

## Small Group Prayer Guidelines, Tips, and Ideas

God desires to be in relationship with His people. Prayer allows us to enter the presence of God in a personal, relational way. Therefore, we believe prayer is an essential element of a dynamic relationship with God.

Notice prayer is not asking God to act on our behalf, getting God to do what we want. The purpose of prayer is to get to know God while we worship and make our requests. The primary focus in prayer is our relationship with God. Remember, God doesn't speak theological jargon; He listens to our hearts!

As a leader you can facilitate the Small Group prayer time to help people grow in their experience of this dynamic component of the Christian life in a safe environment. The most important thing you can do is model an authentic prayer life. People are quick to recognize honesty and humility. If they see a leader open their heart to the Lord without regard to how they sound in front of others, they will be more likely to follow that example. Here are some helpful suggestions to enhance your group prayer time.

### Prayer Guidelines

Prayer can be an intimidating exercise for many people. Like any form of communication, prayer is learned. Although no one is required to pray out loud, encourage people to practice reminding them of Romans 8:26-27. We aren't trying to impress God or each other with our prayers!

1. Give specific requests including how they apply to you – we want to pray for one another so be sure to include how you would like God to use you in the situation.
2. Everyone participates by praying silently or aloud. God hears, values, and responds to all of our prayers – so avoid highlighting the “good” prayers in your group assuming they should do the praying.
3. Short and simple – Group prayer goes better when members keep their prayers short and to the point. When someone prays for a long time, it's hard for the other members to stay focused. Long prayers tend to intimidate those who are just learning to pray out loud in a group. God knows the details!
4. Pray as often as you want. Anyone in the group is free to introduce a prayer request either before prayer begins or during the prayer time.
5. Remind your group often that the group commitment to confidentiality applies to all aspects of the group time, including prayer!
6. There are three areas of requests listed in the weekly study questions.
  - Applying the lesson – focus on things discussed or shared this week so that there is action steps put to our learning. Try asking the question, “how is God convicting or challenging you in relations to what we have studied?” Or, “What do you believe God wants to do in your life in the next day, week or month?”
  - Personal Requests – Here is the chance to share needs.
  - Pray (for ourselves and others as we practice being sent together) – we want to pray for both the church and the world. We believe each of us are called to pray for and are gifted to serve in ministry within the church as well as to be involved

in what God is doing to save a lost world, so there will be a suggestion each week to help focus on different aspects of ministry within the church and beyond the church.

### Prayer Tips

1. At first, if people don't know each other well, take prayer requests, and then you as the leader offer a closing prayer. Ask the question, "What is a challenge or concern for you this week? How can this group pray for you?"
2. One way to help discover who in your group is comfortable praying aloud is to ask for volunteers. In your second meeting, ask "Who would like to close us in prayer tonight?"
3. Don't overlook the power of silent prayer. Close with a time of silent prayer.
4. Keep a journal or notebook of requests so that you can see how God responds to your prayers. Acknowledge answered prayer and give thanks to God.
5. A great way to stay in touch with your group during the week is to email the prayer requests to everyone as a reminder to pray for one another.
6. Ask someone who is passionate about prayer if they would like to be your Prayer Coordinator. Ask them to keep the prayer list and to be the contact for any emergency prayer during the week.

### Prayer Ideas

1. **Prayer Sheet:** Have a printed prayer list available at the beginning of each meeting. When people arrive they can write down their requests. When you are ready to pray, simply read off the requests. Follow-up by emailing the requests to everyone for prayer during the week.
2. **Prayers of Praise:** Start your prayer time off with Praise. To open say, "God, we praise you for ..." Then invite the people to complete the sentence with words of thanksgiving, or names of God, or attributes of God.
3. **Using the Psalms:** Read a Psalm (for example 66, 93, 98, 100, 105, 111) before or during prayer. Or, read a Psalm allowing silence after each line for people to respond with their own prayers.
4. **Prayer for conversions:** Keep a list of people who don't know Christ and pray that God would draw them to Himself.
5. **Meditative Response Prayer (Lectio Divina):** Begin with a moment of quiet, then pray asking God to help you listen to His voice. Slowly read a portion of scripture, like Psalm 51:1-2 aloud. Listen for a word or phrase that stands out to you. After the passage is read, ask each person to share what stood out to them. Repeat the reading and sharing two more times, listening for how Christ is speaking to you. Close with a moment of silence.
6. **Pair Prayer:** A great way to get a larger group to pray together is to divide up into groups of three or four, or all men and all women. Then have people focus on praying for one another. Or, divide into twos to share requests and pray.
7. **Prayer Cards:** Have group members write their requests on index cards with or without their names. Collect the cards and pass them out so that everyone has someone else's card. Have each person then pray for that need. Keep the cards to pray during the week.

8. **Circle Prayer:** Invite everyone to pray for the person on their right (or left) either silently or aloud.
9. **Physical Prayer:** Vary your prayer posture. Kneel, stand in a circle and hold hands, raise hands in praise, lay hands on the person being prayed for, etc.
10. **Group Creativity:** Let your group brainstorm some additional ideas for keeping the prayer time fresh and meaningful.