

Thanks for being willing to lead God's people in prayer. This is an important element in any good church gathering.

Here are a few things to keep in mind as you prepare:

- Prayer is talking to God – not talking to the congregation (Ps 17:6; 69:13). It is essentially *faith articulated*. As we pray, we give glory and honour to God, we confess, we ask of him, and we thank him.
- When you pray publically, you are leading the congregation in talking to God (not praying individually).
- It may be helpful to move from God to person, from the big to the small (Matt 6:9-13).
- Model biblical prayers.

Please prepare beforehand, the following points may help you:

a. Determine a Bible passages to model your prayers. For example...

- Prayers influenced by the Bible passage that is preached on that day (as a response to what God is saying in the sermon).
- Prayers found in the Bible (e.g. Deut 32; 1 Sam 2; Dan 9; Eph 1; Phil 1; Col 1; 2 Thess 1).
- Verses about God, and Jesus (e.g. Psalms; Eph 1; Christology sections in NT; Rev 4-5).
- Verses about the world, Australia (e.g. Dan 2; Rom 13; 2 Pet 3; Rev 2-3).
- Verses about community (e.g. Rom 8; Gal 5-6; Col 2-3; Rev 2-3).

b. Pray to the Father, in the name of the Son, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

- The gospel shows us that prayer is Trinitarian. We pray to God the Father, through the Spirit (because it is the Spirit who brings about the change in us to want to address God as Father) and in the name of the Son, because it is Son who gives, in his death on the cross, the right for us to address God as Father.

c. Write out your prayers.

- Use 'we' and 'us' language not 'I' and 'me' language (it is corporate prayer).
- Start with something like 'Please join with me as I lead us in prayer' (not 'Let me pray').
- Pray to God in the first person (i.e. talk to him e.g. "Heavenly Father ...") rather than in the third person (e.g. 'We pray that God will...').
- Reflect the prayer concerns or requests that are suggested by your Church.
- Some like to write out and use a full script, others prefer to follow bullet points.
- Use concise, plain language; avoid Christian jargon, or insider knowledge (e.g. AFES, ES, CMS, BCSA, BCA, SU, or missionaries names without an explanation).

d. Work out an appropriate introduction

- If it is a typical church gathering then not much of an introduction is needed.
- If it is a guest service then explaining in 15 seconds what prayer is may be helpful.

e. Use your creativity!

- You don't need to do what everyone else does each week - the key is to be helpful.
- You might like to give people a moment for quiet reflection, or a chance to pray silently about something (you may need to give the instruction that it is a silent prayer!).
- You might like to give people a chance to respond after each prayer e.g. you conclude with 'Father hear our prayer' and people answer 'Through Jesus Christ our Lord' (give them the instruction).
- You might like to read a Bible verse – that has influenced your prayer.
- You could use some words from the song that has just been sung.

f. Pray so that we can all say “Amen!”

- As you are leading the congregation, they need to be able to say ‘Amen’ at the end of your prayer i.e. – they need to accept what you are praying.
- Prayers don’t need to be long to be profound; neither do they need to be ‘short’ to keep our concentration.
- The main thing is for us all to be able to say ‘amen’ to them, and for all to glorify God not ourselves, or our plans, or our concerns!
- As a suggestion, then, you might like to have a series of shorter prayers and get people to say ‘amen’ after each one!

Content Considerations

The prayer points given in the gathering running plan follow five broad categories:

1. **UP** – Giving thanks to God for some aspect of his character or work. Often this point should be informed by the Bible passage that is preached in the service.

2. **OUT** – Praying for the gospel to go out – and people or ministry endeavours which are aimed at calling people to Christ (e.g. Evangelistic events, CMS and our missionaries or global partners, CBF, ES, people or groups around your city/town (like medical workers, law enforcement, specific suburbs, our politicians, other churches, local businesses etc.)

3. **CURRENT** – Praying for a current issue or event that may have been picked up in the media that week (e.g. bushfires, terrorism attack, death of public figure, election etc.)

4. **IN** – Asking for God’s help for some aspect of God’s ministry for those at your church e.g. Growth/Small/Bible Groups, Youth Group, those training in ministry, Audio/Visual Ministry, Music Ministry, Kid’s Church, Ministry Team, Church Weekend away etc.), and matters relating to members of the congregation (not too specifically).

Note: When it comes to the suffering for being Christian – the temptation is to pray for the persecution to stop, for those suffering to be rescued, for persecutors to be punished – all perfectly normal responses, yet they fail on biblical grounds! Jesus clearly taught that persecution was normal (John 15:18-16:4), it is possible that God’s purposes are tied to suffering (c.f. Acts 22:22-23; Rom 5:1-5; 1 Pt 4:12-19) and Christians are called to love their enemies and pray for those who persecute (Matt 5:43-48). Instead, pray that Christians be obedient through their suffering and able to be a witness to Christ.

5. **LITURGICAL PRAYER** – Occasionally it is helpful to use formal (or liturgical) prayers to lead the congregation in (e.g. the Lord’s Prayer, Confession, General Thanksgiving), this should be presented on the screens for everyone to say together.

Further thinking

If you are interested in doing some further reading on prayer – these books may help:

- Jensen, P D. and Payne, T *Prayer and the Voice of God*. Kingsford: Matthias Media, 2006.
- Carson, D A. *A Call to Spiritual Reformation: Priorities from Paul and His Prayers*. Leicester: IVP, 1992.
- Goldsworthy, G *Prayer and the Knowledge of God: What the Whole Bible Teaches*. Leicester: IVP, 2003.
- Miller, P.E., *A Praying Life*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2009.
- Keller, T., *Prayer*. Great Britain: Hodder & Stoughton, 2014.

Pray well and fruitfully.



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