

## Companioned Prayer™ Partners and Groups

### Fellowships in Faith

Prayer partners are wonderful. Your appreciation for your partner will grow and deepen appreciably over time. You will find yourselves on an extraordinary journey together that neither of you had imagined. You will be sharing your spiritual gifts and challenges in intimacy and trust, held in God's love.

Therefore, do not underestimate the value or gift of a prayer partner or prayer group; or for that matter, of being a prayer companion for your partner. In addition, it is easier to learn and continue the practice with another person, or by taking turns in a small group. Most people find it easier to let go into their prayer experience if they are not trying to figure out where they are at within the prayer format. People often ask if they couldn't just make an audio recording of the prayer steps and play them back with a start and stop button, or similarly use an application with voice responses. The experience, however, will not be the same, especially over time; neither a recorder nor an app is a suitable substitute for a live companion. The presence of others is vital in deepening our prayer and in experiencing and growing in our Christian spirituality. There is no substitute for a compassionate person who supports you in your faith journey (and as you support them), and who can also respond sensitively and appropriately to the surprising twists and turns that can happen in your prayer. Knowing that such a person is present with you in and of itself greatly facilitates your ability to surrender to God within your prayer experience.

There is something else going on when you pray with a companion. Even though your companion usually will not know the content or meaning of your prayer as it is unfolding, he or she is nevertheless very present to and a part of your prayer experience. When your companion is, through their own faith and prayer experiences, engaged with you and supporting your prayer journey, we usually find that there is a sense of God's presence. God's presence is sensed within the experience of the person praying,

within the experience of the companion, and also within the experience that they are sharing. It is felt in the dynamic of the prayer as it is relayed between them when it is occurring. Jesus said that when two or more are gathered in his name, he will be present. That is the experience of Companioned Prayer. He is present within us as our Companion when we pray the prayer, and he is present when we come together to companion each other in the prayer.

Besides being a richer experience when we are companionship one another, having a companion often means that you have set up regular times to get together for prayer. Having a set routine will greatly facilitate a regular prayer practice. Even when we have a prescribed time assigned for prayer, we will be far more likely to stay to it if we know that another person is counting on our presence. Thus, it is highly recommended to have established times, whether it is with another person or with a small group or with both. For example, you might have a routine where you pray with a friend or your spouse once a week, meet with a small group once or twice a week, and perhaps pray another time by yourself during the week. Additional times can be established for prayer with other family members such as children or parents, and for prayer outreach. Set a prayer routine that is comfortable for you.

Also, when we meet regularly with another person or in a small group, we become friends, sharing of ourselves and being changed by each other. We discover how we are each on our spiritual journey and how it is unfolding in our everyday lives. We become a small Christian community, nurturing each other through love, faith and fellowship. We discover a bond of God's intimate love is found between and within us, and Christ's presence is known.

Whether with an individual or a small group, we should have a common understanding that we meet and pray together to support our own and each other's personal faith journeys. With this common understanding and appreciation, everyone will be sensitive to the very special supportive role that each person gives to one another. Each person is there to support and honor the other person's unique spiritual growth and experience, understanding that each person's path may be different while it is unfolding

before and within them, yet leading to God in the best possible way. Thus, we know that one person's experiences of God and grace may not necessarily be what is appropriate for another person. God calls us each in our own unique way, and as companions to one another in prayer, we know and honor that in each other.

## Faith, Fellowship, and Our Journey Together in Christ

It is important to note that the atmosphere of faith, trust and friendship is critical for prayer partners and groups to work. What should be occurring is more than simply being a companion to each other's prayers. Participants should also allow the others in the group to get to know them. This requires that each person be open to one another, to share in friendship and fellowship. See from the other person's perspective, feel their pain and challenges, and appreciate their joys and gifts received. Allow yourself to be changed by your prayer partner and group participants. Let the Holy Spirit work through all of you together as well as individually. And then companion each other in prayer from that level of intimacy and love for each other.

This does not happen overnight, and should not be forced. But it can be nurtured. If the group understands in the beginning, or as new people join it, that such relationships are anticipated to form, participants will feel freer to risk being both vulnerable and friendly. Even get-togethers outside of the contemplative prayer time can help nurture our relationships within the group. When we have that quality of presence where we can give and receive the caring respect and support for each other without the interior walls that we usually put up, then we will truly feel free to trust and surrender to the Lord in our prayer. And the experience will be much more than just leading another person through a prayer format. We will know the living presence of Christ within our midst, calling us forward into faith, and enlivening us in the Holy Spirit.