

OPENING PRAYERS

We begin each paired Companioned Prayer™ by opening our hearts to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and we also begin with personal prayers. Notice that there are two parts to the *OPENING PRAYERS*. The first part is a general prayer said out loud by the companion on behalf of both the companion and the person who will be praying the Companioned Prayer. The second part is said by the person who will be praying the Companioned Prayer, and they can say their opening prayer either out loud or silently.

These *OPENING PRAYERS* are a very important part of the Companioned Prayer. They are not a prelude to Companioned Prayer; they are an integral part of it. The *OPENING PRAYERS* establish the experience of both the companion and the person praying within a personal relationship with God. They acknowledge our faith in God and declare our dependence upon him in this prayer. The content of the opening prayers should not be fixed, but should be left open to each person according to their need or desire at the time. The opening prayer topics given in the prayer form are simply possible suggestions to assist us as we learn Companioned Prayer. If a more formal written prayer is desired, it should be said before this personal opening prayer time, during the beginning group prayer.

Guidelines for the companion in *OPENING PRAYERS*

The companion begins the paired Companioned Prayer with a personal prayer said out loud, starting with acknowledgement that we are praying in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The personal prayer said by the companion should be extemporaneous, not written down, and not an established or formulaic prayer. The personal prayer should not ask for specific results of the shared contemplative prayer experience. Instead, a prayer for God to be present, for help in being open to his love and guidance, is more appropriate. Some sample suggestions are provided in the *OPENING PRAYERS* section of the prayer form. In this opening prayer the companion is encouraged to include the other person by name if it feels appropriate to do so. After your prayer, invite the person about to enter into contemplative prayer to also say a personal prayer. It is important that when stating this invitation that the person be told that they may say their prayer silently if they wish.

The person about to enter into the contemplative prayer should not feel any pressure to say their opening prayer out loud, or to spend any “significant” time in their opening prayer. The person should feel that their prayer experience is between them and God, and not between them and their companion. The companion should be transparent and non-intrusive to the person’s interior prayer process. The companion should not be judgmental in any way, nor should they want the person praying to “get it right” or to have certain preconceived experiences or outcomes. The companion’s opening prayer should set the tone for a non-manipulative prayerful experience, without expectations or demands. Set the example for total reliance upon faith, upon God, surrendering into God through our contemplative prayer experience.

Guidelines for the person praying in *OPENING PRAYERS*

The person who will be praying the Companioned Prayer can also say a general prayer, but they are encouraged to recall real needs, challenges, issues, people or thanksgivings in their life right now that they would like to bring before God's awareness. This more specific approach not only helps establish our Companioned Prayer within a very personal relationship with our Lord, it also acts as a prelude to prepare us for the *ASKING GOD* part of the prayer. They can also include their companion by name in their prayer. If the person has said this part of the prayer silently, then when they are finished, they should say "Amen" out loud in order to let their companion know that they are ready to go on.