

# An Hour of Prayer

If your church is planning a prayer vigil, you might find that some people will hesitate to commit themselves, because they feel inadequate at prayer. To allay those fears, a church can offer suggestions on what to do during a prayer vigil. Here are a few:

- Bring things to help you talk with God: your Bible, a hymnal, the church directory, and the church's current prayer list.
- Be yourself. Talk to God as you would talk to your best friend.
- Get comfortable. The stiffer you feel, the more formal your relationship will be. Sitting is fine. If kneeling helps, do it.
- Try praying out loud, though not loud enough to disturb others. Being able to hear yourself pray improves concentration, and you'll find your mind doesn't wander as easily.
- Don't feel you have to do all the talking. Discuss something with the Lord, and then be silent. Sometimes God uses the times of listening to implant his answers in our minds. Gradually you'll find prayer can be a conversation.

## Mapping out the Hour

The following outline can help people fill their prayer time meaningfully. People's times may differ, but if they are given times and instructions such as these, they can get started.

**Preparation** (one minute): Ask God to help you spend this time profitably with him.

**Confession** (four minutes): Spend a moment going over with him recent sins that weigh on you. Ask for his cleansing, accept it by faith, and thank him for it.

**Praise and thanksgiving** (nine minutes): Sing your adoration to the Lord using a hymnal or choruses you know. As your heart begins to adore him, you'll sense his presence more deeply.

**Petition** (nine minutes): Pray about life's difficulties. Use this time to talk over with the Lord your own struggles.

**Intercession** (nine minutes): Pray for friends, loved ones, relatives, neighbors, fellow workers. Don't just read a list of names to God, but talk to him about their lives and needs.

**Prayer for the church** (twelve minutes): Pray for your pastor and church leaders. Intercede for the Sunday school children and the youth, the families, the singles, the widows, the sick, the shut-ins.

**Prayer for the nation** (eight minutes): Pray that God will guide our public officials and those who serve our communities. Pray for righteousness in government and a public policy sensitive to true justice.

**Prayer for other nations** (eight minutes): Pray for the work of Christ throughout the world. Intercede for unreached peoples. Pray for missionaries, for Third World pastors and churches, for the people of God who are suffering persecution. Pray for peace.

As people see how they can actually pray for an hour, they're more willing to risk it. After one successful experience, they'll be eager to sign up the next time.

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