

SHARPEN

A Model for Mental Prayer

Stop Honor Ask Repent Perspective Extra Prayers Next

Stop: Stop; take a moment and realize you're in the presence of God. Turn your heart and mind in love toward Him and let Him also lovingly look at you. Strive to be docile and receive that He looks upon as His beloved. (If you only have 20 minutes, this will likely take 5 minutes. Most of us need time to settle down. Side note: some days you might simply need to spend much of your time here, e.g. those days you feel utterly defeated and tempted toward despair.)

Honor: Praise Him for His goodness and love, especially when suffering and it is hard to do so.

Ask: Ask for grace to meditate well and to love God more. Give permission to the Holy Spirit to come into your heart. (Don't get hung up here praying for a bunch of people and petitions. God knows your petitions already.) Pray most of all for His grace, so you may be sanctified and enlightened by God.

Repentance: An examination of conscience goes here. Think of the day ... hour by hour ... and when you didn't love God and neighbor well. Ask for a true spirit of repentance, i.e. to love God so much that you hate sin. Ask as well for the grace to fight against temptations to sin in the future for love of God.

Perspective: In addition to asking for enlightenment regarding things of life, here, having examined your faults with God, ask Him for perspective on one or a few of them. Particularly ask Him to enlighten you regarding the motivating factor was undergirding that fault. (N.B. The most time should be spent here, at least a solid 7-8 minutes of silence, especially if you can only spend 20 minutes. The key here is to listen.) (Also, in the silence, do not be discouraged; learning how God speaks to you will take time. Lastly, when it seems like He doesn't speak, don't forget that Sacred Scripture is His Word and therein God speaks to you. Also, He speaks through His Church; thus, prayerful reading of the Catechism helps.)

Extra (Extemporaneous) Prayers: From the encounter with God and His perspective, give Him your heart. Offer any extra extemporaneous prayer you have, inviting Him into your heart. Invite the Holy Spirit to fan your heart into flame. Surrender. (You can also pray a rosary or Divine Mercy chaplet here as an offering of your heart, so as to go deeper into the mystery of God's love for you, so that you can surrender your heart all the more.)

Next: Enlightened by God and moved by love, decide the next good thing you can do. Resolve to do it and go forth with purpose. This becomes a benchmark for the following day(s).

Any other prayers or pious devotions, like meditatively praying the rosary, go at the end. These are tacked onto the 15/20 minutes of prayer that the above should take.

If this is intimidating, at least consider this: <https://youtu.be/1UPIvsvWcUc> (This is also a great plan going forward.) For continued spiritual growth, get to know the Lord speaking to you in Sacred Scripture and Sacred Tradition. Get a good Catholic Study Bible and start this spiritual reading plan: <https://bit.ly/SpiritualReadingPlan3>

“Experience shows that to pray well and to be brought to the state of passive prayer in which God and the soul communicate in depth, *the heart must be pierced* - pierced, that is, by the love of God, wounded by thirst for the Beloved. Only through such a wound can prayer truly descend into the heart and lodge there. God must touch us at such a deep level of our being that we cannot do without Him anymore. Without that wound of love, mental prayer will ultimately be no more than a mental exercise or pious spiritual practice; it will never be intimate communion with the one whose own Heart was pierced with love for us.

We have seen that Jesus’ humanity mediates between God and mankind. At the center of His humanity is His wounded Heart. It was torn open so that God’s love could be poured out on us and we could have access to God. Only when our own hearts have been laid open by a wound will we be able to receive that outpouring of love. Then a true exchange of love, the goal of the life of prayer, can occur. Then our prayer can become what it is meant to be: a heart-to-Heart.” - Fr. Jacques Philippe – *Time for God*.

General Advice:

- If you’re not praying, do so.
 - 5 minutes in the morning and 10 minutes in the evening, or vice versa.
 - Use the SHARPEN Method for now.
 - Get the Book, *Into the Deep* by Dan Burke
- We must be humble because there’s always the temptation of pride, the temptation to take God by the hand and explain to him how things are going to be. “*Listen God, I have this problem and this is how you are going to help me fix it.*” Ambition promises you control and turns prayer into a business negotiation. “*I’ll give you a bit of moral living, some acts of charity and a few minutes of prayer if you give me...*”
- Be patient. (“Patience” comes from the same word as a “patient” in the hospital, it means there will be suffering. Don’t be deterred. Ask for fortitude and carry-on, day by day, moment by moment.)
- Prayer then is nothing more and nothing less than placing ourselves face to face with God. It offers us nothing more and nothing less than God himself. He does indeed listen. He does indeed act. He does indeed transform you. He does indeed conquer this world. **Yet**, He does it all in his own way and we are invited to learn a logic different than our own.