

Rather than plan a corporate gathering during our prayer week, this time we are encouraging each small group to devote their regular meeting that week to worship and the Word, prayer, and the Lord's Supper. It is exciting to think about several hundred adults crying out to God in praise and petition in the context of uncommon community.

I totally respect your leadership competencies, and I suspect that many of you could plan out an effective prayer night for your small group. But

sometimes it helps to have a bit of a framework. Please use the following guidelines to the extent that you wish. I am structuring the evening around the A.C.T.S. acrostic for prayer.



Adoration

- *A* stands for *adoration* in which we praise and honour God, primarily for who he is. We focus on his nature and his character, on his majesty and his magnificence. Our orientation is vertical!
- At the outset, encourage everyone to actively participate throughout the meeting, even if it means stretching beyond their natural comfort zone. This night will only be as engaging and exciting as the breadth and depth of the participation.
- Start your time with one or two worship songs that ascribe glory to the Lord. Some examples that we often sing include: *All the Earth*; *None Like You*; *Holy* (Redman); *Worthy, Worthy*; *No Other Name*. Any of these songs can be found on YouTube to sing along with.
- Read some Scripture that expresses praise to our awesome God. The psalms are always a great place to go. For example: Psalm 96, Psalm 98, Psalm 100, Psalm 145. Get multiple people involved by having them share in the reading of God's Word. Don't rush through it. Perhaps pause and ask people what they are taking away from the passages? What is standing out to them about the Lord?
- Move into a season of prayers of adoration. Urge people to really stick with that theme. It might help to have them start their prayers like "God, I worship you because you are . . ." or "God, I give you praise for . . ." Again, the focus here is primarily on who he is (not so much on what he has done). You might want to aim for shorter, sentence-or-two prayers, and then have people pray multiple times as different ideas come to mind. This is sometimes called "popcorn prayer."

Confession

- *C* stands for *confession* in which we admit our shortcomings and our need for God's saving grace. Having emphasized God's greatness in the previous section, we now recognize and embrace the immense gap between us and God because of our sin, as well as the incredible provision of redemption, reconciliation, and restoration through Jesus' death on the cross.
- Turn to Isaiah 6 and read v. 1-5 together. Ask your group why Isaiah responded as he did. Allow that reality to sit with you for a bit. How much do we see ourselves as Isaiah saw himself? If so, how so? If not, why not?
- Flip over to Psalm 51. Have your group read v. 1-12 on their own, and then give them a few minutes for quiet confession before the Lord. Urge them to pour out their hearts to God like King David.
- Then turn back to Isaiah 6:6-7 to see God's amazing provision for Isaiah and reflect on that. The Lord has done this for us in the person and work of Christ. You could read Ephesians 2:1-8 (as just one example—you might have a different passage in mind) to see this spelled out in the New Testament. Ask people what their response is to their salvation.
- As you move into a time of celebrating the Lord's Supper, sing/listen to a song that speaks about Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. Some examples include: *Christ Is Enough*; *Cornerstone*; *Man of Sorrows*; *In Christ Alone*; *Lamb of God*.

- You will have already made advance preparations for the Lord's Supper.
 - In terms of the bread, do one of two things: either (1) break up some soda crackers or pitas into smaller pieces and spread them out on a plate for people to pick up; or (2) purchase a loaf of bread (unsliced from a bakery) and allow people to break off their own large chunk.
 - For the cup, you can use whatever drinking cups you have, but if you would like to pick up a small stack of our regular communion cups, I will have them at the church this weekend or at the office next week. Pour some grape juice or other similar fruit juice into the cups and have them ready on a tray. (Or you could just pour them in the moment, and use it as an opportunity to remind people of God's love being poured out for us.)
- After singing the song, offer up a brief prayer of gratitude for what Christ has done and for this special ceremony that he left for us to remember his work. Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-24 and then pause to eat the bread together. Don't rush this opportunity—many people have never celebrated the Lord's Supper in a small, intimate setting like this. Then read v. 25-26 and drink the cup. Again, no rush. If the Spirit leads, you may want to ask how God is moving in people's hearts through that time. Linger in the moment.

Thanksgiving

- *T* stands for *thanksgiving* in which we express gratitude for God's blessings in our lives. And oh how much we have to be thankful for! While adoration is more about who God is, thanksgiving is more about what he has done.
- Depending on your available time, you could read a passage like Psalm 103 or 136 and/or sing/listen to a song like *10,000 Reasons (Bless the Lord)* to "warm you up."
- Enter a brief season of prayers of thanksgiving. Again, it might help to keep people focused on the topic at hand if they start their prayers with something like "God, I want to thank you for . . ." These don't have to be long prayers, but people can pray multiple times. Encourage people to just speak out as things come to mind.

Supplication

- *S* stands for *supplication* in which we ask God for his help in our lives and his intervention in our world. This rightly follows the previous three sections. We focus on our relationship with God before simply asking him for stuff.
- There is a ton of material for supplication in our online prayer week guide. (We hope that you and your group members are using that guide personally throughout the week.) If people don't have a phone/tablet handy, you may want to quickly highlight the various categories mentioned online and some of the prayer requests listed there.
- In terms of actually praying, you could do one of several things here: (1) Continue to pray altogether as a full group and let people pray about what they want. (2) Continue to pray altogether and assign a specific prayer focus to different individuals. (3) Break up into smaller groups of two people and allow them to pray together. This could all be done in the same room, with multiple people praying out loud at the same time—it's a cool sound! (4) Have the men and women go off separately and pray that way.
- The main point is, call out to God! He hears, he knows, and he loves to answer. You may want to remind people of the truth of Matthew 7:7-11.
- You could wrap up the evening with one final worship song. *Lord, I Need You* would be a great way to close out your time as it really summarizes a lot of what the entire night has been about.