

LIFE Group Leader Handout

April 12, 2015

It's Not Over—Trusted Sources

Pastor Mike O'Connor

Scripture—Colossians 1: 1-14

[1:1] Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and Timothy our brother,

[2] To the saints and faithful brothers in Christ at Colossae:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father.

[3] We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, [4] since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints, [5] because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel, [6] which has come to you, as indeed in the whole world it is bearing fruit and increasing—as it also does among you, since the day you heard it and understood the grace of God in truth, [7] just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf [8] and has made known to us your love in the Spirit.

[9] And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, [10] so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. [11] May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, [12] giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. [13] He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, [14] in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Main Idea—The Gospel Then and Now Comes through Trusted Sources

The message of the gospel has life in itself—

- it bears fruit wherever it goes—including faith, hope and love
- it increases
- it is grace and truth

Trusted Sources—

- Portray, they don't pretend
- Continue, not cave

Application—

- Think of some of the people God used in your life to break down your resistance in order to receive and believe the gospel—what was it about them that made them effective with you?
- Is the gospel bearing fruit and increasing in your life? Can I point to areas where I see God at work in me, and situations where I see God at work through me?

INTRODUCING PEOPLE TO GROUP PRAYER

10 Tips to help group members feel more comfortable

By Reid Smith

Praying in a group can be intimidating for those who haven't done it before. You'd be surprised how many people are not used to praying out loud with others listening in. This is an important skill for all believers to develop because agreement in prayer among two or more believers makes God's will be done on earth as it is in heaven, and builds the community of his church (Matthew 18:19-20). Here are some tips that will help you to ease the fears of people who are unfamiliar with group prayer, and help them participate more comfortably in this very important spiritual practice.

Be brief. Brevity can reduce the anxiety level in group prayer because it allows time for others to pray and serves as a model for simplicity in prayer (Matthew 5:7-13). People who aren't used to praying aloud in a group will see "short and simple" as something they can do, too.

Be informal. Don't have a big build-up. When it's time to pray, just begin. For example, "Okay everyone, let's pray. Feel free to jump in if you'd like. Lord, we....". This makes prayer feel less intimidating and more natural.

Be yourself. Imagine God sitting across from you in the group and talk with him like you would another person--after all, Jesus is fully human and he has promised to be in your midst. Have a conversational flow to what you share with the Lord and avoid Christian cliches or complex theological jargon.

Use Scripture. Invite people to articulate their prayer with biblical passages. They can read something that is meaningful to them and say "I believe that about..." or "Let that be true for..." and reference their own prayer need or one that was shared by another group member.

Invite the most confident to lead. There is usually at least one person in every group who tends to be more forthright in prayer, or they're good about summarizing multiple prayer needs. At the beginning of your next group meeting, ask them how they'd feel about facilitating prayer time. If they're open to doing this, reassure them by saying, "Just be yourself; you'll be great!"

Don't call on anybody. Some people are terrified to pray in front of others, and if they're newer to the group, they may not return if you put them on the spot.

Don't go in a circle. This puts people who don't want to pray aloud in an embarrassing situation, especially if they are the only one to pass.

Go first in sharing a personal prayer request. This primes the pump for others to share and sets an example of vulnerability.

Appoint somebody to write down prayer requests. Then follow up on them at your next meeting. This cultivates a warm and caring environment that will help people feel safer about personally engaging in group prayer.

Practice integration. Discussing prayer needs outside of the time allotted for prayer in your next gathering can help integrate prayer more fully into your group life. This helps group prayer feel more a natural part of your group, as opposed to an isolated or add-on component.

Growth tip: There are a couple of ways you can strengthen this spiritual discipline with your group members. First, introduce prayer during different parts of your meeting. For example, do not always have it follow your discussion. Also, include brief prayers in your discussion time and express prayers in different ways (thanks, adoration, petition, and ministry). The more your group gets to know one another, the more freely you can ask different people to lead out in prayer. Also, if you're running short on time, but still want to pray, ask participants to pray their own requests. In other words, don't take time for each person to share and pray--have them verbalize their prayer needs to the group while in prayer.