God’s gracious invitation to intimacy through sweet hours of prayer is new every day. We may become disheartened with our prayerlessness, but God continues to ask us to call. Our past failures or vows to be more faithful in prayer should not keep us from responding anew to His desire to communicate His love, His faithfulness, and His desire to be with us. When we respond to His desire for intimacy, prayer becomes a priority and a necessity. We believe with all our heart that a day in His presence is better than a thousand anywhere else.

Prayer of Preparation

As you begin this final session, which will lead you through a time set apart for intimacy with the Lord, pray with Amy Carmichael (twentieth century) for a selfless heart:

From prayer that asks that I may be
Sheltered from winds that beat on Thee,
From fearing when I should aspire,
From faltering when I should climb higher,
From silken self, O Captain, free
Thy soldier who would follow Thee.

There is no way to learn to pray but by praying. No reasoned philosophy of prayer ever taught a soul to pray. The subject is beset with problems, but there are no problems of prayer to the man who prays . . . and if prayer waits for understanding it will never begin.

Samuel Chadwick
The following guide is intended for use either individually or in a group. Before you begin, choose a suitable place and time for spending an intimate interlude with the Lord. If you are meeting as a group, set aside a portion of your time to separate for personal prayer and then gather to share your experiences. In addition to Becoming a Woman of Prayer and your Bible, you will find it helpful to bring with you pen and paper (a journal, if you keep one), a hymnbook, and perhaps a favorite devotional book (these additional resources can be especially helpful for extended periods of prayer). The reflection and study you have done in the preceding sessions will provide rich material for you to draw upon during this “sweet hour” – for example, particular Scripture passages that gave you new insights; prayers you wrote that expressed important desires or requests; a quotation that was particularly illuminating. You may adapt this prayer guide for a session of any length, from ten minutes to an hour or even a half-day or more. Use variety as you spend time in prayer: listen, read, pray, sing, walk, sit, kneel, go outside.

**One: “Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10)**

Begin by reading a psalm or a verse of Scripture (such as Psalm 46:10, above) to help quiet yourself before God. Enter into the Lord’s presence with a period of silence and waiting before Him. Ask Him to prepare and purify your heart.

**Two: “Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.” (Psalm 119:18)**

Meditate on a passage of Scripture through which God seems to be speaking to you in a fresh way. If you have a quotation from a devotional writer that helps illuminate that passage, read it alongside the Scripture to aid your meditation.

**Three: “Speak, Lord; for thy servant heareth.” (1 Samuel 3:9)**

Now turn your attention from meditation to listening. Ask God to impress upon you what He desires you to learn or experience from meditating on His Word. In preparation for the next step of intercession, ask God to prompt you with the needs he wants you to bring before Him. As you feel free to do so, write down any thoughts or Scriptures prompted by His Spirit.

**Four: “Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us. Selah.” (Psalm 62:8)**

Spend time in petition for yourself and intercession for others. You might want to write out your requests, or bring a prayer list with you. Look back over your closing prayers from the previous sessions, as well as prayers of petition and intercession in the Bible, to guide you in pouring out your heart before the Lord.

**Five: “For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding.” (Psalm 47:7)**

Spend time praising and thanking God – aloud or silently, singing or playing an instrument, or writing out your praise. Use a hymnbook, the Psalms, or other Scripture passages that will lead you in glorifying God.

**Six: “Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation.” (Psalm 62:1)**

Close your interlude of intimacy in silent reflection and communion. Ask the Lord to keep your heart sensitive to His Spirit as you leave this time of prayer.

> You can do more than pray, after you have prayed. But you cannot do more than pray until you have prayed.

S. D. Gordon
“Sweet hour of prayer,” sings the hymn writer. Communion with our Lord is indeed sweet – a precious privilege that brings joy to our souls. This study is just one of many helpful books and guides on prayer available to us today – but our motive in studying prayer should not be to master guides or lists, but to behold our God, to dwell in His presence, to become an instrument used for His glory.

Prayer is a gracious invitation from our heavenly Father for intimacy and partnership in accomplishing His purposes. That He answers, and that He blesses us abundantly more than we could ask or think, demonstrates His loving desire for us to know Him and trust Him for our good.

The world offers temporary and fleeting refreshment; God invites us to an eternally enriching relationship through sweet hours of prayer . . . sweet not only to us, but to our Lord. Truly, a day in His courts is better than a thousand outside.

All the world knows now of old Pere Chaffangeon, who used to remain for hours before the altar in the church at Ars without even moving his lips; it seems that he was speaking to God.

“And what do you say to Him?” the Cure asked.

“Oh, “ replied the old peasant, “He looks at me, and I look at Him.”

“The greatest of mystics,” says Henri Gheon, “have found no formula more simple, more exact, more complete, more sublime, to express the conversation of the soul with God.”

William E. Sangster

A Prayer for Sweet Hours with the Lord

David’s one request was to be in the presence of God. Pray with David for a heart attuned to consistent communion with God. Consider adding your own prayer for dwelling with the Lord in sweet hours and moments of intimacy with Him.

David’s Prayer

One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple.

For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion; in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.

(Psalm 27:4-5)

My Prayer

SUGGESTED SCRIPTURE MEMORY: Psalm 84:10