

HOW TO SPEND AN HOUR IN PRAYER

"How can anyone possibly pray an entire hour?" Here's how to structure an hour in prayer with twelve scripturally based aspects. Conveniently, each hour can be divided into twelve five-minute "points of focus," allowing specific time for each of these vital areas. Of course, some of these aspects may require only a minute, whereas others - such as intercessory prayer for the world - will require far more than a mere five minutes. These are just suggestions - everyone has a different prayer life. Developing such a prayer habit will lead you into a ministry that changes you and the world around you as well.

1. Praise: Psalm 63:3; 1 Chronicles 29:11-13; Matthew 6:9B

All prayer should begin with recognition of God's nature. The Lord's Prayer - our model for all praying - begins with "Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed by thy name." Praise is that aspect of prayer, which vocally esteems God for His virtues and accomplishments. As you praise Him don't use the words "I" or "we" but rather praise Him for who He is! "God you are..."

2. Confession: Psalm 139:23-24; Psalm 51:10; 1 John 1:9

The psalmist asked God to search his heart for unconfessed sin. He knew sin was one of the greatest roadblocks to focused and answered prayer. Early in prayer we need to make time for confession. This clears the way for powerful praying and living.

3. Waiting: Psalm 37:7; Isaiah 40:31; Lamentations 3:25

After confession we need to give some time to being "quiet" in God's presence. This is not meditation or just a time for listening; it is simply taking time to let God love you.

4. The Word: II Timothy 3:16; Psalm 19:7-8; John 15:7; Numbers 23:19

"The commandment of the Lord (His Word) is pure, enlightening the eyes," wrote young King David. When we bring God's Word into our prayer, we are opening our eyes to new possibilities in God. At this point in prayer, pray God's Word. Here we bring actual Scripture into our prayer. We can never pray out of God's will when we pray God's Word.

5. Intercession: I Timothy 2:1-2; Psalm 2:8; Matthew 9:37-38

Our prayer now centers on intercession for people who need God. This also concerns praying for others who have desperate needs.

6. Petition: Matthew 7:7; Matthew 6:11; James 4:2

This aspect of prayer concerns our personal needs. Petition is included in the Lord's Prayer in the expression, "Give us this day our daily bread." To petition God is to open our need to God through prayer.

7. The World: 1 John 2:2; John 3:16; Isaiah 49:6; Revelation 7:9

God's heart is for the world. If we are going to pray His heart and His desires we must pray for the lost and dying world that Jesus died for. Spend this part of your time praying for missionaries in other countries and for salvations to take place.

8. Thanksgiving: Philippians 4:6; Psalm 100:4; 1 Thessalonians 5:18

When Paul wrote to the Philippians, he instructed them to offer prayer and supplication "with thanksgiving." Thanksgiving differs from praise in that praise recognizes God for who He is, and thanksgiving recognizes God for specific things He has done. Regardless of what is going on in life we can always be thankful for Jesus and that God is always working to make us more like Him.

9. Believers: Colossians 1:9-12; 1 Corinthians 12:27; Philippians 1:9-11

Praying for Believers was important enough that Jesus spends a whole chapter (John 17) praying for those who have and those who will trust in Him. Paul, in many of his letters, starts out praying for believers. In this section pray for those you know that trust in Jesus to become more like Him, to embrace the things that He embraces, and to hate sin the way that He hated sin.

10. Meditation: Joshua 1:8; Psalm 1:1-2; Psalm 77:12

To wait in God's presence is simply to be there to love Him. Meditation differs in that our mind is very active. To meditate is to ponder spiritual themes in reference to God. Think of great things He has done, review scripture that you have put to memory, and/or ponder the deep attributes of God.

11. Listening: Ecclesiastes 5:2; I Kings 19:11-12

Whether through His written Word or by an inner "still small voice" of His Holy Spirit, God speaks to praying Christians. But we must take time to listen.

12. Praise: Matthew 6:13; Psalm 100:4; Psalm 150

We begin our prayer by recognizing God's nature, and we end in similar fashion. Jesus taught this when He ended His prayer with the statement, "For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory."