

SUGGESTIONS FOR PRAYER GROUP LEADERS

You have been asked to lead a Prayer Group. These suggestions can be helpful to you as you prepare. Consider them thoughtfully and prayerfully. Let us remember that "Jesus Christ is the Leader of the prayer group." As you prepare for the time together, visualize Jesus as the Center of the group. (Matthew 18:19-20). Remind the group of His Lordship in all things. You are the human leader to give directions and to keep control. Don't let anyone take all the time or unduly stress some experience, practice or doctrine, not even yourself. Aim for a group experience, accepting, caring, loving one another and growing in oneness in Christ.

1. **PREPARATION.** Plan ahead so that the prayer group can be most effective in the time scheduled. Realize that your group will be one of diversity in age, vocation, lifestyle, experience and maturity. Each person is seeking a life-changing relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ who knows who we are, where we are and what we need. He alone can enable us to experience change. So while preparing, remain adaptable, flexible, ready to accept others without expecting them to conform to all the patterns that are meaningful to you.

Prepare some kind of beginning and closing for the group sessions. Scriptures and songs can be helpful here. Plan to be flexible, letting the Spirit guide the flow of the group and guide you in helping all to participate. Plan to make written notes during the Open Heart to record requests many make relating to needs such as physical healing, emotional healing, family problems, etc. Be prepared to have these lifted up during the prayer group time. Plan times of silence in the group, learning to listen to God and to respond to His will.

2. **OPENING THE PRAYER GROUP TIME.** Relax and help others to relax. Form a close circle. Introduce yourself. Speak up clearly. Have the others introduce themselves, telling something about themselves briefly, such as work, church, family, hobbies, etc. For some it may be the first experience in such a group. Set them at ease. Assure them that they are free to respond as they wish or not to respond. On following days this will take less time, but allow a few moments to help the group relax and establish the setting, becoming acquainted with any new persons who may have come to your group. Begin with the opening you have prepared using scripture, a hymn or a poem about prayer. Have a short prayer that the Spirit will guide the group in knowing each other better, in sharing needs and blessings and in coming to love each other.

3. **SHARE AND PRAY.** Keep a balance between sharing and praying. Invite members of the group to share their needs and prayer requests with the group. Ask them to be as specific as possible, but without lengthy details. Remember that Jesus told us that the Father knows our needs even before we ask. Some needs may be very sensitive and should not be shared with the group; so point out that God has a private office for these situations. Some groups spend part of their time sharing needs and the rest of their time praying. Some groups pray after each need is shared. Let the time available and the dynamics of your group help you determine which is best.

Each member of the group is to be free to share or pray verbally or not to. If you "go around the circle," make it clear that anyone can "pass" or pray silently and simply say "Amen" when finished. Use Spirit-guided judgment as to how to involve shy, quiet persons. They often want to participate, but find it hard to break in if "eager talkers" monopolize the time. And don't be afraid of periods of silence that develop. These can often be very meaningful times for the group when the Spirit is at work.

4. **MAKE WIDE YOUR CONCERNS.** Let the circle of prayer of concerns reach even wider. Pray for personal, specific needs within the group, then encourage requests and intercessions for others not in the group or at the meeting. Bring in the needs expressed in the Open Heart. Pray for Ashram leaders, other groups, local churches represented, communities, nations of the world, political leaders and missionaries and Christian leaders in all places.

5. **FOLLOW-UP.** Certain needs may need to be followed in prayer by members of the group. Covenant within your group how you can continue to pray for each other and determine how you will keep in touch with regard to any on-going prayer concern.