

# How to Spend an Hour in Prayer

## by Dr. Ralph F. Wilson

"An hour? How could I pray for an hour? I'd run out of things to say!" Praying for an hour is like sitting down in a restaurant with a friend, rather than ordering a cheeseburger and chocolate shake at the drive-up window. Somehow, as you sip coffee together, you find a lot of things to say. And, it's a whole lot more satisfying than a wave and a "Hi-how-are-you?" But if talking to God for that long seems intimidating, it's probably because we're still learning just to share ourselves with Him as we would with a friend.

The following suggestions are designed to help you take courage to try spending an hour with the Lord. After the hour, probably after the first 15 minutes, you won't need this outline. You'll find there's plenty to talk about without prompting.

Start by bringing along some things to discuss with Him: your Bible, a hymnal, a world map or globe, perhaps a church directory and yours or your church's current prayer list. Then find a place where the two of you won't be disturbed.

### Preparation

**Beginning Prayer: 1 Minute.** Ask God to help you spend this time profitably with Him. Ask His guidance. Give yourself to Him for this hour.

- Perhaps invite him to meet with you in this time!
- Perhaps confess: Lord, I seek your help in this hour, for you know well that "the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak." (Matthew 26:41)
- Perhaps invite Him to speak: Psalm 25:4-5: "Lord, tell me your ways. Show me how to live. Guide me in your truth, and teach me, my God, my Savior. I trust you all day long. Amen!"
- Perhaps ask for a pure heart: Psalm 51:10; Psalm 139:23-24: "Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.... Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me into the way everlasting."

**Confession: 4 Minutes.** Spend a couple of minutes going over with Him recent sins which weigh on you. But don't dredge up old ones. Read 1 John 1:9. Ask His cleansing, then accept it by faith and thank Him for it. He is far more willing to forgive than you are to ask.

### Praise and Thanksgiving

**Adoration: 9 Minutes.** Sing to the Lord using a hymnal or some choruses you know. Come on, lift up your voice in praise; there are just the two of you. Now start to thank Him for His goodness to you and your friends. There is a special sense in which God "inhabits" (KJV) and is "enthroned upon" (NIV) the praises of His people (Psalm 22:3). As your heart begins to adore Him, you'll sense His presence more deeply.

### Petition

**Pray About Life's Difficulties: 9 Minutes.** Use this time to talk over with the Lord your own personal struggles. Discuss with Him your relationship with your special loved one or spouse, your family, your hang-ups, your financial needs, your studies or job. But don't stop here. Be sure you go on to praying for the needs of others.

### Intercession

**Pray for friends, relatives, neighbors, fellow workers, members of the church: 9 Minutes.** Don't just

read a list of names to God, but talk to Him about their lives and needs. You can boldly ask Him for their salvation because Jesus died for them. Ask God to bring Christians into their lives, to alter circumstances, and to give you opportunities for witness and sharing in depth.

**Pray for your church and its needs: 12 Minutes.** Call on Him for a deep renewal of love for God. Pray for your pastor and church leaders. Intercede for the Sunday school children and the youth, the families, the singles and the widows, the sick and shut-ins. Call on God for an increase in giving so the church doesn't have to struggle so much. Pray for the Christian organizations working with the college students, the children, the homeless in your community, with servicemen, and on college campuses. Then intercede for those you know in special need.

**Pray for our city, state, and our nation: 8 Minutes.** Pray that God will guide our president and legislators, our justices and judges, our governors and mayors, our police and firemen. Pray for righteousness in government and a public policy sensitive to the needs of the oppressed here and abroad.

**Pray for other nations, missionaries, the Persecuted Church: 8 Minutes.** Pray for the work of Christ throughout the world. Intercede for unreached peoples, call on God to send laborers into His harvest. Pray for missionaries, for third-world pastors and churches, for the people of God who are suffering persecution. Pray for peace. Ask God to give food, shelter and hope to the hungry.

## Closing

- Perhaps us this:

Loving God, we thank you for hearing our prayers. Take me and use me to love and serve you, and all people, in the power of your Spirit and in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

## **Total = 60 Minutes**

Sixty minutes already? I've just got started!

## A Few Suggestions

Here are some ideas that'll help you pray more freely.

- First, be yourself. Talk to God like you'd talk to your best friend.
- Find a place where you can be alone. A place with as few distractions as possible is best. Put your phone on "airplan mode" and set it aside, out of reach.
- Get comfortable. The stiffer you feel, the more formal your relationship will be. Sitting is fine. If kneeling helps, do it. You might want to take an hour's walk as you talk with your Friend.
- Next, try praying out loud, though not loud enough to disturb others. Being able to hear yourself pray really helps. You'll find that your mind doesn't wander as easily and that you can pray more fervently.
- Many find it helpful to write their prayers in a prayer journal. If you struggle focusing, it can be a great help in that regard.
- But don't feel you have to do all the talking. Discuss something with the Lord, then be silent for a time. Sometimes God uses these times of listening to implant His answers in our minds. Gradually you'll find that prayer can be a conversation.
- Finally, don't worry about keeping to the times suggested here. It's only to get you started, to help you believe you actually can spend sixty minutes in prayer. You'll find God will guide you in your prayer time. It's not a program, it's a growing relationship.

Now, go for it. Before you put this down, set a time when you will spend an hour with Him. You can't learn to pray from reading any more than you can learn to swim from a textbook. It's time to get into the water.