

PRAYER DASHBOARD LEADER'S GUIDE

In a typical small group, perspectives on prayer are likely to differ. This one-week study provides an opportunity to discuss as a group the purpose of prayer. As a leader, this study can also provide a chance for you to share why we would choose to pray in a group together. Here are three reasons we believe prayer is an important part of every Community Group:

1. **Sharing prayer requests builds community.**

One of the central purposes of Community Groups is to be an environment where people can experience accountability, belonging, and care. Sharing prayer requests helps in the development of each of those building blocks of authentic community. Sharing prayer requests and celebrating answered prayers together also drive relationships deeper.

2. **Prayer is an opportunity to be aware of God's work in the lives of group members.**

When we pray, it is a way of inclining our hearts and minds toward God and acknowledging our dependence on him. By praying in a Community Group setting, we invite his involvement in the growth and development of the group.

As leaders, it can be easy to reduce our prayer time to a simple question of, "Does anyone have anything we can pray about?" at the end of your group meeting. Below are four prayer barriers, as well as ways to overcome them.

FOUR BARRIERS TO GREAT GROUP PRAYER

Many factors can restrict the growth and development of a Community Group's prayer life, but most of them fall into one of four categories:

1. **Group members lack experience or confidence with prayer.**

Most Community Groups include members that have no experience with group prayer. In fact, some group members have no experience with prayer at all. Groups attract people from diverse religious backgrounds. Some group members have no religious backgrounds at all. Others come from a tradition where faith was kept private. It's not surprising that group members lack experience with prayer.

2. **The groups' prayers lack authenticity and depth.**

Shallow, inauthentic prayers definitely undermine a group's prayer life. That kind of drab prayer experience can be a result of a number of factors . . . from people who never have prayer requests to those who dominate prayer time.

3. **The groups' prayer times lack structure and variety.**

Routine can be good. Many of us wouldn't be able to maintain physical fitness without the stability and predictability of habit. But the same characteristic of routine that provides stability—the ability to perform an action without giving it much thought—can rob a group's prayer time of its energy. By injecting a little change into the structure of your prayer time, such as altering the timing and format, you can keep things fresh and vital.

4. **The group doesn't follow through on prayer requests.**

Maybe the most important tip is to follow up on prayer requests. There's no better way to reinforce the value of group prayer than to ask members what has happened with their past requests.