



# Prayer and Praise in Small Groups

## Quick Start Guide 9



This resource is for small group leaders wanting to encourage prayer and praise in the groups they lead.

## PRAYER

### Getting going with prayer...

Are you, as the leader, the only member of the group who prays out loud? Do group members lack confidence in this? Here are some ways to help them:

- Give some teaching on prayer and demolish the myths (one myth is that you need to use big theological words!)
- Tell the group not to be afraid of silence but that the value of spoken prayer is that others can add their 'Amen'.
- Make your own prayers simpler so that it sounds easier to do (your eloquence may discourage them from trying).
- Write down prayer requests and ask someone other than you to pray through them – or divide them up and ask group members if they will take a section each. Praying from written material is easier than trying to remember all the prayer requests or think up appropriate words.
- A step back from this is to ask group members to write out a short prayer.
- This can be done in smaller groups of three or four as long as one person in each smaller group can facilitate it.

### What to pray for....

Use the 'ACTS' model – adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication (requests) to expand prayers beyond just requests. The following specific examples are not exhaustive but will help you have a more balanced approach:

- Adoration: have a time just praising God in prayer for who he is and what he has done in Christ for us, ask the group to pray one word (or very short) prayers describing God's attributes (love, care, holiness, etc...)
- Confession: ask the group to say sorry for one thing since last time they met (shouldn't be hard to think of something but could pray for the Holy Spirit to bring to mind!). Say sorry as a group for neglecting something.
- Thanksgiving: keep a notepad of prayer requests and then remember to give thanks when they are answered!
- Supplication: pray for each other and those you know who are in need, the Minister, Kirk Session and your congregation, missionaries, the persecuted church, our country, for people we know to become Christians.

### Prayer coaching...

Give some pointers on praying better:

- Be specific. For example, try not to say 'we just pray for Mr X' but 'we pray that Mr X would know your peace/become a Christian/know your provision/etc.'
- Normally prayer is to the Father, in the name of Jesus by the Holy Spirit – the dynamics of this are that Jesus grants us access to God by his work on the cross and the Spirit indwells us as our connection with God.
- God knows all the details, so in praying out loud, just give enough for others to understand and say 'Amen'.

# PRAISE

## Getting going with praise and worship...




But none of us can sing! Really? But you do in church... Sometimes it's just a matter of confidence. Use the gifts in the group – if someone plays an instrument that can be a real blessing (but be wise if you know that they play the recorder badly!). Singing praise in a small group can be a wonderful experience of intimacy with God but more than that, praising God as a group is a worthy response to God who has blessed you as a group. So no matter how you do it, it's something not to put on the backburner with the excuse 'we can't sing'. Some ideas are:

- Praise God in prayer (see suggestions over the page)
- Read a Bible passage that praises God, e.g. from the Psalms
- As a last resort, play a worship song on CD or MP3 and sing along (provide the words for the group)

## Understanding worship for the group...

On Sundays, in a traditional Presbyterian service, there is a very familiar format. It is not just about stand up and sit down. There is a flow – God speaks, we respond, God speaks. The opening is a 'call to worship' then there is a hymn of praise. There is often a hymn of response to the sermon.

As a leader, think about how this works in your small group meeting (and explain it to them). Here is an example (a down arrow means God speaks to us, an up arrow means we respond to God):

- The group arrives and there is something that is heavy on their hearts – give it to God in prayer 
- The Bible study is all about a great attribute of God, e.g. holiness or grace 
- After the Bible study praise God for this attribute in prayer or song 

The small group also includes Christ at work in and through the group which means sideways arrows as well. If the group leader and the group understands all this then worship can become a normal part of the group's experience and not just be limited to singing (although the worth of singing praise to God should not be underestimated).

## Praise and worship ideas...

Worship is more than praise. Here are some ideas:

- Consider fasting as a group from food or perhaps a luxury food like chocolate, mobiles phones or Facebook! Remember the purpose of fasting is not to feel good about being self-controlled but to focus on God.
- Do a Bible study on work and life as worship (see Colossians 3 for example).
- Choose a great hymn and consider the words in more depth and where they find their source in the Bible.