

## Grow Group Prayer Experience #3 Leader's Guide

**Purpose:** To have a meaningful experience of extended prayer together that focuses on being the people of God – God's *prototype* of His Kingdom right here and right now.

### OPENING TO GOD (5-8 min)

1. Have different people read these passages out loud with a short pause (a few seconds) between each (arrange this before you start so that everyone knows what to do); think of it as a **"cascade of Scripture" pouring over you together**. Encourage everyone to listen for descriptions of who God is.
  - a. Ephesians 1:3 "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ."
  - b. Psalm 73:25-26 "Whom have I in heaven but you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."
  - c. Psalm 143:8 "Let the morning bring me word of your unfailing love, for I have put my trust in you."
  - d. Isaiah 43:1a "Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name and you are mine."
  - e. Lamentations 3:22-23 "Because of the Lord's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness."
  - f. John 1:14 "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."
  - g. I John 3:1 "See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called the children of God."
2. Now invite everyone to voice a prayer of **praise**, "God, you are \_\_\_\_\_." (i.e. good, faithful, compassionate, Almighty, Shepherd, Savior, Friend, etc.)
3. Now invite your group into a time of **thanksgiving**, "Thank you, God, for \_\_\_\_\_." (i.e. this community, my family, your joy, your strength, etc.)
4. Close the segment with your own prayer or just "Amen."

### LISTENING TO GOD through SCRIPTURE (8-10 min)

1. Explain that we are now going to listen to a passage read 3 times which is an exhortation of Paul to the church in Ephesus. As it is read, invite your group to listen for the word or phrase that resonates in their spirit right now. Encourage them to underline or circle words in the text or jot a thought in the margin.

2. Read Ephesians 4:1-6 slowly (and with expression) 3 times with 10 or 15 secs of silence between each repetition:  
*“As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”*
3. Next, invite everyone to pray silently, responding to God about what they have heard in this passage. Encourage them to jot anything down that will help them articulate and remember what they have heard and felt.
4. Close the time of silent prayer with “Amen.”

**PRAYING FOR ONE ANOTHER’S SPIRITUAL GROWTH (15-20 min)**

1. Divide into smaller groups of 3; if your group is 6 or less, you might prefer to stay all together.
2. Invite everyone to think of one aspect of how they desire God to help them GROW spiritually in this season. It may be something that’s been on their mind for a while; or it may be something that was prompted by the Scripture this evening. Give them some time to think specifically as to what this desire is and jot it down.
3. Invite everyone to share with their group at whatever level they are comfortable.
4. Now pray for each other concerning these desires.

**PRAYING FOR OUR CHURCH (5-8 min)**

1. Come back together if you divided into small groups for the previous segment.
2. Now spend some time praying together for VRBC. Here are some possible topics.
  - For our church staff – that they would abide in Christ and lead/serve from a place of attentiveness to the Spirit.
  - For our church unity – the Spirit-empowered ability to be “different together” in a culture so deeply divided.
  - For our love for one another – that we would live out Ephesians 4 in authentic ways with humility, gentleness, patience and love and unity.
  - For our mission – bringing His kingdom with its priorities and purposes into our community; “inviting diverse and disconnected people to passionately follow Christ together.”
3. When you feel this time of prayer is complete, speak this blessing from Romans 15 to close this segment: *“May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you the same attitude of mind toward each other that Christ Jesus had, so that with one mind and one voice you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*  
 AMEN. (Romans 15:5-6)

### Tips for Leaders:

- You are certainly welcome to modify this guide so that it is most helpful to your group having a great time of prayer together.
- Several things in this guide were intentional that we hope you will embrace:
  - We want to spend a good portion of our time praying, not talking about prayer. Some may not be accustomed to this lengthy of a prayer experience, but we hope the design will keep it comfortable and accessible for all.
  - The focus of this prayer experience is our call to be “citizens of the kingdom,” living out our calling in a worthy manner. We are most accustomed in our Grow Groups to intercessory prayer, where we pray for one another’s specific needs. In this experience, we want to focus on prayer for our church and how we might live faithfully together as we grow in our faith and live on mission for his kingdom.
  - There are a few opportunities for silence, reflection and listening prayer. Again, these may be less familiar, but we hope you will help your group “dip their toe” into something new or less familiar in order to deepen their experience of prayer.
  - We depend on Scripture to guide our prayer; it’s always beneficial to learn how to pray according to Scripture, which is why we have provided some passages for this experience.
- You know your group best when it comes to how comfortable they are praying aloud in a group. This guide attempts to provide opportunities for silent prayer, that all can more comfortably do, as well as opportunities for “popcorn” prayer of just a word or phrase or sentence, which might help some feel they can also pray out loud without the need to “make a speech.” Then there are also opportunities for those who are more comfortable to voice more than a sentence.
- Try not to be anxious about allowing some silence in between during the segments where people pray out loud. We usually feel the pressure to “wrap it up” if things are quiet. Prepare your group to be OK with quiet and to relax into the milieu of unhurried time with God and each other.
- Another suggestion might be to pay attention to the environment for the prayer experience: making it comfortable for 45 minutes, perhaps having some kind of soft, instrumental music in the background – whatever might help folks feel at ease while also keeping it simple.
- Everyone will need the participant’s guide and something to write with.