

Praying Together

IN OUR REGULAR PRAYER MEETINGS

WHY?

- This can be a precious time to meet with the Lord, hear his heart and declare his purposes.
Dispel the notion that prayer meetings are boring!
- Cultivate 'all kinds of prayer' to bring freshness. God has created an infinite variety of life. Don't get stuck in one style.
- Prayer is 'front-line' work, so encourage one another not to grow weary. The enemy will seek to shut you down.
- If you are a leader, being at prayer meetings will keep you in touch with what God is doing among your people and model the importance of prayer to others.
- A heart of love and 'the tools' of the gifts of the Spirit are essential in regular prayer.
- Find a way to report back to the congregation when the Lord answers these prayers.

TIPS

1 Good leadership is important

- Be clear about what you are there to pray about. Write topics on a whiteboard or introduce them before praying (make sure you take time to wait on God before moving on).
- People bring their own burdens, so it may be helpful to pray about these briefly in pairs before shifting the focus to the needs you are committed to praying about.
- Some people prefer to wait on the Lord for direction. Assure them that there will be time for that, but that persisting in prayer for known needs is also very important.
- Rather than introducing a range of prayer topics all at once, drip feed them one at a time. This will encourage people to pray more deeply for each topic.
- If someone often hijacks the group for their favourite topics (such as prayer for Israel), suggest to them privately that they could gather others and pray for that at another time.
- If time is going and you haven't prayed for all the things you had planned—divide into pairs and give each pair one topic.
- While focused prayer is important, do not quench the leading of the Spirit if he is leading you all to pray about another thing during that time!

2 Ensure 'equal opportunities' for prayer

- Prevent people dominating or taking over the prayer time (particularly if you have serious intercessors in the group). Ask them to encourage others to pray by making simple, heartfelt and shorter prayers the norm. Speak to them in private if their eloquence and length is discouraging others from participating.
- If you have more than 10 people, not many will be able to pray. Start with praise and prayer together before breaking into smaller groups of three or four.

3 Keep focus on God

- Teach the group to cultivate the presence of Jesus, and learn listen for words, Scripture and the Spirit's leadings.
- Sing together! Do this at the start, and in the middle to restore focus on the Lord.
- Sometimes there is a strong sense that the Lord is leading people to pray for things not identified. Learn to discern, receive and respond to such promptings. God wants us to pray what is on his heart, as well as what's on our heart!

4 Pray with boldness

- We cannot 'agree in prayer' if we are praying silently. Faith is stirred by hearing the prayers of others. Boldness grows as we declare openly what God is saying or doing (see **Acts 4:29-31**). Pray boldly for God to move and make a difference through your ministries.
- Make your prayers specific—it's easier to see answers.
- Contemplative prayers reflecting on your own life are useful ... at the end of a sermon or during a retreat! Use corporate prayer meetings to build faith and energy by focusing *outwards* on growing God's Kingdom.

5 Include variety in your prayer meeting

→ Avoid just sitting bent over in a little room every time. Get physical! Hold up the Word. Stand up or walk around. Meet in a place where there is space to move. Change the location now and then, as well as people's postures.

→ Do a 'prayer walk'. This could be inside, praying over seats in the auditorium, the rostrum, the music stands, the Family Store, where children meet, etc. Head outside and walk around your community, stopping to pray at locations.

→ If you are praying for your town or city, get a map and lay hands on it in small groups. Bring symbols of what you are praying for and ask people to hold these or stand around them and pray.

→ Depending on the fluency of the group, write or draw prayers with symbols.

RESOURCES

From the Booth College of Mission library

Transforming Prayers: 40 Unique Experiences by Jenny Baker with reproducible handouts (248.32). Designed for youth, but many of the tangible ideas would help all of us to enter into prayer. Full of symbols and actions to 'flesh out' our praying.

Prayer Power Unlimited by J. Oswald Sanders (248.3 SAN). This gem covers 22 aspects of prayer with clarity and inspiration. A wonderful resource for lifting our sights in our prayer times together.