

Companioned Prayer™ and the Church

In addition to the material here, see chapter 14 of the book, *Companioned Prayer*, available on the Supplemental Resources page of the Companioned Prayer Christian Fellowship's website at www.CompanionedPrayer.org/supplemental-resources.

The Prayer Experience

When we pray with Companioned Prayer, we can find ourselves surprisingly open to God's mystery and loving personal gift. Over and over again, people describe their experiences as gaining insight and understanding, new directions and discernments, a realization that what was received was given as gift, that we did not make it happen and in fact could never have made it happen; and that what did happen was very personal and private healing, reconciliation, understanding, love and grace. We experience all this with a sense of mercy and often a strong sense of the personal divine presence. God's very real mystery, of his being deeply and actively involved in our life beyond our appreciation for this personal love, is usually an overall quality of our prayer experiences.

Symbols and showings that come to us in the prayer may often be related to scripture. Sometimes the appreciation that they are scripturally based may not happen until later when we read or hear the relevant passage. Sometimes their scriptural relevance is clearly understood immediately. The presence of God may also be felt more than through symbols. We may find Jesus gently revealing himself, healing us and calling us to a new life in him. God may choose to open our hearts to his mystery and love in personal ways beyond our rational expectations or understandings; ways that call directly to our hearts and souls.

Christian Faith and Prayer

These interior Companioned Prayer experiences reflect many fundamental tenets of Christianity. By experiencing these directly, interiorly and with both personal and universal applicability, the prayer experiences are confirmed over and over again to reveal the living waters of the faith. Are these experiences something new? No. They have been going on for 2000 years. The church has an incredibly rich and well documented history of people of faith who have recorded such experiences and expressions over the centuries. In addition, it is now and always has been the common experience of Christians everywhere that God is personal and universal, awesome and loving, that he gives us freewill but is also merciful and saving. You don't have to be a saint in order to know the simple yet profound truths of Christianity. You can know them directly through faith and prayer.

We find the gift of God's presence and grace universally experienced in Companioned Prayer occurring and being fulfilled in us within our Church worship; in the liturgy, in song, in the Word, in each other, in prayer, and in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist. Then the fullness of

our faith becomes our living reality, and we are continuously surprised to discover anew the fullness and joy of God's love for us.

Called to a New Hope

Our personal awakening to God's loving presence in our life, realized through the quiet experience of his grace, opens us to a new way of living. We discover that for us the risen Jesus can be more than a belief in an understanding of him; he can be personally known. In this prayer and in life we find Christ has been and is forever our Companion. We begin to know this gift of divine love and presence continually. When we are quietly sensitive to his will and love, our choices and actions are based on a greater, natural purpose and hope. All of our life can become an expression of God's love. The possibilities for reconciliation and renewal offered through this prayer, to each of us personally, to each other, to the church, and to all society, are incomprehensibly immeasurable.

With the regular practice of Companioned Prayer we find ourselves silently being in God's love and giving love to others, and serving them. God's loving kindness, compassion, humility, and appreciation of others find expression through us. Love and charity will grow in us, as will our discipleship. His love within us is made real in our relationships and in our community.

This is not just another interpretation of theology. It is actual transformation – a healing and making whole in Christ by his grace. By being authentic to our yearnings, limitations, vulnerabilities, sins, brokenness, and needs – by listening, acknowledging and holding these in prayer with God's help, and simultaneously in faith being open to God's caring loving presence, we find over and over again his mercy and grace given and received.

A Prayer of Reconciliation and Renewal

Whatever the understandings or gifts we receive in Companioned Prayer, whether it is that we know that we are no longer alone, or that it is okay to trust in God, or that mercy and healing are God's gift to us, that we are a child of God, that Jesus is our personal savior, that it is okay to love others, that we are one,... no matter what specifically happens in our journeys in prayer, we will not be the same. We find that over time we become more complete, more of who we authentically are. But at the same time we find that who we are means being a part of something wonderfully more, a divine mystery and presence, not only transcendent and beyond all knowing, but also very personal and caring. When that is known, not just intellectually, but experienced as basic to our soul, then we are changed.

Then we sing out in praise and worship. We are free to love and serve God, our fellow humans and our planet home. We are renewed in Christ.