

A DAY OF PRAYER

*Individual Prayer Guide**

What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the Lord our God is near to us whenever we pray to him? Deuteronomy 4:7

Your [time] alone with the Lord isn't a matter of sitting out on a rock like the statue of *The Thinker* and taking whatever thoughts come to your mind. That's not safe. It should be [time] exposed to God's Word, and then his Word leads you into prayer. You will end the time worse than when you started if all you do is engage in introspection, thinking of yourself and your own problems. It isn't your estimate of yourself that counts anyway. It's God's estimate. And he will reveal his estimate to you by the Holy Spirit through his Word, the open Bible. And then the Word leads into prayer.

As you approach God in prayer, remember that his Son is the one who presents you to the Father pure and spotless and clothed in his righteousness. With confidence in his saving and keeping grace, you can boldly enter his throne-room with complete openness and honesty as you seek his mercy and grace and as you bring your petitions before him.

Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weak-nesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are – yet without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. Hebrews 4:14-16

Divide your time into seven parts: praise, waiting on the Lord, confession, Scripture praying, watching, intercession and thanksgiving.

I. Praise

Mentally and verbally honor God for who he is and for what he has done. This where the Lord's Prayer starts: "Hallowed by your name." The Psalms are a great repository of praise. At times it may be appropriate to start off by singing: you could use some hymn of praise that you know or find a psalm in your hymnbook that has been made into verse and set to music.

II. Waiting

Be still before the Lord and seek to appropriate his presence. Lift up your eyes to the Lord and speak of your love for him. Above all, ask the Holy Spirit to help you to concentrate your attention upon the Lord. From time to time it might be well read a brief devotional chapter during this time of waiting.

III. Confession

Remember that you are in the holy presence of the God who "desires truth in the inward parts" (Psalm 51:6). From time to time pray through Psalm 51, 32 or 139. Be very honest and specific about your sins. Confess them, name them specifically in order humbly but gladly to claim such promises as 1 John 1:9. Pray the simple prayer that John Calvin often prayed at the end of his sermons: "Lord, help us to hate our sins enough to turn from them." Seek fresh communication of his Spirit to give you power to overcome temptation (1 Cor. 10:13).

IV. Scripture Praying

Take portions of Scripture and ask God to apply them in your life and in the situations for which you are concerned. Say to the Lord, "Do as you have said!," which was the practice of C. H. Spurgeon. What you read before you turned to prayer will often be of some assistance in this process. Just remember, God loves his Word and when you turn his Word into prayer, he is hearing his own voice, and that voice will have a good reception in heaven above.

V. Watching

Seek to be alert to what is going on around you in the spiritual and material world. Try to understand reality in terms such as those in Ephesians 6, which describes Christian warfare and armor. Enter into battle and pray for the defeat of Satan and his evil influences both in your own life and in that of the church. Pray for fresh "binding of the strong man" that his good may be spoiled, that precious souls may be brought out from under his sway into the glorious liberty of the children of God (see Mt 12:29). Think of the current local, national, and international news events from this perspective. Remember how Daniel's prayers caused a battle to be won in heaven. This is a good example of what *watching* means.

VI. Intercession

Here it is very important to be specific. If people ask you to pray for them, then by all means keep some kind of written prayer list. Write down their name, their specific need, and the date. If and when you find out the request has been answered, then thank the Lord for a few days and scratch it off your list and make room for others. Keep a definite list of your own needs and those of your various family members. Pray specifically for church, school, business, and state. Pray for revival. And never forget to pray for your enemies. Enough prayer for them in some cases may well turn them into friends.

VII. Thanksgiving

Thank God for his wonderful triune existence and for his infinite goodness to his church in general, as well as you in particular. Thank him for something he has done in the last day or two. Thank him for what his Word says he is going to do. Again, be specific and particular.

CONCLUSION

The result of your time of prayer should be answers to the two questions Paul asked the Lord on the Damascus road (Acts 22:6-10). First, "Who are you Lord?" The Lord replied, "I am Jesus." You will be seeking to know him, to find out who he is. The second question is "What shall I do, Lord?" The Lord answered him specifically. This should be answered in that part of your time when you unhurriedly seek his will for you.

The test of such [time in prayer] is not how exhilarated you are when the time is over but how it works into life tomorrow. If we have really exposed ourselves to the Word and come into contact with God, it will affect our daily life. And that is what we want.

*This guide is based on and/or excerpted from *How to Spend a Day in Prayer* by Lorne Sanny, Navpress, 1979 and from *If God Already Knows, Why Pray?* by Douglas Kelly, Christian Focus Publications, 1996.