

# Group Prayer Basics

*Adapted from Prayer Study Guide, Appendix A, by Tim Keller*

Conversational prayer can be used any time two or more people pray together. It differs from what we often experience in group prayer – talking in detail about our prayer needs so there is little time to pray, or one long monologue prayer after another. Conversational prayer recognizes that prayer is really dialogue, and includes God from the outset. We converse in prayer not only with Him but with the others present. It is prayer in which we invite the Holy Spirit to lead us and expect his edifying work among us.

It is typically helpful for the focus of the group prayer time to be stated by the leader from the outset. You have the freedom, of course, to shift the focus as the Spirit is leading. The leader will also help to guide the prayer time as it unfolds.

## Basic Guidelines for Group Praying:

1. **Don't take time to share prayer requests** first unless you do so very briefly. Let them come out as you pray.
2. **Be brief.** Limit yourself to a couple of sentences at a time, covering one thought instead of many.
3. **Be specific.** This is typically more edifying and compelling than overly-general requests. It also allows greater opportunity to recognize and celebrate answered prayers.
4. **Be bold.** As adopted and beloved children of the King, we need not sheepishly beat around the bush.
5. **Pray for big things.** We honor our unfathomably powerful God by asking for God-sized requests.
6. **Pray for others,** rather than yourself – especially in group prayer. Pray for the advance of God's Kingdom.
7. **Use everyday language.** Beware of using words, phrases, or tones you never use in normal conversation.
8. **Feel free to keep your eyes open and hands unfolded.** Assume whatever posture helps you focus.
9. **Pray spontaneously** instead of going around the circle.
10. **Build on the prayers of others,** as in conversation. When a topic is complete, it will be clear by the silence. Anyone can move on to the next topic, not just the leader.
11. **If a Scripture passage comes to mind, do pray it** if it seems at all related. This is often how the Holy Spirit edifies our prayers.
12. **Pray loud enough so others can hear you.** For those with soft voices, don't pray with your head down.
13. **Pray silently along with the one who is praying.** Discipline yourself not to think about what you'll pray next, but to stay actively involved when you are not praying. You can do this by verbally and nonverbally agreeing with others' prayers. This is a vital aspect of the "group" nature of prayer.
14. **Don't rush to fill a silence.** Silences are normal and can actually be restful. They also provided needed pause for shyer prayers to jump in.
15. **If two people start praying at the same time,** simply make eye contact and briefly decide who will pray first. I recommend men typically defer to women, and older believers defer to younger Christians.
16. **If someone is uncomfortable praying aloud** (which is very common), give him or her the freedom to pray along silently. However, the eventual goal is that everyone would learn to engage aloud in group prayer. Shy prayers should be encouraged over time to take steps of engagement.
17. **Don't close each prayer with "in Jesus' Name, Amen."** Assume every prayer is prayed in His Name. It also keeps the prayer time open and going, rather than a feeling of "hanging up the phone" for the whole group, but instead fosters a continuity or flow in the prayer time until the very end, when the leader of the group will close "in Jesus' Name" for the entire prayer session.