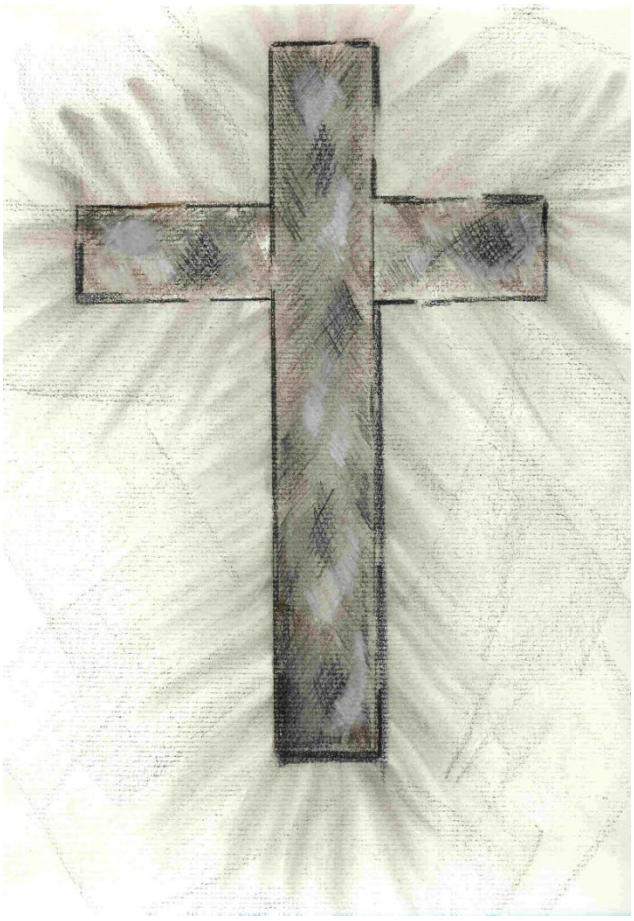
A Summary of Companioned Prayer™



LARGE PRINT

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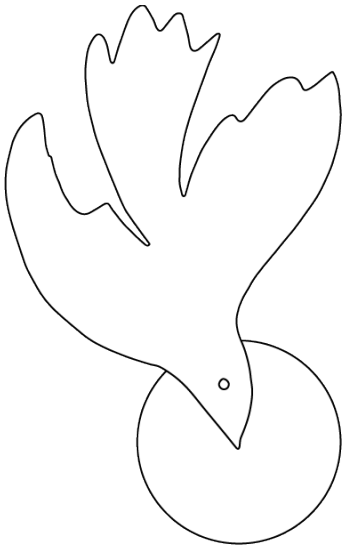
In Companioned Prayer™ we experience Jesus as our true Companion. The prayer experience is between the person praying and God, and requires an active faith relationship with Him or a searching for that relationship. Companioned Prayer, and the other interior or reflective prayers and practices offered, are offered and practiced as Christian, interactive, contemplative prayers. They include the role of a prayer companion who reads text and accompanies the person who is praying. These prayers are not a form of therapeutic treatment. Neither are they spiritual direction, nor spiritual or pastoral counseling. They are private, personal prayers with the assistance and companionship of another person. Neither the prayer companion nor the person praying should view the role of the companion, or the prayer practice or prayer experience, as a substitute for professional therapy or treatment. Your prayer companions, the sponsoring or hosting organizations and the Companioned Prayer Christian Fellowship (CPCF), their directors, officers, employees and volunteers, and the authors of Companioned Prayer and other material offered by the CPCF, are not responsible for your prayer experience or the results thereof. Each church, organization or individual that offers or practices Companioned Prayer is responsible to determine the suitability of the prayers and the offered material for their own programs and purposes. The prayers and materials are offered "as-is" and may not be suitable for all individuals or programs. If you have related questions or concerns about any prayer or practice, discuss them with your professional therapist, doctor and/or priest before beginning or engaging in any further practice of the prayer. You should not practice *any* prayer with which you are not comfortable. However, Companioned Prayer when practiced with faith and in community can offer us God's personal tender mercy and love, felt and known within us in a way that is unique to each person.



> Abide in me, as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. …As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you; abide in my love.
>
> John 15:4-5a, 9

A New Prayer Experience

Sometimes we are fortunate to experience God's loving grace gifted to us with the help of another person. Those are precious moments – when we know God's abiding love for us, experienced and known through the gift of friendship or a special moment in a relationship. When we hold our child or grandchild, or when we look into our mother's eyes and feel her heart. Or those special times when we feel we are one with our husband or wife, or our brother or sister. Sometimes we find these moments with a friend, or more rarely, with a small group of friends.

When we do experience such moments of grace, we cherish their personal richness and special meaning for us. They are times of treasure that often just seem to happen – when our feeling of wholeness in ourselves, our family, and in God's creation seem to break through into a connectedness we recognize as very special, even holy.

In faith we know such opportunities for being open to the gift of God's grace can also occur in our worship and prayer. But these prayer times are usually either in corporate worship or solitary prayer or reflection. It is not

common to find a prayer specifically designed to open us up to that private inner knowing of God's tender presence with the guidance of one other person. That is the unique gift of this prayer.

Companioned Prayer™ is a simple way to help one another be present to God and open to his gift of grace and understanding felt and known directly. In this manner we accompany or companion each other in prayer. Yet our prayer subject and experience are completely private and personal. In faith we take our personal prayer to God, to the loving heart of Jesus, and wait for some inner movement or discernment. We stay with this as it unfolds and leads us to new personal understanding and renewal, given from God's love.

In Companioned Prayer the traditional contemplative blending of devotion, alert listening, and faithful waiting come together with personal and private prayer issues. This is a prayer of the gift of God's love, his mercy felt and known within us.

> "My spiritual journey has taken on a new dimension. I feel God's call and Christ's love. Each time I pray with my companion, I feel like God has touched me."

> "When I let myself listen in this contemplative way, the Holy Spirit gently guides me to new revelation, to new understandings that are very personal to my situation. God is with me in this prayer."

> "I felt that God was present; his glory penetrated me. I knew Jesus' love was total."

This unique interactive prayer is ideal for friends, family members, and acquaintances. It can be practiced at home, in church, or in other settings. It can be part of a regular practice of spiritual growth in our faith journeys, and it can be practiced as part of a healing ministry with others.

In whatever way we practice it, we experience ourselves as part of a community or fellowship of God's children. Our faith is awoken from within. We are called into a new being, as a child of God. We find his love transforming. Each time we pray we discover anew our life in Christ. We find that in this Christ-centered prayer and experience, we come to know his saving presence. "*For, everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.*" (Romans 10:13)

Praying with Another Person

Companioned Prayer is usually practiced with another person, a companion. The companion guides the person through a structured prayer experience, following the desires of the person praying. The companion assists the person praying to stay focused on their inner prayer experience, surrendering into their walk with God. With this companionship and supportive instructions, the person praying can be more present to their inner prayer experience. We find that we are in a prayer of attentive inner listening. In this holy listening we are no longer "doing prayer." Instead, we find ourselves "in prayer" and then "being prayer" as we let go into God praying in us. Our soul is nourished by His gifted intimate presence and love.

In this prayer, the term "companion" carries a double meaning. In addition to the person assisting in the prayer, it also refers to Christ. Christ is our Companion in our prayer. We find him present in his constant love throughout the prayer, including within our experience of the very things that we pray about.

Unlike the more traditional forms of contemplative prayer in which a word or phrase may be silently repeated or in which one sits in silence, in this prayer we pray about the same kinds of things that we might otherwise find ourselves praying about. We pray about things that are personally important to us, such as our concerns, about thankfulness, personal challenges, loved ones, our faith, and so forth. But instead of us selecting, we listen to what God is calling us to be with in prayer. We ask, of everything going on in my life, what does it feel like God is calling me to listen to in prayer? What does he want me to be aware of? Knowing that God knows us completely, even better than we know ourself, and knowing that he loves us, as best we can we turn the selection over to him.

Once a prayer subject is identified, instead of simply praying about it, talking about it, or asking God for his intervention or other action about it, we take it to the loving heart of Jesus. We experience our prayer subject within God's tender love and remain open to the Holy Spirit. Within the compassion of Jesus' sacred heart we wait for some inner movement – for something to come that we sense is related to what we are praying about. In this way we follow the inner direction of the Holy Spirit, letting her guide us to greater understanding and mercy.

Throughout this experience we let our attention also be on our physical nature, our body. This helps us to be grounded in our prayer experience, and to not get caught up into analytical thinking and emotional responsiveness. It also facilitates being open to noticing God's quiet inner movement and call within us in our present moment.

Each of us is unique. We all have our unique stories, our unique concerns, and our unique spiritual journeys. We are each called individually to God in a special way. This is a prayer practice that honors that. The companion knows that they are there to help the person be attentive to their prayer subject within Christ's loving presence. The companion does not provide advice or suggestions about the person's prayer issue. In fact, the companion usually doesn't even know what the person is praying about. The subject of the prayer is private, between God and the person praying. The companion knows from his or her own experience of the prayer that God's mercy and grace are found within the prayer issue as it is held in Christ's love and carried forward by the Holy Spirit into revelation, into God's mercy and grace. The companion knows that this is holy ground, that this graced felt movement from within cannot be made to happen by anything that the companion or the person praying does. It simply comes as gift; a gift beyond any thought of advice or suggestion from the companion. A gift from God.

Appreciating the Prayer Experience

When experiencing Companioned Prayer, this sense of gift, of God's presence within our concerns and within our daily lives, may not be obvious at first. For some people it is apparent after only a few experiences of the prayer. For others it is more gradual, kind of a dawning awareness, but very real and solid. Individual experiences vary. In the inner movement of symbols and graced understandings, some people's experiences frequently revolve around the themes of their faith; for example, of Christ's presence in their life. For others, their graced inner movements and gifts may be obviously related to their faith only occasionally, with an understanding of how it all is a personal gift of faith coming at a later time. In any case, whether appreciated right away or later, a personal growing relationship with God and the sense of his miraculous love within our life is inevitable with regular practice of the prayer.

Learning the prayer is easy. As with any contemplative prayer, the best way to learn Companioned Prayer is with others such as a prayer group or learning program sponsored by your church or religious community, which offers an experience of instruction, ongoing practice, and fellowship. If one is not available in your area, get together with some friends and start one using the resources available on the Companioned Prayer Christian Fellowship's website at www.CompanionedPrayer.org.

A Relationship That Grows Over Time

Companioned Prayer is a simple, effortless, and graceful experience in the mystery, love and wonder of God. When practiced over time, God opens us to his abiding presence and we flower in him. This is our discovery that awaits us. The experience of God calling us personally into a new and intimate relationship with him, into revelation, and into his mercy and grace, felt and known inside us.

This is a gentle and gradual process. It cannot be hurried. But amazingly, we can give ourselves to it through Companioned Prayer. This prayer is not just something that we do; it is time we spend being open to, and nurturing of, our awareness of God as the prime mover and shaper of our lives. And when we do that consciously and regularly, we find that we are carried forward in his hands by his love, in ways beyond our knowing, that guides us and transforms our understanding of ourselves as children of him who loves us deeply.

So, in faith we turn to God in prayer and give ourself to him over and over again. We allow ourselves the time to get to know the depths of his love over time; time we spend in Companioned Prayer over months and even years. While it is easy to learn the steps of Companioned Prayer with a friend or in a group, appreciating what the prayer experience truly offers is a process of growth. It takes time because it is real; it happens within you as you grow in response to God's love.

Because the prayer experiences are subtle, it can be easy to initially dismiss their value and the value of the prayer. This seems to be true whether the experiences are profoundly personally meaningful or are of a more simple nature. The key to experiencing the personal growth of our formation in Christ that Companioned Prayer offers over time, is to understand that while individual prayer experiences gift us with God's intimate mercy, the greater gift is his real presence to us. This is a

presence of being in a personal relationship with our Lord, a presence and relationship that unfolds and develops over time as our awareness of him is nurtured through our many Companioned Prayer experiences.

How does this happen? It happens because God is love and he loves us. When we give ourselves to this love in trust and humility, we open ourselves to a greater knowing of him, and of his gifts of mercy and grace. Companioned Prayer has steps or movements that help guide us through this encounter. Our prayer companion offers us these guided movements as we stay focused interiorly on our walk with God, as Jesus calls us into prayer, into a personally meaningful relationship with him.

Jesus Loves Us

Essentially this prayer is our surrender into the personal loving presence of our Lord, exemplified by his loving heart. This is the simple key to our prayer experience. Letting go *into our prayer subject within our experience of the love of Jesus* is the heart of the prayer.

Through our faith we let ourselves experience this tender divine compassion by taking our fragile and wounded selves into the mystery of this abiding love, and letting go into this very real and very present gift of Jesus' loving heart. In this way we simply are open to experiencing his tenderness and loving acceptance, felt inside us, not as a concept but only as an abiding and familiar experience. An experience that we allow and encourage by giving ourselves into and participating in his gift of tenderness and loving acceptance, felt inside us, in our wounds, in our prayer issue, as we take it to him in faith and abide in that love. In the reality of Jesus' presence we are open to the flowing presence of his love felt in the tenderness of our prayer issue, allowing us to be closer to and accepting of our prayer issue and its special gift to us, instead of handing it off or distancing ourselves from it. For it is within the tenderness of our brokenness that, with faith and humble acceptance, we experience God's mercy and grace.

Letting God Draw Us Forward Into Our Prayer Experience

It is God's love for us that draws us forward into our prayer experience. It is not our actions or thoughts, or anything that our companion does or says. Our companion simply helps us stay attentive to this inward pull from God. For "the Spirit helps us in our weakness, for we

do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words." God, who knows and searches our hearts, causes the Holy Spirit to stir within us at first even beyond our perceptions, beyond our knowing, "too deep for words", praying within us and calling us to him "according to the will of God." (Romans 8:26-27)

Our Companioned Prayer Journey

As we pray this prayer, we find that over time we are drawn into an intimacy with God. Our spiritual journey is enlivened from within, as we increasingly discover a personal relationship with him. We experience his healing touch, his care, his love, and his divine presence at first as discrete prayer occurrences, and then gradually more subtly and continuously. In all this we experience healing and wholeness integral to who we authentically are, and we discover that who we are includes being deeply loved by God.

As we are drawn into this tender intimacy, we find our heart responding in ever deepening faith and love. We also discover our prayer experiences to be expressed throughout the scriptures, within our liturgy, sacraments, and worship, and in the lives of our brother and sister saints. Within this experience born of prayer our appreciation for our Christian faith and formation becomes paramount, as does the value we give to the support and guidance of our Church or religious community in our ongoing spiritual development. Our personal Companioned Prayer journey becomes an exciting lifelong awakening to God's presence, a divine mystery, 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. We are renewed in Christ.

www.CompanionedPrayer.org