

Appointment Prayer

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Description

Contemplation (union and dialogue with Jesus) is the goal of the exercise. The steps of this exercise are mere “spiritual crutches” used to support your steps into contemplation. As such, the steps are temporary MEANS -- not ENDS; they are intended to serve as CATALYSTS for contemplation. This prayer style includes five steps to AIDE prayer. If any step becomes more cumbersome than helpful, eliminate it. Once a step seems forced or empty, move on to the next step.

This prayer-style is called **Appointment Prayer** because it implies that the prayer set an appointment time each day where distraction is eliminated and time is focused for this one purpose alone.

Materials Needed

- A SAMPLE sheet (provided)
- New Testament or a copy of a Gospel story.
- Writing materials

Suggested Time

15-minute prayer period. An additional 15-30 minutes if group sharing is intended.

Process

1. Determine a setting or environment that is conducive to RE-collecting the parts of yourself that get cut off and disjointed during business-as-usual activity.
2. Pray to become conscious of the Presence of God. Perhaps this prayer will be an aide:
“Holy Spirit, place your word in my mind + on my lips + and in my heart.”

Turn over to God all concerns that have the potential to be distractions during this prayer time. Convert such things into prayer petitions like, *“Replace my obsession over xxx with focus on you.”*

3. Acknowledge the many ways that God was present to you since the last period of prayer. In time your sensitivity will increase so that you recognize God in the moment. Example, “I felt your nudge in the song that was playing in the car this afternoon. . .”
4. Read Scripture slowly and audibly. STOP at the first word, idea, thought that touches your soul. Do not read any further. You can continue the reading at that point during the next occasion of Appointment Prayer. [In any group it is possible that some one will stop in the first sentence. Others mid-way. Others may not be “moved” by any word.]

5. Reflect on the Word that “speaks” to your heart. Pay attention to the feelings, desires, attitudes, or resentments or resistances that the text arouses within you. Talk it through with Jesus using “I-You” language. If, by chance, you read the entire Gospel story and no word, thought or phrase moves you, then talk with Jesus about what is going on in your life that nothing touched you.
6. Make a resolve based on your dialogue with Jesus.
7. Choose a mantra-reminder to use throughout the day that will re-connect you to this prayer experience.

SAMPLE

1.

Recognize and verbalize my awareness of God’s presence and God’s activity/action in my life by creating as many “**I-YOU**” **statements** as I can until I feel that I am “forcing” statements.

EXAMPLES:

- I recognize **YOUR** affection for me in the friendship that Pam offers me.
- I value the message **YOU** sent me during yesterday’s parent conference. I will consider it.
- I know **YOU** were consoling me through my conversation with Renee.
- I praise **YOU** for the welcoming spirit that Russell conveyed last week.
- I recognized **YOU** today in the song lyrics that called me to ordinariness.
- I thank **YOU** for the strength to help my mother die in peace.

2.

Read the Scripture audibly and slowly. Stop at the first point that “speaks” to me (moves me, makes me uncomfortable, soothes me, affirms me, questions me, etc.) In other words, read until the Holy Spirit focuses my attention. [The next time I come to prayer I will begin where I left off today.]

This sample of Appointment Prayer incorporates the Gospel story of the Good Shepherd (John 10:1-18.) The underlined ideas reflect the parts that “moved” various members of one school faculty who prayed this Gospel. You might stop at yet another place!

“Truly I assure you: Whoever does not enter the sheepfold through the gate but climbs in some other way is a thief and a marauder. The one who enters through the gate is shepherd of the sheep; the keeper opens the gate for him. The sheep hear his voice as he calls his own by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all those that are his, he walks in front of them, and the sheep follow him because they recognize his voice. They will not follow a stranger; such a one they will flee, because they do not recognize a stranger’s voice.”

Even though Jesus used this figure with them, they did not grasp what he was trying to tell them. He therefore said to them again: “My solemn word is this: I am the sheepgate. All who came before me were thieves and marauders whom the sheep did not heed. I am the gate. Whoever enters through me will be safe. He will go in and out, and find pasture. The thief comes only to steal and slaughter and destroy. I came that they might have life and have it to the full. I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. The hired hand -- who is no shepherd nor owner of the sheep -- catches sight of the wolf coming and runs away, leaving the sheep to be snatched and scattered by the wolf. That is because he works for pay;

he has no concern for the sheep. I am the good shepherd. I know my sheep and my sheep know me in the same way that the Father knows me and I know the Father; for these sheep I will give my life. I have other sheep that do not belong to this fold. I must lead them, too, and they shall hear my voice. There shall be one flock then, one shepherd. The Father loves me for this: that I lay down my life to take it up again. No one takes it from me; I lay it down freely. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. This command I received from my Father.

3.

Reflect on the WORD that “speaks” to me. Dialogue about the issues it raises. Talk it through with Jesus using “**I-YOU**” sentences. (Continue until I feel that I am “forcing” dialogue.)

EXAMPLE: (Based on “The sheep hear his voice” from Jn.10: 1-18)

I wonder how the sheep recognized **YOUR** voice from among the many sounds and other voices they experienced? There are so many voices in **my** life that I have a hard time recognizing when **YOU** are speaking to me. I am distracted by the voices of duty and friendship, TV, ... [The dialogue continues . . .]

4.

Make a resolve based on my dialogue.

EXAMPLE:

When I get into the car to return home from work tomorrow, I will wait five minutes before turning on the ignition and use that time to breathe out the day's voices and breathe in your presence.

5.

Use a word or phrase from the Scripture passage as a reminder of my prayer conversation. Throughout the rest of the day and until the next prayer period I will try to recall the word(s) to RE-collect my experience of union with God.

EXAMPLES:

Shepherd me! Let me hear your voice. Assure me Give life-to-the-full.