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Fort Leavenworth Bible Study Developmental Prayer

Step-By-Step Prayer Development Methods

Well over 90% of the members of the armed forces claim to be Christians. Only a very small number of them have ever prayed aloud in public. A significant part of community building in a Bible study is participative prayer.

We have found it wise to state that no one is called on to read, pray, or participate in our Bible study groups. Our goal, however, is to encourage everyone's confidence in praying and give them an equal opportunity to pray in the group. For this reason, we recommend that the Bible study leader carefully guide the prayer time. Discourage long, flowing, "King James" type prayers. They will intimidate those who are less familiar with group prayer.

Our purpose in the group is not to impress others with our eloquent prayers. It is to encourage all to pray in a way that communicates with God. Following is a description of the step-by-step prayer development method. Words in quotes ("") are the instructions of the leader to the group. The number of meetings indicated for each step are the average that most groups require to obtain a comfortable level of participation.

The leader allots a specific number of minutes to prayer and uses silence, avoiding the pressure to fill in silent periods with words. Close your prayers with "in Jesus' name, Amen!" If someone joins the group, the leader should recycle through the steps allotting just 1 or 2 meetings to each step.

It is not necessary to explain to the group why the leader is going back to step 1 and risk embarrassing the new person. Start this process with your first meeting and you will find more participation and growth in your prayer time.

1. Step 1 (3 to 4 meetings)

a. Opening Prayer (4 min.) "We will open with prayer by reading phrases of praise. Turn to Psalm 148, about the middle of your Bible. (Some may be present who are not familiar with location of books of the Bible. Refer to the contents page in your Bible and say, 'Using the table of contents in my Bible, Psalms start on page __.') You will note that Psalm 148, 149, and 150 are a series of phrases of praise of God. For example, the first phrase is 'Praise the Lord from the Heavens.' The second phrase is 'Praise Him in the heights', and so on. For the next few minutes we will have a time of reading phrases of praise which you select at random from the last three Psalms. Read one phrase at a time and permit someone else to read one before you read a

second one. Feel free to repeat a phrase that has previously been read. Now, let's go to the Lord with phrases praise. I will start with 'Praise the Lord.'" (If the group is small or the number participating is small, have them read whole verses rather than phrases).

b. Closing Prayer

(1) Petition (3 min.) "For the next few minutes we will have one word prayers of petition for ourselves; our needs; or what we desire of God. Heads up, eyes open. The Bible does not direct that you close your eyes and bow your head when you pray. For a little while we will not bow our heads and close our eyes when we pray. Please say one word and wait for someone else to contribute before you say another word. Feel free to repeat someone else's word of petition if it is your need also. I will start with 'peace'." (Note: the leader should model by repeating a few of the words of others at the beginning.)

(2) Intercession (3 min.) "Now, let's switch to one word prayers for this group; i.e., our desire of the Lord for our Bible study group. I will start with growth."

2. Step 2 (4 meetings)

a. Opening Prayer

(1) Phrases of praise (4 min.) "Let's continue to open with phrases of praise but feel free to select any phrases of praise you find in the Psalms. Also, feel free to add your own extemporaneous phrases of praise. We will follow the same rules as previously; i.e., read or say one phrase at a time and permit someone else to read or say one before you add another one."

(2) Thanksgiving (3 min.) "Now let's bow our heads and switch to sentence prayers of thanksgiving; i.e., what we wish to thank the Lord for today. 'Lord, I thank you for the fellowship that we enjoy in our group.'"

b. Closing Prayer

(1) Petition (3 min.) "Let's close with sentence prayers of petition; what we would ask of the Lord for ourselves."

(2) Intercession (3 min.) "Now let's switch to prayers for others; prayers of intercession." (Leader pray for some who have mentioned a need in their petition.)


3. Step 3 (Indefinite period) Read through this sequence before starting.

(a) Opening Prayer (6 min.) "Let's open with phrases of praise and sentence prayers of thanksgiving."

(b) Closing Prayer (6 min.) "Let's close with short prayers of petition or intercession." (The leader should model conversational prayer by leading the way.) **(c) Assignments to pray for each other** (continue as long as effective) If the group is composed of couples: "Between now and our next meeting I would like for each of you to pray for your spouse at least once each day." If the group is not composed of couples, assign a prayer partner for each person for the coming week and change partners for succeeding weeks. (***)Caution: Do not assign married people to pray for those of the opposite sex, except for their spouses. Share at the next meeting about this experience.)

(d) Step 4 (indefinite) Continue to open and close prayer as the Holy Spirit leads. The structured format of the above steps are designed to develop the group as a praying body.

Last Reviewed: July 13, 2006

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