

Building Community During Prayer Time

Having a meaningful time of prayer can also build community in your groups.

A. Model it in your life

1. Be a praying person yourself—pray with your spouse
Pray for the group members and their needs, for the Holy Spirit's guidance and power to enable you to be a true shepherd of your Flock, for all the members to be strengthened and encouraged by their gathering together.
2. When praying aloud in your group, let your prayers be natural, true, and from your heart.

B. Play it safe

1. Don't expect every member to pray each time.
2. Let the participants pray as they feel led, rather than praying around the circle or some other specified pattern.
3. Respect your covenant's intimacy provision. This will develop a sense of safety and will nurture real, heart-felt prayer.

C. Gently set guidelines for your prayer time

1. Pray each time your Flock meets.
2. Vary your time and methods of praying.
3. Follow the Holy Spirit's leading.
 - a. When a deep need is being discussed, stop and pray for it right then.
 - b. Encourage spontaneous and free praying.
 - c. Periods of silence are not to be feared.
 - d. Give the Holy Spirit time to work in your Flock gathering so your time together is edifying, uplifting, and refreshing.

D. Further ways to build community in your group through prayer

1. At times use a portion of the prayer time just to praise God instead of asking for needs to be met. (Kimber uses this on Wednesday nights)
2. Pray through a Scripture passage aloud together (Kimber uses this too)
3. Have spouses pray for each other and encourage them to continue doing so during the week.
4. Breakout into gender groups for more intimate sharing and accountability.

5. Apply prayers found in Scripture (Eph. 1:15-21; 3:14-19; Phil. 4:6-7; Col. 1:9-12; 2 Thess. 1:11-12).
 6. Vary the placement of the prayer time in your meeting schedule. Don't always make prayer the last thing before you dismiss.
 7. On occasion pray through the requests in the Sunday bulletin.
 8. Pray that College Park elders may live righteous lives, make wise decisions, and give God's guidance to the church.
 9. At times, have the Flock members write out their requests beforehand and exchange them with another participant.
 10. Assign participants to pray specifically for others during prayer time.
 11. Ask a gifted communicator to write down all the answers, praises and requests and e-mail them within two days to all the members.
 12. Don't let the giving of prayer requests consume all of your prayer time (see #9 above to help alleviate the situation if this is a problem).
 13. Let different members lead your prayer session.
 14. Always allow some time for actual prayer by the group so they can experience the Holy Spirit's blessing. Then remind them to pray for the requests during the interval before the next meeting.
- E. For more tips on developing prayer in your Flock Group, see *The Willow Creek Guide to Leading Life-Changing Small Groups*, 117-120. Also see *Small Group Leaders' Handbook*, by InterVarsity Press, 69-84.