

## 31 Ways to Pray (Group Prayer)

We've all been there: you're in a small group or Bible study at your church and there's about 20 minutes left, and the time comes to pray together. The leader asks if there are any prayer requests. What follows is usually one of two things: 1) You spend about 18 minutes sharing requests and then have only a few minutes left to actually pray for the requests, so one person tries to pray generically for all the requests; 2) You still spend almost 20 minutes sharing requests, but then you spend another 5 minutes assigning people to pray for the different requests. After that, you go around the circle praying for each request as people pray unnecessarily long prayers for what feels like an unending amount of time. The end result of this oft repeated situation is that people start to perceive group prayer as a boring activity (I can't tell you how many people have admitted to me that they feel terribly guilty because they dread their small group prayer times).

But this does not have to be the case at all. There are many creative and lively ways to pray with small or large groups of people. When we make an effort to practice different forms of group prayer, we are teaching people that we can approach God and express ourselves to Him in many ways. So, to help you bring some life into your group prayer times, below are some different ways to pray in small or large groups. There is certainly crossover between the two lists below, as many of the small group suggestions will work in a large group and vice-versa. I hope this helps bring fresh life and new creativity into your group prayer times!

### **Small Groups (homes, Bible studies, smaller get-togethers, etc.)**

1. Have each person share a request, and then go around in a circle and have the person to the left or right of each person pray for him or her (this is the most overused form of small group prayer, but it should at least be listed as an option).
2. Share requests and have one person pray for all of the requests (also overused, but appropriate every once in awhile).
3. Get into smaller groups of two to four and share/pray.
4. In the group, take only one request at a time and pray for that request as a group (a different person can pray each time) after each request. This avoids the monotony of people sharing for a long time one after the other and then praying for everyone all at once for a long time.
5. Take the requests (the leader writes them down) and then say them individually and have everyone in the group pray together for the request. For example, the leader would say "Let's pray for Bob's toe" and then everyone would pray out loud together for about 15 seconds, and then the leader would say "Now let's pray for Amy's new baby."
6. Very similar to above, but after the 15 seconds of everyone praying together out loud, have a designated person close that portion by leading everyone in prayer for that need. Then move on to the next request.
7. Use the ACTS acronym (Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication) and have people pray short one-sentence or phrase prayers out loud for each letter. For example,

during the “Adoration” time one person might pray aloud “God, you are creator of heaven and earth,” and then another person might pray “Jesus, you are Savior of the world,” etc. Don’t be afraid of prolonged times of silence.

8. Have a person/couple share a request, and then have everyone gather around them and lay hands on them and have someone pray for them briefly. Then the next person shares a request and moves to the middle of the circle and is prayed for, and so on.
9. Similar to above, but instead of people sharing requests, just say “if you want prayer for sickness move to the middle of the circle,” and then have someone lead in prayer. Other general topics to call out would be stress, finances, salvation of loved ones, future plans, relationships, etc.
10. Simply sit and wait in silence together for several minutes or more.
11. Sing a song or hymn together, and then wait in silence and let people pray as they feel led.
12. Pray through the Lord’s Prayer, stopping after each section for a time of spontaneous prayer. For example, pray “give us today our daily bread,” and then say “begin to ask God for the things you need today—the physical, spiritual, emotional nourishment that is necessary—and thank Him for providing it.”
13. Select a liturgical prayer and read it together or have one person read it while others listen pray silently.
14. Have people go on a prayer walk outside.
15. Go through the nine fruit of the spirit and assign one person to pray for each fruit for the group or church. The leader would say “love,” and then the person assigned love would pray for one minute, and when finished the leader would then say “joy” and the next person begins and so on.
16. Jesus warns us against praying lengthy prayers for the wrong reasons (Matt 6:7-8). Instruct the group to think of one thing they each would like to pray for and put it into one sentence. Then go around and have each person pray their one-sentence prayer. Optional: after each brief prayer, the group responds together by saying, “Lord, hear our prayer.”
17. Use the pattern laid out in Acts 1:8 to pray as a group for your community, city, state/province, country, and the world.
18. It has been said that at least one-third of the Psalms can be summarized in one word: “Help!” Encourage each person to think of a situation they are facing. Then ask everyone to repeat after you, “Lord Jesus [repeat], Help! [repeat].”

## **Large Groups (church service settings, especially smaller churches or gatherings)**

19. Feature an issue (in the community, the world, a country, a high school, etc.) and pray for it or have people pray in groups for it.
20. Feature an issue and have people selected ahead of time to lead in prayer for that issue. Example: three or four students from different high schools come up front and each lead in prayer for their school.
21. Get into groups of three to four, share requests, and pray for one another.
22. Have people who would like prayer come up front, and go down the line and pray for each of them (not taking requests, just generically praying for them) while having the congregation extend their hands and agree with you.
23. Have prayer leaders up front and available to pray with people during the singing part of the service.
24. Take requests from the people (and write them down) and then go through the list and pray for them. When someone is prayed for, people around them in the seats can lay hands on them. You can also do this one at a time (take a request, stop to pray for them, and then move on to the next person that has a request).
25. Ask people to put their hand up (or stand up) if they have a need and have people around them lay hands on them and pray for them while the leader leads out in prayer for all of them.
26. Have a time of quiet, individual prayer at their seats.
27. Have three or four general prayer categories prepared ahead of time (example: physical need, financial need, family/relational issues, sadness/depression, etc.). Do a general call for anyone with the specific need to come forward (example: “anyone who has a physical need, come forward”). Pray for them as a group and have people from the congregation come behind them and lay hands on them.
28. Split into groups of three or four. Plan an issue or several issues ahead of time to pray about. Write out the issues/prayer needs on slips of paper and walk around and hand one or two or more slips of paper for each group to pray for. For example, if you are going to pray about the AIDS crisis, then have eight to ten specific prayer needs related to that issue ready (such as education, orphans, legislation, etc.), and then hand them out to the groups so that each group prays for a different need.
29. Prepare several issues and have a group of people stand up and begin to pray aloud for each issue. For example, if praying for human trafficking, have all the females stand up and for one minute call out for young women who are forced into prostitution. Then have the leader briefly close out this portion. Then have the males stand and pray for

child soldiers who are abused. As another example, have people from each high school stand and pray for their school.

30. Have everyone write out something they are thankful for (a praise report) and a prayer request. After they have done that, ask for a few people to share. Then have them all hold up their pieces of paper and begin to pray for their requests as you pray a general prayer for them.
31. Divide the congregation into sections and assign each section a certain issue, part of the world, etc., to pray for.