

TIPS FOR PRAYER

If you're in-person or online, it is always important to begin with prayer. You may be waiting for another person to log on, or trying to get the group gathered together after a meal. Starting with prayer will reorient your time together and focus your attention on Jesus. Socializing is beneficial for community to take place, but remember that the social aspect of your group should not take precedence over the discipleship of your group members.

Praying together as a group can be a powerful way to connect and bond, but as a leader you must remember that prayer is also very personal. You cannot assume that every group member has experience praying aloud or feels comfortable doing so. Praying in front of others can cause social anxiety. Some people are comfortable praying aloud in front of a group while others are terrified by the thought of it. As a leader you never want to put someone on the spot, cause anxiety, or embarrass a group member. If a group member does not openly volunteer to pray it is best to always ask privately if they are comfortable praying before you call on them unexpectedly.

Decide on a method that works for your group

- With a new group, you may want to pray out loud yourself and have the rest of the group members pray with you silently.
- You can ask one or more of the group members, in private, if they would be willing to lead the prayer.
- You can also go into the group prayer time letting anyone pray out loud if they want. Then when everyone has had an opportunity, you can say a final prayer to close the prayer time. Whatever you do, no one should feel like they're forced or pressured to pray.

Here are some tips on prayer requests

- Write down the requested items.
- If time is limited or group members begin to dominate this time it may help to ask the group to focus on prayer requests for them or their immediate family only.
- If the group is very large you can have people matched with a prayer partner.
- Keep track of what the group asks in prayer. Note when God answers each item. Reviewing this list as a group from time-to-time will show the power of prayer.

**Leader tip- Prayer is an opportunity for you as a leader to lead by example. Have patience and extend grace to group members as they learn about prayer and begin to step out in faith as the Holy Spirit leads them.*