



SPENDING EXTENDED TIME IN PRAYER

In the midst of our busy lives, it can be incredibly valuable to go beyond morning devotions and spend extended time alone with God in prayer. God has called us into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 1:9). Like many personal relationships, this fellowship is nurtured by spending time together.

An extended time in prayer also gives increased opportunity to think of the world from God's point of view, especially when going through some difficulty or making big decisions. We need God's perspective to sharpen our vision of the unseen, and to let the immediate, tangible things drop into proper place.

Scheduling your time

Divide your time into three parts:

- Wait on the Lord with an open heart to realize His presence and to be cleansed.
- Pray for others. Ask specific things for them. Use Paul's prayers in the New Testament (such as Romans 15:5-6) to pray for them and pray for them what you are praying for yourself.
- Pray for yourself. Be totally honest with God.

What to take with you

The essential items to have with you are a Bible, paper, and a pen or pencil. Other helpful items include:

- Prayer letters from missionaries and other Christian workers
- A favorite devotional book
- Your current prayer list
- Your quiet time journal
- Scripture memory cards
- Notes from your last extended time in prayer

How to stay awake and alert

- Get adequate rest the night before.
- Change positions—sit a while, walk around, sit, walk, and so on.
- Have variety in what you do. Read the Scriptures, then prayer, then write, and so on.
- Pray aloud—in a whisper or soft voice if necessary.

Taking notes

Taking notes during your extended time in prayer will give you a record of the things the Lord is speaking to you, as well as helping you keep your time organized.

In addition, when we pray we often have something come to mind that we feel we should take action on, or that we have forgotten to do—perhaps totally unrelated to what we are praying about. By keeping paper ready to list these things, we can avoid prolonged distraction and act on them later.

Toward the end of your time in prayer you will want to spend a few minutes writing down some conclusions. Summarize the major impressions of your time. Keep these notes in a notebook and review them weekly for a while. This will ensure that you follow through on the things God has impressed on you.