

Discerning What to Pray About

Guidelines for the person praying in the *ASKING GOD* movement

In the *ASKING GOD* step of Companioned Prayer™, it is important to allow ourselves to honestly acknowledge how we are, being real in our moment of prayer as we place ourselves in God's hands. We let our attention turn inward and, aware of all we carry inside, we sense what feels like God is calling us to listen to. In other words, of everything going on in our life, of all our personal burdens, challenges, hurts, joys and longings that we are carrying, what might God want us to spend some time with in prayer with him, in this moment?

This is not an intellectual exercise. Both the question and the selection or answer are decidedly neither analytically reasoned nor emotionally prioritized. Nor, in faith, do we imagine what God wants us to listen to and be with in prayer. It is not about how we believe we are supposed to feel or be. Instead it is about how we actually are right now, as we come before God. And in that truth, we are completely open to God's inspiration. We wait in faith for a particular subject or item to seem to stand out, or somehow to be different. Sometimes awareness of the prayer subject comes quickly and is obvious; and sometimes it is not. We can check our feeling in our body to help sense if the item feels right or on-target, and to sense if it feels okay to spend some time with it in our prayer. Often it is an item that we clearly recognize as important to us, but sometimes it is not. It might be something quite different than what we would have expected to pick for ourselves. Sometimes it is just a feeling, a sense, or even an image or memory.

Once we have something that seems to be right to pray with, we do not spend any time analyzing it. We do not try to figure it out, nor try to ascertain its significance, nor try to clarify it or define it further. Instead we purposefully accept it as it is, often with its own ambiguity of meaning or feeling. Once something feels right to journey with in prayer, we can simply say "Okay," thereby letting our companion know that we have something and we are ready to go on.

If nothing seems to come, or if you feel bored or frustrated, it is important to let your companion know that. Or perhaps many things have come but nothing seems to stand out as special. Stay focused on your inner experience, keep your eyes closed, and just tell your companion what is going on and how you feel about it. Your companion can make suggestions that can help you determine what you might want to do next.

Guidelines for the companion in the *ASKING GOD* movement

Sometimes the person indicates that they aren't sure if something came. When initially becoming familiar with this prayer it is common for people to wonder, "How do I know if it is something that God is calling me to listen to?" The answer is that we really don't know for sure. In this contemplative prayer of faith we are opening ourselves up to God's presence and his will for us as best we can. We are simply allowing ourselves to be receptive to his direction. How do we do that? By being centered in our faith and trust in God and simultaneously just noticing when thoughts or feelings or images or memories come that seem to somehow stand out. Perhaps they have slightly more energy, or carry a subtle feeling with them that they are to be noticed. Perhaps we find ourselves going back to them repeatedly. If the person praying is having difficulty discerning what God might be calling them to be with in prayer, it is the role of the companion to assist them do so. The simplest way is to ask them to notice what has come, notice how it all feels in their body, how they carry it. After a brief pause, ask them to notice if something that came might have slightly more energy or carries a subtle feeling that it should be noticed, and then to let you know what they find.

If nothing came, invite them to go back to their body-feeling, noticing how their body feels and noticing any special physical sensations. Be sure and tell them to let you know when they have done that and are ready to go on. When ready to go on, repeat the instructions for *ASKING GOD*. If this again results in nothing coming, ask them if it would be okay to sit with how all that feels inside. It is amazing how God can use this feeling of being stuck or nothing coming as a doorway for his Spirit. Then proceed with the next step, *GOD'S LOVE AND ACCEPTANCE*.