

Companioned Prayer™ and Hypnosis

An actively suggestive and sometimes intrusive technique that has been employed in secular practices, is hypnosis. However, hypnosis is both suggestive and intrusive in ways not present in Companioned Prayer. For example, under hypnosis a person may be asked to notice what their body feels like, but then are given further suggestions that they are getting sleepy, their limbs are heavy, etcetera. Such suggestions are never a part of Companioned Prayer. Likewise, a hypnotist may suggest or direct the person to explore a specific issue (like fear of flying or past trauma), or to adopt a particular attitude or outcome about something (such as an aversion to smoking).

When initially learning Companioned Prayer, individuals who have experienced hypnosis may comment that the general feeling of being companioned can seem similar to that of hypnosis. In fact, there are some similarities. Hypnosis also often begins with a suggested awareness of the body, can include talking or feedback between the person hypnotized and the hypnotist, suspends direct awareness of our outer reality and redirects our attention inward (as is common in all types of prayer), and can include invitational suggestions. And after hypnosis, the person usually shares their experience with their therapist. However, the similarity of hypnosis and Companioned Prayer is only superficial.

In Companioned Prayer the companion never suggests a particular personal prayer issue or subject, and in fact is usually not even aware of what the person praying has identified or is experiencing as their prayer subject. In addition, the practice of hypnosis includes the establishment of a trance or altered state of consciousness. Companioned Prayer does not seek an altered state but asks the person praying to be authentic within themselves, honoring how they feel inside as they wait in faith upon God's presence and mercy. In hypnosis, the person being hypnotized relinquishes control of the session to the hypnotist. This never occurs in Companioned Prayer. The hypnotist often leads the person into areas of emotional challenge or pain that the person would not otherwise allow themselves to experience. Hypnosis may include a sense of loss of control and loss of free will during the session, as well as a lack of cognitive awareness of the experience after it is over; again, not something that occurs in Companioned Prayer. There are other important differences as well, including the fact that the artificially relaxed state in hypnosis prevents an issue, symbol, or God's compassion from being felt in the body. And after Companioned Prayer, while there is usually an opportunity for sharing of prayer experiences, there is not an expectation that sharing must occur; and if it does, it should never include discussion and analysis of personal prayer issues, even if they are occasionally shared. Sharing is completely voluntary; and is usually limited to the prayer experience instead of personal prayer topics or issues.

All of these differences are very important. In Companioned Prayer we do not relinquish control to our companion. The companion never suggests prayer topics, and in fact rarely has a clear idea of what the person's prayer subject is. Likewise, the companion does not suggest prayer issue outcomes. The companion follows the desires of the person praying and never leads them into areas that they are uncomfortable with. In fact, just the opposite happens, as the companion frequently asks the person praying to check inside and see if it feels right or okay to continue to

journey with their prayer subject as it unfolds. The person praying never loses cognitive awareness of what is happening either during the prayer or afterwards, nor loses choice or freedom of will or action at any time during the Companioned Prayer experience. Unlike hypnosis, Companioned Prayer is neither manipulative nor intrusive. And while sharing of our prayer experiences is usually offered after Companioned Prayer, it is never an expectation, and never includes discussion or analysis of personal issues. Thus, the voluntary sharing after Companioned Prayer should not be confused with the in-depth analysis or therapy associated with many hypnosis settings.

In Companioned Prayer the experience of the person praying is completely between them and God, and the companion has no power to affect, manipulate, influence, or control any prayer experience or personal outcome. Companioned Prayer is a prayer of faith, in which we let go into our prayer experience within the love and presence of God, with integrity, surrendering to God with total freewill.