

# 10 Tips on How to Introduce People to Group Prayer

by Reid Smith

Praying in a group can be intimidating for those who haven't done it before. You'd be surprised how many people are not used to praying out loud with other people around them listening in. This is an important skill for all believers to develop because agreement in prayer among two or more believers makes God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven and builds the community of His Church (Matthew 18:19-20). Here are some tips that will help you to ease people who are unfamiliar with group prayer into this very important spiritual practice:

1. **Be brief.** Brevity can reduce the anxiety level in group prayer because it allows time for others to pray and serves as a model for simplicity in prayer (Matthew 5:7-13). People who aren't use to praying aloud in a group will see short and simple as something they can do too.
2. **Be informal.** Don't have a big build-up. When it's time to pray, just begin. For example, "Okay everyone, let's pray. Feel free to jump in if you'd like. Lord, we..." This makes prayer feel less intimidating and more natural.
3. **Be yourself.** Imagine God sitting across from you in the group and talk with Him like you would a person (after-all God is fully human and He is actually in your midst). Have a conversational flow to what you share with the Lord and avoid Christian clichés or complex theological jargon.
4. **Use Scripture.** Invite people to articulate their prayer with biblical passages. They can read something that is meaningful to them and then say, "I believe that about..." or "Let that be true for..." and reference their own prayer need or one that was shared by another group member.
5. **Invite the most confident to lead.** There is usually at least one person in every group who tends to be more forthright in prayer or they're good about summarizing multiple prayer needs. At the beginning of your next group meeting, ask them how they'd feel about facilitating the prayer time. If they're open to doing this, reassure them by saying, "Just be yourself...you'll be great!"
6. **Don't call on anybody.** Some people are terrified to pray in front of others, and if they're newer to the group, they may not return if you put them on the spot.
7. **Don't go in a circle.** This puts people who don't want to pray aloud in an embarrassing situation, especially if they're the only one to pass.
8. **Go first in sharing a personal prayer request.** This primes the pump for others to share and sets an example of vulnerability.
9. **Appoint somebody to write down prayer requests.** Then follow-up on them at your next gathering. This cultivates a warm and caring environment that will help people feel safer about personally engaging in group prayer.
10. **Integration.** Discussing prayer needs outside of the time allotted for prayer in your next gathering can help to integrate prayer more into your group-life. This helps group prayer feel more as a natural part of your group-life as opposed to an isolated or add-on component.

# Introducing Worship in Your Group

## by Reid Smith

Once you get a sense of your group's unique dynamic and personality, you can begin integrating creative forms of worship that involve thanksgiving, adoration, times of silence/reflection on the Lord, singing, "sacrifice" (e.g. giving something up over Lent/fasting), rejection of sin, etc. In these actions we are pouring ourselves out to Him because of the way that He poured Himself for us (Philippians 2:5-11). We are expressing our deep gratitude and joy for how God's nature, character, words, and dynamic love for us continues to be revealed in and through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Gradually and gently encourage people toward new expressions of worship. Consider these ten ideas for worship in your small group:

1. Invite your small group participants to think of something that feels ordinary in their daily life, but they are very grateful for, e.g. a roof over their head, more than one meal a day, etc. Then have each person express their thanks for that thing within the group. (Again, something they're grateful for, but don't normally think of thanking God for.) After everyone shares, let your group know you just had a time of worship in your group through giving thanks (a corporate offering of thanksgiving).
2. Play a worship tape or CD. Either listen to it, reflecting on God, or sing along to it (Psalm 69:30).
3. Ask all of your small group participants to reflect on the Names of God found in Scripture, and share the significance of the Name(s) for their lives. Then, thank God for His faithfulness and who He is.
4. Ask your small group participants to select and share their favorite psalm or Scripture passage with everyone. Have them explain why it is meaningful to them and then pause to pray, giving thanks.
5. Have a period of silence wherein each small group participant reflects on how God has expressed His love for them through His Son Jesus Christ.
6. Praise God as you read through Psalms 23, 63, or 64. Afterwards, have each person discuss the significance of the passage for him or her.
7. Go to a special event at the church together, along with the people your participants invite.
8. Initiate and welcome spontaneous "offerings" of praise and thanksgiving during your time of bible study.
9. Read scriptures that show expressions of worship, such as clapping, raising of hands, and bowing down and expose your group participants to new flavors of worship.
10. Invite small group participants to share a photo that's significant to them and shows what God is doing in their lives. (Consider in advance how to integrate this idea with the focus of your bible study).