

Grow Group Prayer Experience #2

Leader's Guide

Purpose: To have a meaningful experience of extended prayer together that focuses on prayer for being deeply rooted in God and in each other.

OPENING TO GOD (5-8 min)

1. Have different people read these passages out loud with a short pause (a few seconds) between each (arrange this before you start so that everyone knows what to do); think of it as a **“cascade of Scripture” pouring over you together**. Encourage everyone to listen for descriptions of who God is.
 - a. I Peter 1:3 “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.”
 - b. Psalm 145:17-18 “The Lord is righteous in all his ways and faithful in all he does. The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.”
 - c. Psalm 34:18 “The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.”
 - d. Psalm 145:3 “Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise, his greatness no one can fathom.”
 - e. Psalm 115:1 “Not to us, Lord, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness.”
 - f. Daniel 2:20 “Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are his.”
 - g. Nahum 1:7 “The Lord is good, a refuge in times of trouble. He cares for those who trust in him.”
2. Now invite everyone to voice a prayer of **praise**, “God, you are _____.” (i.e. good, faithful, compassionate, Almighty, Shepherd, Savior, Friend, etc.)
3. Now invite your group into a time of **thanksgiving**, “Thank you, God, for _____.” (i.e. this community, my family, your joy, your strength, etc.)
4. Close the segment with your own prayer or just “Amen.”

LISTENING TO GOD through SCRIPTURE (8-10 min)

1. Explain that we are now going to listen to a passage read 3 times concerning how we are to love one another in Christ; as it is read, invite them to listen for the word or phrase that resonates in their spirit right now. Encourage them to underline or circle words in the text or jot a thought in the margin.
2. Read Romans 12:9-18 slowly (and with expression) 3 times with 10 or 15 secs of silence between each repetition:
 - *“Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil, cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.”*
3. Next, invite everyone to pray silently, responding to God about what they have heard in this passage. Encourage them to jot anything down that will help them articulate and remember what they have heard and felt.
4. Close the time of silent prayer with “Amen.”

PRAYING FOR ONE ANOTHER (15-20 min)

1. Divide into smaller groups of 3; if your group is 6 or less, you might prefer to stay all together.
2. Invite everyone to think of one aspect of how they desire God to help them grow in this season. It may be something that’s been on their mind for a while; or it may be something that was prompted by the Scripture this evening. Give them some time to think specifically as to what this desire is and jot it down.
3. Invite everyone to share with their group at whatever level they are comfortable.
4. Now pray for each other concerning these desires.

PRAYING FOR OUR CHURCH (5-8 min)

1. Come back together if you divided into small groups for the previous segment.
2. Now spend some time praying together for VRBC. Here are some possible topics.
 - For our church leadership – that they would abide in Christ, be strengthened, and encouraged.
 - For our church unity – the Spirit-empowered ability to be “different together.”
 - For our love for one another – that we would live out Romans 12 in authentic ways.
 - For our mission – to see what God is up to and join Him in bringing His kingdom through love and good deeds here and around the world.
3. When you feel this time of prayer is complete, speak this blessing from Hebrews 13 to close this segment: *“Now may the God of peace . . . equip us with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”* (Hebrews 13:20-21)

Tips for Leaders:

- You are certainly welcome to modify this guide so that it is most helpful to your group having a great time of prayer together.
- Several things in this guide were intentional that we hope you will embrace:
 - We want to spend a good portion of our time praying, not talking about prayer. Some may not be accustomed to this length of a prayer experience, but we hope the design will keep it comfortable and accessible for all.
 - The focus of this prayer experience is our spiritual growth in loving God and each other deeply. We are used to interceding for one another concerning a variety of needs, but this focus is less common and we want to change that. We want to learn to pray consistently for each other's life with God.
 - There are a few opportunities for silence, reflection and listening prayer. Again, these may be less familiar, but we hope you will help your group "dip their toe" into something new or less familiar in order to deepen their experience of prayer.
 - We depend on Scripture to guide our prayer; it's always beneficial to learn how to pray according to Scripture, which is why we have provided some passages for this experience.
- You know your group best when it comes to how comfortable they are praying aloud in a group. This guide attempts to provide opportunities for silent prayer, that all can more comfortably do, as well as opportunities for "popcorn" prayer of just a word or phrase or sentence, which might help some feel they can also pray out loud without the need to "make a speech." Then there are also opportunities for those who are more comfortable to voice more than a sentence.
- Try not to be anxious about allowing some silence in between during the segments where people pray out loud. We usually feel the pressure to "wrap it up" if things are quiet. Prepare your group to be OK with quiet and to relax into the milieu of unhurried time with God and each other.
- Another suggestion might be to pay attention to the environment for the prayer experience: making it comfortable for 45 minutes, perhaps having some kind of soft, instrumental music in the background – whatever might help folks feel at ease while also keeping it simple.
- Everyone will need the participant's guide and something to write with.