

Grow Group Prayer Leader's Guide – Fall 2022

Praying together is powerful! Not only does it help us grow deeper in our relationship with Jesus, it also helps us grow deeper in relationship with each other. This semester, we want to experiment with a couple of ways to deepen the experience of prayer in our groups.

For most of us, we tend to focus many of our prayers on *intercession* (praying for ourselves and others, usually focusing on our circumstances). This is a wonderful way to pray, and it is encouraged consistently in Scripture! However, when we examine the prayers recorded in God's word, we find that there are lots of other important ways to pray as well.

In the spring, we emphasized praying for spiritual transformation. This fall, we'll continue that focus, but we're also add in prayers of "Worship and Thanksgiving." Here's how it will work:

Sometime before you begin your sermon-based discussion for the week, you'll go through a time of "WTI Prayer" together (Worship, Thanksgiving, Intercession). Then, at the end of your conversation, you'll go through a time of "Growth Prayers" in smaller groups, focusing on spiritual formation.

Keep in mind that many in your group have never prayed out loud in front of someone else, and doing so for the first time can be scary! We want to be gracious and patient, making it easy for them to participate, even if it's just a few words. Over time, they'll become more comfortable and will ultimately be blessed by the experience.

We'll give you guidance each week in the Leader's Guide on how to do this, but the following pages contain some general information you might find helpful:

Worship, Thanksgiving, and Intercession (“WTI Prayer”)

We’ll spend time sharing in this type of prayer each week before our conversation about that week’s discussion topic. The idea is to begin by focusing our minds and hearts on who God is and what he’s done, and then to lift our needs to him, trusting that he is at work.

WORSHIP

The first section is *worship*. During this time, the group will spend a few minutes praising God for *who he is*. In the Lord’s Prayer, Jesus taught us to pray, “Our father, who art in heaven, *hallowed be thy name*.” This is our way of “hallowing” or honoring his name.

- One way that makes it easy for everyone to participate is for the leader to open with a brief prayer, then invite the group to take turns praying this simple prayer: “God, I praise you because you are _____” They can fill in the blank with any attribute, characteristic, or name of God. For example, “I praise you because you are good, loving, creative, eternal, forgiving, our healer, the King,” etc.
- Another way to structure this prayer time is to use Scripture as a guide. There are many passages throughout Scripture (especially in the Psalms) that praise God for who he is. You might pick one of these passages, have one or more people read it out loud, then use that as a prompt for prayer.
- A third way to do this is to start by playing a worship song (a recording is great!) that praises God for who he is, then use that as a prompt for prayer. You could do the same with a piece of art, or even a testimony from the life of a group member.
- Remember, this doesn’t have to be long! Two or three minutes is great.

THANKSGIVING

The second section is *thanksgiving*. In this section, we thank God for *what he has done*. This might be thanking him for specific things he’s done in our life, our group, or our church, or it might be thanking him for what he’s done throughout history.

- As the leader, you can make a transition like, “And now, let’s take turns thanking God for anything and everything you’d like to, big or small. Let’s enter into Thanksgiving together.”
- As in the first section, encourage each person to participate and remind them it doesn’t have to be long or poetic! Just a simple, “Thank you God, for what you’re doing in Jeff’s life right now,” or “Thank you, Jesus, for forgiving me of my sins” is great.
- Encourage the group to be creative here. There are *so many* things to be thankful for!
- Again, this doesn’t have to be long – a few minutes works well.

INTERCESSION

The final session is *intercession*, where we pray for our needs and the needs of the world. Many of the topics you cover here will have come up in your “catch up” conversation at the beginning of your group meeting.

- As the leader, you can make a transition like, “And now, let’s lift up our needs to the Lord and pray that his kingdom would come and his will would be done on earth, as it is in heaven.”
- This is a time for the group to take turns praying for each other and the specific needs that have been shared.
- One powerful way to keep these prayers kingdom-focused is to add a “so that” phrase to each request. For example, “We pray that you would restore Julie to full health so that she can continue to be a testimony to your power and grace.”
- In addition to praying for circumstances in our own lives, this is a great time to pray for other kingdom priorities such as the church, those who don’t know Jesus, those who are struggling in our community, our leaders, etc.
- As the leader, you can close this time with a brief prayer like, “Thank you, Father, that you hear these prayers, and that we can trust you in all things. In Jesus’ name we pray, amen.”

Growth Prayers

We’ll spend time sharing in this type of prayer each week after our conversation about that week’s discussion topic. The idea here is to pray for each other’s spiritual growth and transformation.

- Most weeks, we’ll do this in smaller groups as part of the application portion of the discussion. This allows for more open sharing and for more people to receive individual prayer.
- Part of this prayer time will include praying that the Spirit would enable us to live out the things we talked about during our discussion in specific ways.
- This is also a great time for group members to pray for each other in specific areas where they’re struggling, which is sometimes more easily shared in smaller groups like this.