

How Do You Begin Your Prayer or Worship Time?

God doesn't only want to hear our grocery list or prayer list when we go into our secret place or prayer and worship time with Him.

God desires us to, "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name, (Ps. 100:4). How do we enter into His gates with thanksgiving? It seems as if we can thank Him for the natural things like food, health and provision, but then we soon find ourselves running out of thankful words and entering into our prayer time or asking for our needs or starting our worship time without truly entering into His presence.

By the time the songs start, shouldn't we already have had some time of thanksgiving from our lips and in our heart? As we start singing the song, we should already be focused on Him and not the busyness of what we did before we were attempting to settle down and enter into His presence.

Looking at Psalm 100:4, we discover He wants us to enter in with thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is giving an expression of gratitude to God. What are you thankful for? I remember my mother-in-law was always thankful for all the different shades of green and all the different kinds of trees. When you think of God's creativity, there is plenty to be thankful for.

When we arrive in our church services we should be bringing a spiritual offering of thanksgiving. On the way to the service or as we sit down and are waiting for services to start we need to be focusing our hearts and minds on what is about to happen and who (God) we are about to encounter. By releasing some prayers of thanksgiving from our lips, we can focus our mind, attitudes and spirit on the Living God. When we do this

we are contributing to our services and the atmosphere that is manifesting in our church.

We can do the same thing in our personal prayer and worship time with the Lord in our homes. Instead of expecting to change the laundry, take care of the kids and doing your chores and then running into your prayer closet, slow down and focus your attentions and affections on the One you love and are coming to pray and worship.

When approaching your secret place, take a moment and simply breathe. Breathe in the presence of God and then as you focus and settle down speak out words of thanksgiving to Him. Don't try to think about what you are thankful for, you don't want to get your mind going, you are trying to get your mind settled down so you can enter into the presence of God.

You could start your prayer time with some of these thoughts:

- I bless You, Lord.
- I thank You for this day.
- Marvelous are the works of Your hands.
- How great are Your ways.
- You've searched me and know me.
- I open up my heart to You.
- Favor is my portion.
- I exalt You Lord.
- I lift Your name up high.
- How magnificent is Your name.
- I love You, Lord.

Think about how our prayer and worship time could change and be elevated if we would start by words of affirmation and prayer to our Father prior to praying and worshiping. Speaking out words to our Father will help us still our heart and soul before the Father so we can connect with Him Spirit to spirit.

We tend to lead busy and hurried lives and then we expect to

all of a sudden sit down and pray or stand up and sing when there are so many other things running through our mind. One of the main things Christians can complain about is that they can't hear from God. When we settle ourselves down and enter in with thanksgiving and speak words of praise, we will hear from God. We have stilled ourselves and put ourselves in a posture of receiving.

Try starting your prayer and praise time differently, with thanksgiving and discover how it will enhance and increase the rest of your spiritual life. God longs to hear from you and His ears are open to you. Open your mouth now and speak praises to His ears and bless His holy name!

Kathy DeGraw is the founder of DeGraw Ministries, (). She is a prophetic deliverance minister who is passionate about releasing the love and power of God. She travels hosting conferences, teaching schools and evangelistic love tours. Kathy enjoys empowering and equipping people through writing and is the author of five books, including FLESH, SATAN OR GOD-Who are you hearing from and A Worship Woven Life—Learning to Live a Life of Praise.