

Facilitate Meaningful Group Prayer

Great tips from an experienced small-group leader

Bill Donahue

Model It

1. Be a person of prayer yourself—pray for your members and for who might fill the open chair, asking God to give you his direction in leading the group.
2. When you pray out loud in the group, keep your prayers honest, authentic, and from your heart.
3. Basic guide for group prayer:
 - A. Short simple prayers create safety.
 - B. Simple prayers are direct and honest.
 - C. Spirit-led prayers rely on God's power.
 - D. Silent prayers are okay for anyone, especially newcomers.

Keep It Safe

1. Don't call on someone to pray unless you've asked permission beforehand (or you know them well).
2. Don't expect everyone to pray every time.
3. Try to avoid praying in a circle. Allow members to pray one at a time as they feel led.
4. Respect the intimacy level. As the group grows in deepening relationships, a sense of safety will foster a deeper experience in prayer.
5. Be clear on who will close the prayer time.

Guide the Prayer

1. Give guidelines, but let the Holy Spirit lead.
2. Avoid lengthy discussions on prayer.
3. Include prayer each time you meet.
4. Use a variety of praying methods.

What Happens When Group Members Commit to Pray for One Another?

- Your relationship with Christ and with each other will deepen. You will experience spiritual growth.
- There is less chance of burnout as you put problems in God's hands and trust members to his care.
- You allow the Holy Spirit to work in your group so your time together is filling and refreshing.
- God will answer your prayers in amazing ways, and your faith will increase.

Creative Ideas for Group Prayer

1. Pray through a psalm out loud together.
2. In a couples' group, have spouses pray for each other.
3. Vary prayer time among the beginning, middle, and closing of the meeting.
4. Pick a portion of Scripture to pray for one another during the week (for example, Colossians 1:9 or Ephesians 3:14-19).
5. Pray through your church's prayer requests given in the bulletin or program each week.
6. If someone is in crisis, stop right then and pray for him or her.

7. Pray for the church, a country, a family in need, specific seeker-oriented events, or any area for which your group has a passion.
8. Do a study on prayer. Highly recommend: *Praying from God's Heart* by Lee Braise, *Prayer* by Richard Foster, or *Too Busy Not to Pray* by Bill Hybels.
9. Is there someone in your group with the gift of faith or encouragement? Ask that person to be the prayer coordinator, who writes down requests each meeting and keeps track of answers. If a group member has an emergency, he or she can contact the prayer coordinator, who will notify all the other members to pray for that person.
10. Praise can be a part of intercession. Is a member in the midst of struggle? Praise God in the struggle (see Psalm 13).
11. Have each member write down requests for the week on a piece of paper, fold the paper, and put it in a hat. Pass the hat, each member agreeing to pray for the person he or she picks and to call to encourage that person during the week.
12. To cut down on the time your group spends talking about prayer requests, give everyone a three-by-five-inch card to write down prayer requests for the week and have them exchange cards with another member of the group.
13. We need to voice our requests from God's perspective and will (John 5:14-15). The next time you are asked to pray for an event, for someone's salvation, or for someone's health, stop and ask your heavenly Father, "What are your desires, and what can I pray that will cause your desires to take place?"

What to Pray for Others: Colossians 1:9-14

Intercessory prayer can be defined as asking God to act on behalf of someone else. Sometimes we don't know how to pray for our friends and family (or even those who have hurt us), yet we know we should pray for them. In [Colossians 1:9-14](#) Paul gave us a pattern to follow when we pray for others. Read this passage and try using it as a pattern the next time you pray. Watch how God answers.

Pray that ...

1. they will understand God's will;
2. they gain spiritual wisdom;
3. they live a life pleasing and honoring to God;
4. they do kind things for others;
5. they know God better and better;
6. they are filled with God's strength;
7. they endure in patience;
8. they stay full in Christ's joy;
9. they are always thankful;
10. they recall God's forgiveness of their sins.

Biblical Examples and Styles of Prayer

The Lord's Prayer, which serves as a basic model for us (because it includes several kinds of petitions), and some prayers from Scripture give a wealth of methods, or styles, for moving your group to deeper levels of praying.

Opening	"Hear our prayer"	Nehemiah 1:11 ; Psalm 5:1-3
Adoration	"Hallowed be your name"	Deuteronomy 10:21 ; 1 Chronicles 29:10-13 ; Psalm 34:8-9
Affirmation	"Your will be done"	Psalm 27:1 ; Isaiah 26:3 ; Romans 8:38-39
Group Needs	"Give us this day"	Psalm 7:1 ; Nehemiah 1:11 ; Matthew 7:7-8
Confession	"Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors"	Psalm 51 ; Matthew 18:21-35 ; 1 John 1:9
Renewal (protection)	"Lead us not into temptation"	1 Corinthians 10:13
Thanksgiving	"Give thanks to the Lord"	1 Chronicles 16:34 ; Psalm 75:1 ; Revelation 11:17
Blessing	"The Lord bless you and keep you"	Numbers 6:22-27 ; Psalm 1:1
Commissioning	"Go therefore and make disciples"	Matthew 28:18-20 ; Acts 1:8
Healing	"The prayer of faith will make you well"	James 5:13-16 ; Psalm 6:2 ; Psalm 41:4
Warfare	"Get behind me, Satan"	Matthew 4:10 ; Matthew 16:23
Closing	"May the grace of the Lord"	2 Corinthians 13:14 ; Ephesians 3:20-21

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