

# Points of how to lead a good prayer meeting on line

Leading prayer is important and deserving of time to organize and get ready as much as for any teaching. Being well organized, and knowing what you are going to be praying for and why, will help the prayer meeting be powerful and meaningful to the participants—all the more so when in a platform such as Zoom. The following are some helpful considerations for leading prayer well on Zoom followed by an explanation of how I use a specific format to lead online prayer that has worked well for many.

- It is very helpful to have prayer requests written up beforehand to put on to the screen to help people stay focused (*more on this below*).
- It helps to give people an orientation session if they are not familiar with Zoom before they actually come to the prayer meeting. This will ensure that the first half of your first prayer meeting isn't taken up with "Can you hear me? I can hear you..." type of talk.
- If you are a small group (*less than 10 - I would say from experience*), people can leave their microphones on; it is difficult to feel connected without. Encourage people to use headsets as this cuts down on background noise, and also to mute themselves if a phone starts ringing, someone comes to the door, etc., or they have to move around for some reason. You, as the organizer, can always mute someone if there is a lot of noise coming from them (*sometimes they are not aware that shuffling a paper near the microphone sounds 10x louder than if you are in the room with them*) and then they can unmute themselves.
- It is also helpful to put a time limit on the prayer meeting. It can be hard to stay focused on Zoom for periods longer than 60-90 min. You may also want to limit chit-chat—encourage people that we are here to pray and provide other moments for social connection.
- It helps to encourage people to pray shorter prayers. Again, Zoom can be a somewhat passive format and it is easy to "check out." When someone prays longer than 2-3 minutes, the others might begin to check their phone, look at their emails or whatever else they might be able to do on their computer at the same time as they are in the prayer meeting. This is an awesome opportunity to learn that corporate prayer is as much about listening to God directing us how to pray through paying attention to what others are saying, as it is about having a chance to pray out loud.

Here is a suggested format that I have used for over 6 years now: 30 min in prayer around verses/categories, and then 30 min of specific intercession with requests compiled ahead of time. This is not my invention but comes from others who have used this.

- I prepare verses ahead of time and place them into categories, always asking the Holy Spirit what these verses should be; sometimes it is a Bible story, sometimes it is a Psalm or a specific chapter in the Epistles for example, sometimes verses pulled from different places around a same theme, sometimes we work our way through a book of the Bible even.
- The categories are:
  - ▶ FOCUS—a time to help people leave other things and distractions aside and enter into God's presence.
  - ▶ ADORATION—a focus on worship and God—who He is not just asking him to do something for us.

- CONFESSION—this can be a powerful moment for people. Sometimes the focus naturally becomes personal confession, other times confession of corporate sins. I encourage people to take this always personally first, however, as we should not confess things on behalf of others that we haven't confessed for ourselves.
- THANKSGIVING—thanking and rejoicing in God.
- SUPPLICATION—this verse leads into the intercession time naturally.
- As the leader, I read the verse out for the category, starting with FOCUS and working downward. I then pray out what God has laid on my heart about that verse. I leave about 4-6 minutes for others to then pray into that verse/category as well. The point is to stay focused on praying what comes to our hearts and minds from that verse. Sometimes we wonder off into other things and even into intercession, but we try to stay on the verse as it is powerful.
- I then move on to the next category—i.e. Adoration—and we have a 4-6 minute time of worship in prayer. Etc.
- I keep things moving until we come to about the 30 minutes marker and then we transition to the specific requests that have been compiled ahead of time.
- \*This discipline of praying through the Scripture before going into requests is quite remarkable. God has spoken some very important things to us as we pray because we do not quickly jump to a posture of asking but desire to hear from him, carefully listening to how he wants us to pray. The kinds of ways we pray during the first half often lead us to know how to pray for the requests in the second half, and similar themes emerge in our prayers.
- This is not hard and fast and, of course, we leave room for how the Holy Spirit directs. Sometimes prayer in one category will last longer or shorter than the time allotted normally. This is fine. As long as people are engaged and we sense God is continuing to direct, we stay with it.
- I scroll down my Zoom screen as we go along in praying through the categories to ensure that everyone can see the screen.
- During the request section, I usually have the requests divided into categories with prompts for prayer. For example, "Families in our church" could be a category and then I would list 3-5 points of what to pray for about families (*perhaps specific families, perhaps more general things for all families*).