

IN OUR CORPORATE GATHERINGS (SUNDAY MEETINGS)

WHY?

- Scripture gives us lots of stories of big groups of people praying together, and God acting in miraculous ways. This is a powerful way of invoking the Lord's intervention—so give space in your services for this regularly in some form.
- Explore, experiment and develop what works best with your numbers and facilities believing that you **must** do this, not just leave it to the 'serious pray-ers' in small groups. This needs oversight and coordination, and probably some instruction to the congregation.
- Believe that as you do this together, it will spill into the lives and homes of those who usually hesitate to pray. They will catch the joy and faith-building effect of prayer.

TIPS

The three main areas of prayer in corporate gatherings are: response in worship, praying for needs and praying in response to the Bible message.

1 Tips for Responding in Worship

- Display a prayer or Scripture passage to declare out loud.
- Use a responsive prayer or reading.
- Provide a prayer of repentance that people can either say together or read quietly to themselves. Either write one or provide something from a Psalm (perhaps **Psalm 32** or **51**).

2 Tips for Praying for Needs

- With some planning, you can use a great variety of people in your corporate prayer: families, small groups, ministry leaders, even fairly-new believers who could write and read a prayer. Get creative and involve the whole congregation.
- Organise a roster (or grab people) and ask people to pray for anything on their heart. Then the topics will vary the focus from church needs to community, national, international and missions.
- Keep alert to what is on people's hearts. If there has been a serious accident, a school closing, or a contentious issues in your community, make that your focus for a week or two.
- If your group number less than 100, consider an open time of short praise and thanksgiving prayers. If inviting the whole group to respond, have a couple of people primed to pray so there is no long silence.
- Ask two or three people to offer brief praise prayers.
- Try everyone praying out loud at the same time. Get creative, but keep it to a few minutes.
- Break people into small groups to pray for presented topics.
- Include a prayer in your newsletter and declare it together.
- Show a DVD clip on the topic (eg, missions) and then ask people to pray in groups.
- Ask someone to pray in a different language (eg, in Māori), then translate it.

3 Tips for Praying in Response to the Bible Message

- If you are a regular preacher who isn't confident at leading response times, find someone who is and ask for coaching. Or hand this time over to them to lead.
- Make sure you do not miss the moment when God is powerfully speaking by just 'having the last song' or saying a quick benediction to get to morning tea.
- Use the response time to reinforce action. For example, at the end of a message on sharing our faith, ask people to think of others in their lives whom they would like to bring to faith. Then ask them to pray specifically for these people and any actions they can take this week.

4 Keep your response times fresh. Don't fall into the trap of doing the same thing over and over until it wearies people. Our Creator God has no end of variations in how he touches lives!

- Offer people the chance to come up for prayer. Allow time for this response (but don't become predictable).
- Have people sit in silence and allow the challenge or the question to settle in their heart. Ask people with a prayer on their heart to pray publicly (or for bigger groups, invite two or three to come to the microphone to pray briefly).
- Have paper and pens handy for individuals to write a prayer to take home and continue to pray.
- Ask people to pray in twos or threes about their response. This can take time, and some people get into long conversations and do not pray, so be clear in directing people in this. If they feel inadequate, suggest they just sit with the other person and pray silently. It can be very precious to pray together.
- Put a written prayer on screen and ask people to say it aloud together, or offer a prayer that they repeat in their heads.
- Make a special 'prayer place' available where people can be invited to come forward to pray.
- Ask people to speak a 'blessing prayer' over someone else. You could write one and display it on the screen as a model.

RESOURCES

From the Booth College of Mission library

- *Transforming Prayers: 40 Unique Experiences* by Jenny Baker with reproducible handouts (248.32). Designed for youth, but with many practical ideas. Full of symbols and actions to 'flesh out' our praying.