

::Praying Together::

Just as it is in your personal life, prayer is an essential activity for healthy groups. Yet praying aloud in a group makes many people nervous. We may fear sounding stupid, not knowing what to say, or making mistakes. This shouldn't be the case, but it is. Religious sounding words are not needed. Instead, concentrate on saying what you really mean in your own words. Don't be concerned about how you sound to the other members. What is important is communicating with God from your heart.

Basic guide for group prayer:

- Short prayers create safety
- Simple prayers are direct and honest
- Spirit-led prayers rely on God's power
- Silent prayers are okay for everyone

A Few Suggestions

1. Don't call on someone to pray unless you've asked permission beforehand.
2. Don't expect everyone to pray every time.
3. Try to avoid praying in a circle. Encourage members to pray in random order as they feel led.
4. Be clear on who will close the prayer time.

Keeping prayer conversational and meaningful:

1. One sentence prayers. Speak a brief specific concern, praise or thanks to God.
2. One breath prayers. Limit prayers to whatever you can say in a breath or two.
3. Keep your prayer request list simple. Often more time is spent making and explaining the requests than actually praying. One solution is to skip the requests and simply begin praying for specific needs. Explanations can be given later, if needed.
4. Use conversational tones in audible prayer. Use everyday language. A group meeting is not the place for religious speeches in prayer. The leader's modeling of conversational prayer is pivotal.
5. Cultivate a consciousness of God's presence. All prayers should be directed to Him. Never pray to the group. Kneeling or holding hands can enhance an attitude of prayer but can also intimidate those who have never experienced group prayer before.

6. Be brief. God does not hear us on the basis “of...many words” (Matthew 6:7), but rather on the basis of faith (Matthew 17:20, Hebrews 11:6). Jesus modeled brief prayer throughout His ministry (Matthew 26:39, Mark 15:34, Luke 23:34, 46, John 11:41-43). Each person should pray in one or two sentences, then allow others to pray. Pray so an eight-year-old child could understand. (Eccl. 5:2)
7. Introduce one topic and let others join in before moving to another topic. Have one person at a time pray. One person’s prayer might focus on a topic such as prayer for wisdom in a job situation. Another person might then pray for wisdom in a family situation.
8. Agree in prayer. When one group member is praying, the others should silently agree; there is much power in prayer of agreement (Matthew 18:19-20). During the prayer, others can verbalize agreement by short responses such as “Yes Lord”, “Hear this prayer”, and “Answer that prayer, Lord”.
9. Be spontaneous. Informality, honesty and love are all vital. Stay away from ritualistic, memorized prayers – we are in relationship with a living God “who has been tempted in all things as we are” (Hebrews 4:15).
10. Allow for silence. Silence is not an uncomfortable space to be filled with unnecessary words. A waiting silence to hear the voice of God can be the most reverent portion of a group’s prayer time.
11. Pray with and for each other. It is appropriate to follow someone’s prayer with a request related to an expressed need or concern. Example: After John prays for his wife in the hospital, Ann might add, “God, please strengthen John and the children during this difficult period.” Peter could then say, “Lord, we ask that you provide for the financial needs of John’s family during his wife’s hospitalization.”
12. Be creative. At various times, try the different types of prayer: adoration (praise), thanksgiving, confession, commitment, and intercession. Also, choose various topics to focus on, such as family relationships, needs of the local church, community problems, national government, and other needs around the world.
13. Everyone writes a prayer request on a piece of paper. Fold the paper and put it in a hat. Pass the hat, then pray for or simply read the request during the prayer time.
14. On a poster board make a list of everything you know to be true about God. Then, spend time in prayer thanking him for his character.
15. Read Ephesians 3:14-21 as a closing prayer for one of your prayer times.
16. Fill in the blank prayers. Each person who wants to pray aloud starts their prayer with “God, I thank you for _____.” Or “Please help me with _____.”

“Don’t worry about anything; instead pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done.”
(Philippians 4:6)