

Christian Leadership 3 – Week 9

Developing Corporate Prayer

Why is corporate prayer so important?

- *It models the importance of prayer.* If we say that something is spiritually important, we should do it with others in a regular way (e.g., Bible study; fellowship). In corporate prayer, we come together to express our dependence on God, our faith in His promises, and our zeal to serve Him. Over time, answered prayers make it clear that all fruitful ministry is birthed and bathed in prayer (see Matt. 18:19,20; Acts 1:14 & related verses).
- *It helps to create an ethos of other-centeredness and outreach.* A prayer focus that includes non-Christians and other Christians builds conviction over time to serve others rather than stay consumed with self. New Christians who join us are invariably impressed that they have been prayed for by the group—and they come to see how important this is.
- *It is an important way to get new Christians off to a good start.* The sooner new Christians “break the corporate prayer barrier,” the better. They learn how to pray by listening to other more mature Christians, and by being affirmed when they pray. They become aware of the ministry mission of the home group and are immediately able to be a vital part of it through their prayers.
- *It facilitates healthy corporate spiritual experience.* People are spiritually edified and united as they talk to God and listen to others do the same. Praising and thanking God together is reorienting and uplifting. When men and women are vulnerable to God and pray for one another, this both expresses our unity and strengthens it. We often receive specific insights and leadings from God in this context—sometimes directly related to what people pray about, but sometimes unrelated to what is said.
- *It enables us to see what God is doing in and through our home group.* As people thank God for progress in their lives and ministries, we see more clearly that God is indeed at work among us! Leaders also often learn about problems that need to be addressed by monitoring what is expressed in this setting.
- *It helps strengthen weak individual prayer lives.* Few of us can pray alone for sustained periods of time. But in corporate prayer, we can pray much longer because one prayer keeps lighting off another. Corporate prayer also helps promote discipline in our prayer lives. It is scheduled, and others will be there. Even if we have had a poor week of individual prayer, we still have these times through the week where we pray with others. This helps prevent us from drifting into prayerlessness.

What happens at a healthy corporate prayer meeting?

- **WHO:** Don't worry about getting a big group together to start with. *Start with a few committed people and stay with it.* In time, God will probably draw others to pray with you. Share your excitement about what you are doing, and invite people to join you. Those who respond to your invitations will be blessed by what they experience.

- **WHAT:** *Focus on three things: praise & thanksgiving, intercession for lost people, and petition for one another* (see Col. 4:2 and following context). Strive for balance here instead of focusing on only one or two of these.

Normally start with a period praise and thanks—perhaps in song and/or with occasional communion. This helps us “wash the slime” off our spirits and focus on how powerful and loving God is. Then ask Him to lead you and help you “symphonize” (Matt. 18:19 – “agree” is *sumphoneo*) with Him in the rest of your prayer.

Pray especially for the people to whom you are witnessing, and for the newer people in your home group. Keep this as your intercessory focus, and also stretch beyond this to other Xenos ministries (especially ones that home group members are involved in), Xenos missions, etc.

Model other-centered prayer coupled with personal vulnerability. Pray for your own needs so that you can serve the Lord and minister to others. This models healthy (rather than self-absorbed) vulnerability. Pray for one another in this same way.

- **HOW:** Pick a place where you will be undisturbed. Meet at the same time and place, preferably every week.

Allow for at least 30 minutes (preferably a full hour). It usually takes some time for us to get focused and in the Spirit, and prayer is work that should be thorough.

Pray beforehand for the prayer meeting and to come already in the Spirit. Satan will do his best to wipe you out beforehand—resist him!

Identify prayer warriors and mobilize them for this meeting. Consider asking those who are strong in praising/thanking God to lead this part of the meeting. Urge intercessory warriors to play a big role in this meeting, and urge others to send them additional prayer needs (if they are OK with this). Esteem these people!

Have people face each other and speak loudly enough that all can hear. You may have to ask people to speak up so others can participate in their prayers.

The ideal size is 6-12. This is big enough to stimulate ongoing prayer, but small enough that everyone can pray several times. If the group gets bigger than 15, you may need to break it into 2 groups—and have some experienced prayers in both groups.

“Just do it.” Don’t spend a long time talking about what/who you should pray for. Have people share requests and answers briefly, or just start praying!

Leaders should be catalysts during prayer. Get it started or ask someone to start. Pray as needed to keep on track with God’s priorities, stretch vision to other areas, etc. But don’t pray too much—the goal is to get everyone else praying.

Model short, specific prayers. A 30 second prayer is plenty. The idea is to get everyone involved. Long and flowery prayers are unedifying and discourage newer Christians. Speak privately to those who consistently pray long-winded prayers.

“Amen” all appropriate prayers—especially newer Christians and new people at prayer. Inappropriate prayer can be ignored, redirected, or even re-prayed correctly—as the Lord leads.