have prayed as best
I can.
And where I have left unsaid what should have been said, O
Lord of the heart,
Take the intention for the deed. *Amen.*