



Why Everyone Needs a Prayer Chair

As the title of Anne Lamotte's wonderful book "Help, Thanks, Wow" suggests, we humans, in the ordinariness of life, naturally gravitate toward prayer. When something bad happens, when we're surprised by unexpected good fortune, or suddenly recognize God in the beauty of creation, prayers spontaneously arise in us. And we can build on this proclivity to give God a shout-out, and consciously cultivate a more intentional practice of prayer. There are many, many forms of prayer, and scores of books written about each of them. This article is more of a suggestion for deepening whatever type of prayer you choose. You can think of this piece as a promo for a special accessory that can enhance your prayer life. The accessory I'm going to promote is the "**Prayer Chair.**"

In the corner of my room I have a small, cozy chair, the rich brown leather scratched and scarred from years of use. It's compact and comfortable, and like Baby Bear's chair in the Goldilocks story, it is "just right," at least for me. The cushion's topped with a knitting experiment that comically missed the mark as a shawl, but flawed as it is, it provides warmth and a kind of homely familiarity that I savor. Nearby is an old painted chest with an embroidered coaster to hold a cup of tea, and a bureau on which sits a candle and a little glass shrine holding a carved wooden angel. The chair is situated by the window, affording warm breezes and birdsong in summer and, year-round, the sonorous tones of a large set of wind-chimes strategically placed outside.

Why a Prayer Chair?

Since we can pray anywhere, anytime, what's the point of having a designated Prayer Chair? It's really all about two important dispositions for any spiritual practice - AWARENESS

and INTENTION. As in any important relationship, we want our beloved to know that we see him or her, that we're open, responsive, and sensitive to the other's presence. All channels open. No distractions. That's awareness. In prayer, this sense of awareness signals something beyond a casual or happenstance meeting. The disposition of awareness also helps us to establish an INTENTION - the stated desire to fully engage with the other and to set aside the time to do so! Cultivating awareness and intention helps us to focus, to *name* what it is we seek - in the case of prayer, a desire for a deeper relationship with God. Having a designated Sacred



space (Prayer Chair) reinforces our awareness and intention. The word "sacred" means "set apart from the ordinary." And your Prayer Chair signals that this time spent "sitting" is truly other. Having a Prayer Chair also helps establish and reinforce a routine or a practice.

Using Your Prayer Chair

Here are some simple tips for using your Prayer Chair to best advantage:

- 1.) Choose a location where you can enjoy some solitude - away from the bustle of the rest of the family.
- 2.) Be sure your chair is comfortable or you won't want to sit there for long! You might want to add a cushion, a blanket, or a footstool - whatever helps you to settle in.
- 3.) Try to use your Prayer Chair *exclusively* for prayer time. If you can't, then add something special - drape it with a shawl or quilt, anything to set it apart during your sacred time.
- 4.) It's helpful to establish a set time for daily use of your Prayer Chair.



- 5.) Have a small table or other surface nearby to hold books for sacred reading, your Rosary or prayer beads, a candle, cup of tea, or other sacred objects. My chair faces the wall behind my bed where the Crucifix hangs. I begin and end my prayer time gazing on the God who knows our suffering.
- 6.) Lighting a candle or some fragrant incense nearby can help create an environment conducive to prayer.

7.) Create a simple ritual to begin and end each session in your Prayer Chair. It might be making the Sign of the Cross, playing some quiet sacred music, reading a poem (I love Mary Oliver or Rumi for this purpose), chanting the sound of OMMM, or whatever brings you to that place of awareness and intention.

8.) Then, return to your chair the next day, and the day after that, and the day after that...

Barbara Mariconda

Recommended Resources:

[After the Diagnosis...A Guide for Living](#) by Reverend Thomas F. Lynch, Barbara Mariconda, Chapter 16 - Foundations for Spiritual Growth, Chapter 17 - Spiritual Practices - Empty and Fill

[Prayers for the Journey](#) by Barbara Mariconda

[Thirst](#) by Mary Oliver

All available on Amazon.

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