

Ascensiontide

leadership and prayer

AIM

This document is a complete outline for a small group like a House or Cell Group on the theme of **Leadership** and **Prayer**. The purpose of this session is to enable group facilitators to help participants feel comfortable engaging with and using prayer naturally.

INTRODUCTION

People come into leadership of groups in a variety of ways. It may be that they have been nominated by church meeting, have a desire to see a home group started or the mantle of leadership has passed on in an existing group. Whatever the circumstances, how to lead a group on the subject of prayer often causes anxiety for the leader as well as group members. What follows will aim to enable a group to explore prayer in a constructive and helpful way.

One part of growth in prayer is a greater awareness of the activity of God in us and around us, so that prayer becomes an ever increasing part of our life, a being in touch with God. A closer relationship with God is something all Christians aim towards achieving.

STRUCTURE

Begin the session with a short introductory prayer such as this

Lord as we gather in your presence, help us to have a fuller understanding of how we can best use your precious gift of prayer as part of our personal and corporate faith. Open our hearts and minds to your ways. We ask it in Jesus name, Amen.

If your group are not familiar with each other, ensure there is space for introductions before moving into the main content.

On the day of Pentecost (Acts chapter 2) the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples in a way that gave them freedom to express themselves naturally in relationship to God. It is this same naturalness that we want to engender amongst God's people in our prayer life.

For discussion

- **Ask people for their experiences of prayer both positive and negative**

One of the things we know for certain about Jesus is that he was a man of prayer. We find him in the Gospels going to a quiet place to pray in private and also in public to prayer for the sick and needy. His followers considered him like a Rabbi and were ready to learn from him.

In the synoptic Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke we have passages where Jesus is recorded teaching his disciples about prayer. Given that aspects of Jesus' teaching on prayer are recorded in three Gospels we can be certain that this is something the disciples wanted to be remembered about him. All three pick up on different aspects of the Lord's Prayer with Matthew's Gospel having the most complete and familiar words to us. There is much for us to learn here so we will concentrate on this passage. If you wish to look up the other references they are in Luke 11:2-4 & Mark 11:17.

- **Ask somebody in the group to read Matthew 6:9-13**

This teaching on prayer is part of the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). The structure of the prayer that you have just read is part of Jesus' practical advice on living the faith, and

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forms the framework from which all our prayers should come. It was given to us to avoid "vain repetition". It is a guide or model and not a text that we should not deviate from. It is therefore a living prayer capable of re-interpretation and fresh expression in each generation. However at the start of the passage it says "pray in this way". By following the guidelines of the Lord's Prayer we ensure that we bring ourselves before God acknowledging his sovereignty knowing our dependence upon him physically and spiritually and with a desire to see His Kingdom come and His will be done. We also remember that the power and the glory are God's and not ours. This framework for our prayer life ensures that that we approach God humbly and in faith, not always going to God with a shopping list of our requests but placing our prayers before God for him to receive and act upon in His ways.

By taking this approach to prayer we should be freed up to offer God all of our life and witness as a prayer and to develop a deeper relationship with God as our lives are opened up to him. This will mean trusting him with the good, the bad and the ugly of our lives and allowing His Spirit to minister through and in us. As our relationship with God grows, so prayer becomes a more natural part of the relationship. There is no incorrect or wrong way to pray and Christians find a wide range of settings, times and formats for prayer that suits them best. The most important thing is to get into the habit of regular communication with God.

For discussion

- **What is your view and understanding of the Lord's Prayer?**
- **Are we ready to offer the whole of our life to God in prayer?**
- **How might we use prayer to ensure our church life is in keeping with God's will for us?**
- **What do you find helpful in your personal and corporate prayer life?**

Allow people time to think about these questions and do not be frightened of silence. If people seem confident with prayer you may also want to think about the group walking as they say the Lord's Prayer in your locality and seeing what God has to say to you as you do so. Or, for the group to let its community know that they will be praying for it at a certain time and place on a regular basis and invite people to post any prayers they wish to be included to you at the church by hand or email.

Prayer

Finish the evening with a time of prayer giving thanks for all that has been shared and for God's presence with you. Here is an example

"As we come to the end of this evening together we offer all that we have shared and learnt as well as ourselves to you Lord. We pray that you might increase our faith and trust in you so that we may encounter you in all things and be a people drenched in prayer and listening to your leading and guidance day by day. We ask it in Jesus name, Amen"

Book list

You may find these books helpful

Approaches to Prayer Henry Morgan SPCK 1993

The Prayers of the Bible R E Clements SCM 1985

Caring For All Peter Ball Eastern Synod URC 2008

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EVALUATION

Please try to answer these questions for yourself and for others who will use this material:

1. What was the most helpful thing?
2. What was the least helpful thing?
3. What would you like to try now

THE NEXT STEP

If you want more items for this season please revisit the website. You will also find material about the Lord's Prayer and other bible studies related to prayer in the Prayer Toolkit.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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FEEDBACK

You can email the Vision4Life steering group about general or website V4L issues via the website or at admin@vision4life.org.uk

If you have comments and particularly contributions to the prayer year, you can email the V4L prayer year coordinator via prayer@vision4life.org.uk

If you want to make contributions or ask questions about other V4L years you can email:

Year 2 – Transformed by the Bible: bible@vision4life.org.uk

Year 3 – Transformed for Evangelism: evangelism@vision4life.org.uk