

Those who fear the Lord will not be timid, or play the coward, for he is their hope. The eyes of the Lord are on those who love him, a mighty shield and strong support, a shelter from scorching wind and a shade from noonday sun, a guard against stumbling and a help against falling. He lifts up the soul and makes the eyes sparkle; he gives health and life and blessing.⁴⁶

For your strength does not depend on numbers, nor your might on the powerful. But you are the God of the lowly, helper of the oppressed, upholder of the weak, protector of the forsaken, saviour of those without hope. Please, please, God of my father, Lord of heaven and earth, Creator of the waters, King of all your creation, hear my prayer!⁴⁷

1. Desire **I desire the gift of Hope.**

I imagine I am in a dark room. Unafraid, I feel the dark. I sense how I would need to trust the hand of a helper to make my way forward in this darkness. Symbolically, I wait in the dark in this prayer, as one full of hope, ready for the help and hand of the guiding Spirit.

Alternatively, I find a photo of someone who has really given me hope in dark times, spend time recalling that event to immerse myself in the feeling of that welcome... With either symbol or friend, I consider how I may offer a similar welcome, and how important this might be in these despondent times.

I ask the Spirit for a patient and sure hope when I most need it – even in the dark, frightening, seemingly hopeless situations.

2. Rest

Today I rest in the Hopeful Spirit.

I read the prayer texts from ancient spiritual traditions. Then I imagine I am held and protected by the Spirit of Hope who addresses me by name, saying, 'I have plans for your welfare, plans to give you a future with hope.'

Without knowing how such hope will hold me firm when I feel lost or overwhelmed, I rest humbly now, and reflectively throughout the whole day, in the Hopeful Spirit...

3. Hope

I breathe in the Spirit of Hope.

Then I imagine and feel the Spirit breathing the gift of Hope into me.

I breathe it in deep, wait, then breathe it out to renew my relationships, and into those times when my hope is whittled away by loss and seemingly endless disappointment.

I repeat as desired – breathing, hopeful, renewed...

I conclude in thanks, considering two things. First, if possible, can I get in touch with the one who made me feel so welcomed, to reconnect. Second, to decide who I might

PRAYER TIME: ~~pass this exercise in to read for the gentle steps.~~ **pass this exercise in to read for the gentle steps.**

The three dots ... indicate the places to pause.

If you are specially moved at any of the steps, remain there for the rest of the prayer.

⁴⁶ Sir 34:16-20

⁴⁷ Judith 9:11-13