

Stages of Prayer

Stage 1 – Preparation

In this stage, you have two goals. One goal is to remove all distractions from your mind. The second goal is to focus your attention on the Lord. This prepares your heart and spirit for prayer.

- ◆ Ask the Holy Spirit to prepare you for prayer
- ◆ Make your prayer place special. Light a candle, play music, display a painting, decorate
- ◆ Choose a time of day that works best for you
- ◆ Do a physical activity like taking a walk or stretching
- ◆ Regulate your breathing
- ◆ Talk things out that are on your mind audibly with God
- ◆ Keep a notebook nearby to jot down things to do as they come to your mind so you can then move on
- ◆ Play a worship song
- ◆ Read a Psalm
- ◆ Read a poem or other piece of religious writing
- ◆ Choose an appropriate physical position
 - hands - up, down, closed, open, raised
 - head - bowed, uplifted
 - lying face downward - humility, penance
 - lying face upward - openness to God
 - kneeling - repentance, humility
 - standing - adoration, willingness to obey
 - sitting- ready to concentrate, last for longer periods
- ◆ Use your imagination
 - “palms down, palms up” – place your palms down and give each care, concern, sin, etc., to God; next, place your palms up and ask to receive from God answers to requests, strength for obedience, guidance, etc.
 - imagine a box and place all your cares in the box; give the box to God
 - picture Jesus sitting next to you and concentrate on focusing on him

Stage 2 – Focused Prayer

In this stage, you focus on the type of prayer that you feel led to do. Your goal is to fully experience all that God has for you in whichever form of prayer you choose.

- ◆ Examination/Confession – ask the Holy Spirit to show you your sins and confess and repent of those sins, receiving God’s forgiveness
- ◆ Worship – spend time worshipping God for who He is and what He has done
- ◆ Supplication – lift your personal requests up to God
- ◆ Intercession – lift requests up to God for others
- ◆ Guidance/Listening – ask God to direct you and answer your questions
- ◆ Healing – ask God to heal your heart; ask God to heal your body

- ◆ Meditation – allow God’s truth to move from your head to your heart; allow the Holy Spirit to speak to you personally as you listen “with the mind in the heart”
 - Bible verse – choose a short phrase like “in Him [Christ] you have been made complete” (Col. 2.10) and let that phrase rest in your mind
 - “divine reading” (*lectio divina*) - choose a passage of Scripture and read through it slowly, allowing God to speak to you as He desires
 - read a story from the Bible and then slowly replay the story in your mind, picturing yourself as one of the characters
 - study something from nature and ponder what characteristics of the Creator are revealed in this piece of His creation
 - choose one characteristic or deed of God and let your mind ruminate on it
 - choose one word of action of Jesus and let your mind ruminate on it
 - choose one mystery of the Christian faith (Trinity, atonement, creation) and let your mind ruminate on it
 - rewrite one of the Psalms
 - write out your prayer in a journal
 - play a worship song that speaks to you and let your mind focus on the words
 - read slowly through a meditative Christian reading
 - focus your vision on a painting, icon, cross, verse

Stage 3 – Resting in the Lord

In this stage, you seek to simply rest in the presence of the Lord. You receive all that He has for you.

- ◆ Acknowledge to the Lord that you value Him
- ◆ Play a worship song without words
- ◆ Play a worship song that presents God’s thoughts and words to you
- ◆ Rest in God’s presence in silence, simply enjoying being with Him