

How to Spend an Hour in Prayer

Here are some suggestions to help use time in prayer to maximum advantage:

- Make use of printed resources such as the Bible, the Prayer Book and hymnals.
- Be yourself. Don't feel you have to address God with the eloquence of the Book of Common Prayer. Talk with God as you would your best friend.
- Get comfortable. The stiffer you feel, the more difficult it becomes to remain in an attitude of prayer. Sitting is fine. If kneeling helps, do it. You may even wish to get up and walk around as you pray.
- Try praying out loud, though not loud enough to disturb others. Being able to hear yourself pray can improve concentration. You'll find your mind does not wander as easily and you can pray more effectively.
- Don't feel you have to do all the talking, however. Share something with the Lord, and then be silent. Sometimes God uses times of listening to implant his answers in our minds. Gradually you will find that prayer can be a conversation.
- Consider these time suggestions. Don't worry if your times are different, but these figures may help to get you started.

Preparation (1 minute)

Ask God to help you spend this time profitably with him. Give yourself to him for this hour.

Praise and Thanksgiving (9 minutes)

Offer your adoration to the Lord using hymns, songs or canticles which you know. Now start to thank him for his goodness to you and your friends. There is a special sense in which God "inhabits" the praises of his people (Psalm 22:3). As your heart begins to adore him, you will sense his presence more deeply.

Confession (4 minutes)

Spend a moment to go over with him recent sins which weigh on you, but don't dredge up old ones. Read 1 John 1:9. Ask for his cleansing, and then accept it by faith and thank him for it.

Prayer for the Nations (8 minutes)

Pray for the work of Christ throughout the world. Intercede for missionaries and for Third World clergy and churches, for the people of God who are suffering

persecution. Pray for justice, freedom and peace for all. Ask God to give food, shelter and hope to the destitute.

Pray for Our Nation (8 minutes)

Pray that God will guide our federal and provincial legislators, our judges and magistrates, our mayors and councillors, our police and firefighters, our military personnel and civil servants. Pray for righteousness in government and a public policy sensitive to the needs of the oppressed both here and abroad.

Pray for the Church (12 minutes)

Call on God for a deep renewal of love for him. Pray for your clergy and church leaders. Intercede for the Sunday School children and the youth, families, singles, widows, the sick and shut-ins. Call on God for an increase in giving so that the church can accomplish its work. Pray for Christian organizations working with college students, children and military personnel, business people, the poor and the homeless.

Intercession (9 minutes)

Pray for friends, loved ones, relatives, neighbours, fellow workers. Don't just read a list of names to God, but talk with him about their lives and needs. You can boldly ask him to draw them to himself through friendships and other Christians, circumstances and your own witness to Christ in deed and in word.

Petition (9 minutes)

Pray about life's difficulties. Use this time to talk over with the Lord your own struggles. Discuss with him your own relationship with your loved ones or spouse, your family, your financial situation, your studies or your job.

These prayers add up to a total of sixty minutes.