

PRAYER METHODS

Shared Prayer in Groups

INTRODUCTORY NOTES:

- ✓ *Today shared prayer groups are quite popular with Charismatic, Youth and Parish Prayer Groups, at Retreats, Seminars Workshops, Camps and other events.*
- ✓ *Shared prayer can be a powerful means, to grow in prayer life, to experience prayer methods and practice different modes of prayer, such as petition, intercessory prayer, thanksgiving, praise and adoration.*

Important Points To Be Kept in Mind When We Engage In Shared Group Prayer.

Adapted from some notes of Fr. Philip Terrasa s.j.
for a Charismatic Convention.

- When you pray alone, you pray in whatever way helps you most. However, when you pray in a group, the mood and atmosphere change. **If you intend praying in a group as you do when you do it privately, you will not be able to.** It's obvious that when someone prays aloud, your private prayer will be disturbed.
- In shared group prayer you **have to make the other persons' intentions, thanksgiving and praise your own.** Quite often you will experience Christ in another's prayer. If you do not unite yourself in prayer with the group, you will be at cross-purposes. You cannot pray in your own way while the others keep praying another way. The dynamics of group prayer are very different from those of personal private prayer. Lack of understanding of this causes a lot of problems to some.
- In a group, **when a person prays aloud the rest should not only listen to him, but they should be with him in his prayer.** The group members have to be united with the one, who prays, whether he praises, thanks, glorifies God or even asks the Lord for something. . It is a very important to remember that in **group prayer, all have to be attuned to one another.**
- When someone prays aloud, **you ought to listen and be sensitive to what he/she is saying.** It is most disturbing for the progress of shared group prayer and quite shattering, if anyone in the group is insensitive to the one praying. Imagine that a person prays: "Lord, I feel like crying today. I feel so depressed, so terribly sad. Accept me as I am with my fears and depression," And then, immediately, someone else pipes in and says: "Lord I am so happy today! I thank you lord!" It would be simply jarring! This is certainly not the moment to express joy when a brother/sister of yours, just has expressed his/her deep pain. You should make your brother/sister's prayer your own, saying something like this: "Lord, hear the cry of my brother, etc, etc. I feel with him. Give him courage and comfort" or at least **support him/her with your prayerful silence.**

- **If all are attuned to the prayers of one another and respond adequately**, you will notice that, quite frequently, a theme builds up. Without any set purpose of the group members, **the Holy Spirit weaves a theme through which he speaks to the entire group**. The Spirit may tell something special to all the members of the group through that theme he himself inspired. .
- Another thing to bear in mind in shared group prayer is that when you pray aloud you are praying **to the Lord, not to the group or for the benefit of the group**. **So do not preach to the group in the guise of prayer**. Remember the promise of Jesus: “Where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am with them” **It is to Him you open your heart in the hearing of your brothers and sisters**. You are not talking to them but to God alone!
- **When you pray aloud, do not be afraid of fumbling for words or making grammatical mistakes or of making a fool of yourself**. The Lord understands. Forget the others and concentrate on the Lord, to whom you pray. Feel free to express to the Lord whatever is in your heart. You may discover with joy that the Lord speaks to the group or to some one of its members through you as his instrument.
- Another important point to be stressed is **confidentiality**. **Nothing of what has been shared during the prayer, should be mentioned to anyone outside the prayer**, not even to the one who did the sharing
- Finally, a few more things to be avoided at shared prayer.
 - **Giving advice to the one who shared or to the group.**
 - **Show surprise, admiration or shock at the things shared.** .
 - **Using the group prayer as a platform** – directly or indirectly – **to give vent to any possible grievance, hurt, disappointment or hard feelings** , any one may have towards the group or to any of its members..
- Just to close down, a small but an important request. If the Lord is going to use you to speak to someone in the group, the group must hear you. Therefore, **speak loud enough for all those present to hear you**. A mumbled prayer which can’t be heard or understood causes irritation, tension and distractions.

PROCEDURE:

Before the prayer starts:

- Preferably, there should be a moderator at the Shared Group Prayer to direct its process. (*Who should he/she be is left to the group*)
- The leader in agreement with the group should determine the length of time for the Prayer Session.
- The leader, as far as possible, with the group’s consent should decide the modes, methods and topics of prayer to be taken up for the shared group prayer.

