

Fostering a Spirit of Prayer

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Prayer is a crucial part of the small group time, but it is often the most neglected. Nothing will knit hearts together like praying for one another, not to mention the joy of witnessing answered prayer!

A common frustration for small groups is how to spend less time talking about what we need prayer for and more time actually praying!

Tips to help your group pray more and talk less:

- Encourage the women to be brief in their requests and to keep them personal and spiritual. God knows every detail; the women don't need to.
- Ask them to think of one personal request and one spiritual growth request to keep them focused on growing spiritually.
- Stop for prayer throughout the time together as needs surface.
- Some groups may choose to pray first at the beginning of small group time to ensure adequate time is given for prayer.
- If groups are praying at the end, they should plan for it or time will escape them.
- Those who are uncomfortable praying out loud should not be forced to do so. However, leaders can encourage their growth in this area by asking them to bring their prayer request written on a card to be read during prayer time. Eventually, they will go from reading their request to praying it from their heart.

Options for varying the group prayer times:

- If everyone is willing to pray out loud, ask them to pray for the person on their right (or left).

- Ask one or two women to close in prayer in lieu of everyone praying.
- Ask for popcorn-style prayers regarding the lesson and discussion (women randomly praying short requests as they feel led, possibly more than once, with the leader closing in prayer).
- Divide into groups of two or three to make prayer time more intimate.

Tips for building prayer time beyond the group:

- Provide cards for the women throughout the semester. Encourage them to take a blank one home each week and bring it back with their written prayer request on it. Turn all cards into the apprentice or a volunteer at the table to take them home, and email all requests to the women in the group within a day or two. This enables the women to pray for the entire group for the remainder of the week. (Of course, each woman would need to be in agreement that this method works for her household. Does she share an email account with family? Then this then would not be appropriate as the requests should remain confidential.)
- Using the emailed requests, each woman can choose a day of the week to pray for the group. With eight in a small group, all seven days will have prayer coverage for every woman in the group. The email would need to be sent the same day in order for this to be effective.
- Again, using the emailed requests, the entire group commits to stopping and praying for the group at a certain day and time during the week.
- Another method is to collect the completed prayer cards, mix them up, and have each person take one. That is the person they are to pray for that week—daily. They should make phone contact with that person as well to pray with her. If done right, this means each woman receives a call each week and makes a call each week, keeping the group connected all semester long.