

Ideas to Spice Up Your Small Group Prayer Time!

Every small group develops its own prayer life over time — rhythm, style, schedule, and history. But it's always good to shake things up every now and then because it allows us to experience God in new ways that cause intimacy with Him, growth in our faith, and bonding as a small group. Below, are some ideas to try in your Connect group. Be creative and adapt these ideas to the needs of your group.

IDEAS...

- ✎ Conversational prayer : Imagine the group sitting at the table talking with Jesus about a concern. Rather than one person telling Jesus every part of the need while everyone else is left out of the conversation, several people can each tell Jesus different aspects of the need. When all aspects are covered, move to the next need.
- ✎ Listening prayer in pairs : In pairs, one person briefly shares something that is on their heart. The other person then silently asks God for a word, a picture, or a scripture passage regarding that concern for the first person. They can pray out loud at some point, but the bulk of the time should be spent listening for what God might want to give that person. Share what was received. Then switch.
- ✎ Listening for prayer requests : Have group members take 5 minutes by themselves asking God what is on His heart that He wants the group to pray for. Ask them to write each item on a separate 3x5 notecard. Come back together and read what God impressed on upon the group members. Take turns praying for those requests.
- ✎ Break it down : If the group is large, break into pairs or triads and share specific personal needs and pray for one another. Often times, it is helpful for men to be with men and for women to be with women.
- ✎ From the list : Get in pairs or triads and hand each group a list of needs and some Scriptures to form into prayers.
- ✎ Korean prayer: The whole group prays out loud together their individual prayers about a certain subject. The leader signals with "Ready, Go!" or a bell. After 2 minutes, the leader signals with a bell and then moves the prayer to the next subject.
- ✎ Round table : Give individual members the opportunity to share specific prayer requests. Then ask for volunteers to pray for each need.
- ✎ Hot seat prayer: Invite each group member (who wants to) to sit in the center of the group and have the group lay hands on the member/couple and pray for them. Listen for the Holy Spirit to give you some prayers He wants you to pray.
- ✎ Sentence prayers : Each person, one at a time, offers a brief specific concern, praise, or thanks to God, ending with "Amen" or some other refrain. No explaining it, just saying it and leaving it. (Allow those who don't want to share to say just "Amen" so it passes on to the next person.)
- ✎ Silent intercessions : The leader reads a general concern, and is then silent. Time is then taken to silently pray for specific people, actions, and ministries involved with that general concern. Then, after a while, the leader speaks a word of the Bible relating to that concern, and a brief prayer on it.

- ✎ Praying the Scriptures : Have each member pick a verse that speaks to a specific situation in his or her life, bringing it to the group, and then sharing it with a partner. The partner is then responsible for praying that verse for that person throughout the week. You can also pick a portion of Scripture to pray for one another during the week using the same scripture for everyone (for example, Colossians 1:9 or Ephesians 3:14-19).
- ✎ Love thy neighbor : Write down the name of yet-to-believe friends on 3x5 cards, one name per card. Write a brief description of how to pray for the needs of each person, being careful to stay away from anything that might be gossip. Hand out the cards and pray in groups of 2 or 3 over the names. Collect them at the end of the meeting so that they can be redistributed to pray again at the next meeting.
- ✎ Prayer walk : Take a prayer walk around the neighborhood, school, workplace nearby. Pray for residents, students, workers to find Christ. Ask God to show you what He is wanting to do in each place; then, pray it!
- ✎ Praying the Psalms : Choose a psalm and use it as a prayer for your group, either by having one person read it as the rest pray silently, or reading it out loud together in prayer.
- ✎ Basket of prayer : Each person writes just one concern that is most on their heart, onto a slip of paper. The papers are gathered in a basket, and the group prays over them. This can be done by reading each one or leaving them unread all together in the basket.
- ✎ Prayer for witness : Each person in the group names one person that they most want to see turn to Christ. This would be someone from work, hobbies, family, or other non-religious activities, that they meet in the course of their daily lives. After each one is spoken, the group then prays for an opportunity for a Christian's witness to hit home.
- ✎ Two-by-two : Names are randomly drawn to be matched in pairs. The pairs then go to separate locations from the other pairs (like, say, one in the kitchen, another on the deck, another in the garden, etc.). The pair then takes time to minister, share, and pray with each other.
- ✎ Prayer partner : Breaking into pairs, share and write down each other's prayer requests. Pray for each other then, and throughout the week. You can also set up a time to meet during the week to pray again and just hang out.
- ✎ Echos : Someone speaks a phrase of Psalm or hymn or a very specific prayer. Then each person repeats the phrase, with short breaks in between each time it is spoken. This gives everyone time to think on the phrase, or to silently let it sink in, listening for some stirrings within.
- ✎ Groups confessing : The leader talks briefly about a general kind or category of sin. It is best when this subject arises from the scripture study. All those present write on slips of paper a few words of a specific instance where they committed that kind of sin. These are not to be read by anyone; this is between them and God. The papers are then gathered into a cooking container. All those present gather around it, and speak together a prayer of confession of being sorry for that kind of sin and expressing the determination to cease that sin. Then all take the container to a safe place indoors, or outdoors such as in a grill, and then someone lights it, allowing it to burn completely to ash. (You must have something to douse or smother it with in case of flare-up.) Once this is done, someone then says that these sins are forgiven due to Christ's work on the cross.
- ✎ Prayer wall : Put large pieces of paper on the walls and give people colored markers. Ask them to write prayers for and extended time. Ideas: missionary needs, those yet to believe, ways you want God to move in your life, small group, or church, ...)

- ✠ Written responsory prayers : Liturgical church folks know these from worship services. A petition is offered, then a clear ending tag, like, "O Lord" or "in Jesus' name". Then a standard response is spoken by all, such as "hear our prayer" or "let it happen, Lord". Then someone speaks the next written petition, and so on. (The tags and response can be much less mundane than that. But simple often works best.)
- ✠ Adopt a missionary : Choose a one of the FP missionaries/ministries and ask Jarrod for recent newsletters to pray through as a whole group.
- ✠ Newsies : Take a newspaper from that day or week. Have the small group go through it and find issues and people to pray for. Then, pray for these people and current events.
- ✠ Journal it : Keep a prayer journal for the small group. Record requests and answers. Each week pray, review your requests, and report back each week. One of the group members may want to update the prayer journal each week.
- ✠ Answered prayer tracker : For each answered prayer place a stone in a glass jar. As it fills up over the year, it serves as a visual reminder of God's power and faithfulness.
- ✠ The Lord's prayer : Divide the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13) into portions to focus on different ways to pray. For example, you could spend an entire prayer time just focusing on the phrase "Our Father, which art in heaven" — allowing the Holy Spirit to unpack what it means in prayer.
- ✠ Couple time : In a couples' group, have spouses pray for each other.
- ✠ Prayer bulletin : Pray through the prayer requests given in the Sunday bulletin.
- ✠ Crisis prayer : If someone is in crisis, stop right then and pray for him or her.
- ✠ God's character : Spend time only in praise for who God is, not necessarily for what he has done. You will be amazed at how rich this kind of prayer time can be!
- ✠ Thankfulness jar : Put a jar with pieces of paper beside it for a period of time. It can be one group meeting or a whole semester. On the papers, members write what they are thankful for and place them in the jar. Read them together at a specified time and praise God together in prayer as they are read.
- ✠ Fasting : As a group, choose a time to fast from food or social media or something else. Come together to pray during the fasting time. It can be as simple as skipping the traditional dessert at group night and using the extra time to pray.
- ✠ Healing prayer : Have the sick person sit in down while the rest of the group gathers around to lay hands on them and pray for healing.
- ✠ Sit in silence : Allow the group to pray in silence, listening for God and waiting for his presence. This is a great exercise in helping us practice God's presence.
- ✠ Names of God : In prayer, have the group member call out names of God as a way of praising him for who he is and what he has done.
- ✠ Body prayers : During prayer, have members try a new position for prayer — kneeling, laying prostrate, standing with arms raised, etc...
- ✠ Candle prayer : Light a candle during group prayer times as a symbol of God's presence in your midst.

Facilitate Meaningful Group Prayer

Excerpted from *Leading Life-Changing Small Groups* by Bill Donahue

Model It

1. Be a person of prayer yourself—pray for your members and for who might fill the open chair, asking God to give you his direction in leading the group.
2. When you pray out loud in the group, keep your prayers honest, authentic, and from your heart.
3. Basic guide for group prayer:
 - Short simple prayers create safety.
 - Simple prayers are direct and honest.
 - Spirit-led prayers rely on God's power.
 - Silent prayers are okay for anyone, especially newcomers.

Keep It Safe

1. Don't call on someone to pray unless you've asked permission beforehand (or you know them well).
2. Don't expect everyone to pray every time.
3. Try to avoid praying in a circle. Allow members to pray one at a time as they feel led.
4. Respect the intimacy level. As the group grows in deepening relationships, a sense of safety will foster a deeper experience in prayer.
5. Be clear on who will close the prayer time.

Guide the Prayer

1. Give guidelines, but let the Holy Spirit lead.
2. Avoid lengthy discussions on prayer.
3. Include prayer each time you meet.
4. Use a variety of praying methods.

What Happens When Group Members Commit to Pray for One Another?

- Your relationship with Christ and with each other will deepen. You will experience spiritual growth.
- There is less chance of burnout as you put problems in God's hands and trust members to his care.
- You allow the Holy Spirit to work in your group so your time together is filling and refreshing.
- God will answer your prayers in amazing ways, and your faith will increase.