

A Helpful Guide for Spontaneous Group Prayer

The most important thing to remember is that your prayer doesn't have to be perfect.

- It doesn't need to be full of flowery or theological language.
- It doesn't have to sound like something the Priest reads from the Missal at the beginning of Mass.
- All it has to be is a reflection of what's in your heart and mind.

Even with that, we can get nervous and anxious. And even if we know some things we'd like to pray about, as soon as everyone is focusing on us, we freeze and forget everything we wanted to say. That's ok too. Just take a look at the ideas and thought starters below and then customize as you see fit.

Pre-Prayer

- **Instructions:** Before entering into prayer sometimes it's helpful for those involved to know what to expect. This helps to build clarity around the movements you will employ and can facilitate in people entering into the prayer more fully.
 - Give a brief overview of the prayer structure you will follow.
 - You could share why it is that you are praying at all.
 - You can tell people that at some point in the prayer you will "open the floor" to hear special intentions.
 - You can tell people that you will begin with sometime of silence and why.
- **Silence:** You could begin with a moment of silence. It'll help you collect your thoughts and help everyone else quiet their own minds. Five or ten seconds can be enough. If you'd like to start with a whole minute, just let people know.
 - "Let's start with a moment of silence."
 - "Shake off the stress of the day."
- **Bible Reading:** You could begin your time of prayer with a scripture reading along a particular theme or simply the reading of the day.
- **Meditation:** You could begin your time of prayer with a reflection or meditation from the writings of a saint or using some imaginative prayer.

Prayer Opening

- **Who to Address:** God responds to quite a few names. Here are some you could consider using to start your prayer:
 - Lord, God...
 - Heavenly Father...
 - Lord, Jesus...
 - Jesus Christ...
 - Holy Spirit...

Prayer Middle

- **Thanksgiving:** Try to start by thanking God for things. We could thank him for basically everything in the universe, but consider starting here and then see where your mind takes you. “We thank you...”
 - For this day
 - For our loved ones
 - For our community
 - For this small group
 - For our jobs
 - For our Faith
 - For healing someone
 - For answering a prayer
- **Confession or Seeking Forgiveness:** Its good to recognize that at times we fall short of God’s grace and love through Sin. This opens an opportunity to honestly look at the sins of the past few days or weeks and ask for God forgiveness. It could look something like this:
 - We ask that you would please forgive us of our failings...
 - We thank you for your mercy and forgiveness for the ways we have sinned against you and the others to whom we are called to love...
 - We take a moment to recall those times as have failed to live as your disciples and we ask for forgiveness...(Pause for a moment)
- **Intentions:** You can also add in some prayers that you’d like God to answer for yourself, for someone you know, or someone in your small group. “We ask that you would...”
 - Heal someone from a physical or mental disease
 - Protect someone from harm, death, or illness
 - Help someone get a job
 - Help someone pass a test
 - Bless a relationship
 - Answer some other specific prayer

Once you’re done with what you have to say, you can open up the floor to others. “Is there anything someone else would like to pray for?”

Prayer Closing

- **Conclusion:** There’s no best way to end a prayer. Just the fact that you’re praying is enough but here are some ways you could think about wrapping things up:
 - “We ask all of this in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.”
 - “As we pray together... Our Father OR Hail Mary OR Glory Be...”
 - Or just “Amen.”

Follow this simple structure a few times and it will become natural and easy.

- Begin
- Be Thankful
- Seek Forgiveness
- Ask For God’s Blessings
- Conclude

Sometimes all it takes is having a little direction and the rest falls into place.