

5.3 Tips for leading prayer meetings

5.3.a Importance of leadership

Every prayer meeting needs to have someone who leads the time of prayer. Leaders are those who lead. Different ones can lead the meetings but there needs to be someone directing. The first rule of all times of Strategic Prayer is that everyone prays. A sister hasn't led in prayer for the past two hours. Ask her specifically to pray about something. Once the pump is primed she will continue to enter right in.

5.3.b Steps for opening a meeting

How the meeting is opened will depend a lot on who is present and their experience in praying together. A small committed group which prays together regularly need a lot less preparation than a large number of people drawn from different backgrounds for a one-off event. The leader needs to be sensitive to the different needs of the participants. This may include some or all of the following:

- People often need time to re-focus. They come in busy with lots of things on their mind. They need to be reminded why you are together and given time to 'lay down' the worries and preoccupations that they have brought with them. Maybe a few moments of quiet would help. Or you could read a short passage of scripture to focus people, maybe reminding them of a great prayer or pray-er in the Bible.
- It may be necessary to pray for any individual needs before launching into intercession. For instance someone may be distracted by sickness and need healing for either themselves or a family member.
- If there is a plan for the intercession time then it is good to explain it to people at the beginning so they know where they are going and can follow the theme. There may be particular issues that will be prayed for or a progression that the leader has discerned beforehand.
- If there is no plan then prepare people for the idea that the Holy Spirit will be guiding and that He may speak through any member of the team – not just the leader. How do you anticipate that happening?
- People need to know the boundaries, expectations and practicalities – especially if they are unfamiliar with the normal procedure of the group. Are they expected to pray out loud one after another or all together? Are they free to share prophetic words and pictures? Could they bring a tongue? Do they need to 'clear' these sorts of things with the prayer leader before sharing with the whole group? Is it OK to move around? Can they get a drink if needed?
- Entering into worship then prepares people for prayer and focuses us away from ourselves and onto Jesus.

5.3.c Drawing people out

Some people may not be used to praying or have a rather shy disposition in which case the person leading the meeting may need to 'draw them out'. This should be done sensitively so as not to embarrass. The leader could ask if that person has something they particularly want to share or specifically ask that person to lead in praying about something.

5.3.d Organising the prayer time

A prayer time can be led in many different ways again depending on the experience of those involved. Some of these ideas may be helpful:

- Divide the prayer time into chunks, giving people ideas and thoughts and direction between each chunk.
- Pray in different ways. Sometimes pray as a big group with people leading one after the other. Sometimes get everyone to all pray out loud together at the same time (sometimes called 'Korean' style). Divide the group into smaller groups so that each person gets a chance to pray and so that each person feels safe and unembarrassed to pray out loud. Get people to pray in pairs.
- Occasionally pause and ask people to share what they feel the Lord is speaking
- Encourage people to use scripture while praying

5.3.e Slowing people down

- Put guidelines down so that one person doesn't pray for too long. If somebody has been praying for 5 minutes or more it may be time for someone else to participate!
- Make sure people know to stay with the one subject or line of prayer until it has been prayed through before moving on to the next subject.

5.3.f Prayer for all intercessors as they pray

In a meeting that has more than a small group of intercessors together, it is often helpful to have someone praying for the people who are praying. This normally takes places as the prayer meeting is going on. It can also take place on prayer walks, by having one person walk behind the rest of the group and cover them in prayer as the walk progresses (this person can also be rotated in and out of the group of prayer walkers).

When praying for the intercessors, pray for:

- Each one to be filled with the Spirit
- Each one to have insights and understanding from God
- An increase in faith and boldness in prayer
- Protection from distractions
- An understanding of their identity in prayer