

A Pattern for Prayer

(Adapted From Maxie Dunnam's Workbook of Living Prayer)

As we begin to pray it is vitally important that we deliberately turn our thoughts to God. Repeat beneath your breath or aloud, "This is the day that the Lord has made; I will rejoice and be glad in it." Follow this with "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless his holy name." Perhaps you know a Christian song, hymn or a chorus that draws you into the presence of God. The point is to be deliberate--and focus in on God. It may be helpful to take a Bible passage and read it aloud in full. Psalm 145 is a rich Psalm filled with promises and treasures from God's goodness. Keep your Bible in hand and use it in each category below.

This grid from W.E. Sangster has proven helpful to many:

Adoration: Think about the greatness of god, the incredibility that God is listening to you and is going to answer. Offer praise to God for who He is.

Thanksgiving: "Count your many blessings, name them one by one--and it will surprise you what the Lord has done." Health, home, love, work, friends, fun, family, country, opportunity, heritage, freedom etc. Even those who are suffering ill health or misfortune can find something for which to express gratitude to God.

Dedication: Even though you have dedicated yourself to God in a whole-life fashion, every day ought to be the occasion to renew that dedication to God.

Guidance: Seek God's Guidance for the day (and especially to be led in this prayer time). Name the issues that come to mind--and the things that need direction--people, events, work requirements, opportunities, and of course guidance in the unexpected. Try to get in touch with that to which God is calling you, not just with how he has used you in the past.

Intercession: Pray for others. A prayer list will help to keep you faithful in this. Remember those are praying for. Record what you are asking, leave room to see how the answer has come, and review this from time to time. You will sense promptings to pray that arise from your time with the Lord. Other times it is wise to review what you have asked and to ask afresh.

Petition: This is us asking God about what pertains to us (and in particular how He would have us live, serve and give). It is easy for this to become self-focused rather than God directed. Still, Jesus has given us promises that we should accept and upon which we should act, Make your petitions to God in the spirit of wanting to do God's will and find God's way in your life.

Meditation: it is a good thing to spend a few minutes at the close of a prayer time thinking about or brooding over some truth or insight or experience, giving your mind to God that you may think God's thoughts after him...