



Prayer Stations

Ten methods of prayer to inspire leaders to think outside the box

By Amy Jackson

Let's face it: sometimes our prayer lives get boring. We pray for the same things in the same way, and we forget that we're talking with the creator of the universe. There is something significant about experiencing God through prayer, and sometimes we need to pray in a new way to get out of our prayer ruts. Praying for something we don't normally pray about, allowing a visual to take us deeper into prayer, giving ourselves time to listen for God's voice, responding to God in a new way, or positioning our body in a new way can give us new glimpses of God and ourselves. Our hearts are opened to new ways of communicating with God, and that inspiration can carry over into our other relationships and our small groups.

While group prayer time can become routine and, dare I say, boring, sometimes leaders just need a little inspiration to make the group prayer time more meaningful. If they can experience new types or methods of prayer, their personal prayer lives can improve, and they can bring those new ideas to their groups.

Below you'll find a number of prayer stations—prompts and setups for different methods of prayer on different topics. For an activity during your training day that will give leaders both meaningful personal time and inspiring ideas, set up several of these prayer stations. Set up as many stations as fit your time and focus for the day. Provide ample resources at each station so all leaders can complete each station.

You may choose to play soft music in the background, light candles, or otherwise set a worshipful tone. Tell leaders they can spend as much time praying as they'd like at each station, and move on to the next station whenever they are ready. You may direct leaders to go through the stations in a certain order, or you may allow them to skip around depending on how you set up your stations. Decide how much time your leaders will spend on the prayer stations as a whole, and let them know ahead of time. You may also choose to ring a bell, make a quiet announcement, or turn down the music when five minutes remain so leaders know to finish their stations.

Prayer Stations

Washing Away My Sin. Place a vase filled with water on a table. Place several drops of red food coloring into the water and swirl or stir until the color is spread evenly throughout the water. Have small sheets of clear transparency paper and black washable markers available. Then provide this prompt:

Spend some time reflecting on unforgiven sin in your life, and write the sin on a sheet of transparency with a black washable marker. Then lift it up to God. After you have prayed about it, dip the transparency piece into the water in the vase until it has been fully washed away. Jesus' blood washes away your sins just as this water washes away what you've written.

Entangled Heart. You will need a net and several small hearts. The net could be a butterfly net, decorative netting from a craft store, or even a reusable produce bag—whatever you have available. The small hearts could be candy, hearts punched out of paper, or anything else you can think of. I found small wooden hearts at a craft store. Place the hearts in the net. Then give the following prompt to participants:

God has freed our hearts to live fully for him, but our hearts can get entangled by so many things. We focus on praise from others, having the clothes we desire, advancing our careers, being the best parents, or making ourselves happy with a multitude of things. We need to bring our hearts to God continually to allow him to free our hearts again.

What is entangling your heart at the moment? What is keeping it from being free as God intends? Lift up these issues to God in prayer. When you're finished talking to God about this issue, remove a heart from the net, visually representing that God has freed your heart. Keep the heart as a reminder of what God has done.

Let's Get Visual. Place paper and markers on a table. Provide a short passage of your choosing. You could use 1 Peter 5:1–4, Ephesians 3:14–21, or Philippians 4:4–9. Provide this prompt:

After reading through the passage, use the markers and paper to respond to the reading by drawing a picture. Consider: What is the main thing you learned from this passage? What questions do you have after reading this? How do you feel after reading this passage? What is God telling you through this passage?

Listening to God's Voice. Provide paper, pens, and this prompt:

What's been on your mind lately? What have you been praying about? Spend some time silently listening for God's voice. What does he want you to know? What response does he have to your prayers? What promise does he want to reassure you of? Then, spend time journaling about God's personal message for you right now.

Craft Stick Prayers. You will need several cups or mugs, a bag of craft sticks, and a fine permanent marker or pen. Write a different thing to pray for on each craft stick and place the sticks in the cups. You might choose to list specific ministry needs, specific leaders, countries around the world, government officials, community needs, or church-wide concerns. Try to keep a theme for the requests, and think about what your leaders might not be praying for on a regular basis. Then, provide this prompt:

Sometimes we can limit our prayers to the same list of items day after day. God definitely wants to hear those prayers. But, prayer is also much bigger than the things we pray for on a regular basis. Choose several craft sticks from the cups and pray for the items on the sticks. Consider how often you pray for these items or people. Replace the sticks when you are finished.

Give It Away. You will need to provide small pieces of paper, pens, and a small garbage bin or basket that can sit on a table or chair. Provide the following prompt:

Read Matthew 11:28–30 and Luke 17:30–33. Jesus says we are to come to him, to give away the burdens the world places on us and those we place on ourselves, to take up his yoke. We can easily forget that we were not created to carry the heavy burdens we so often carry. We must go to God and give them to him. Jesus said that those who hold on too tightly will lose their lives, but those who let go will preserve their lives.

What are you holding on to unnecessarily? Are you carrying a burden that you need to bring to Jesus? Is there something in your life you are unwilling to relinquish to God? Write it on a piece of paper. Spend time in prayer, giving it over to him. When you're finished, rip the paper and throw it away in the trash can. It is no longer yours. God is holding it now.

God Will Provide. You will need sealable baggies and cornflakes cereal for this station. You may choose to place the cereal in a bowl on a table, spread out the flakes on a tabletop, or spread them across an area on the floor. Provide this prompt and the baggies near the cornflakes:

Read Exodus 16:11–31. One of the downfalls of living in a wealthy society is beginning to think that we have the power to provide for ourselves—that God is not at work, providing for each and every need. This familiar passage reminds us that God provides for our needs day-to-day. Where are you on this? Have you forgotten that God is providing for you? Pray a prayer of praise. Do you feel that God is not providing adequately, or as you would hope? Talk to God about your fear, anger, or concern. Are you worried that God will not provide in an area of your life? Lift up your worry to God. Then be reminded that God does provide. Collect some flakes and put them in a baggie. Keep this as a reminder that God provides for all our needs day-to-day.

Mind-Body Connection. This station needs some space for participants to move around. Provide this prompt:

So often prayer is simply an intellectual act. We think, we speak, we listen. But our bodies are connected to our minds and spirits, and positioning our bodies in different ways can help deepen our prayer. How do you normally position your body during prayer? Do you sit with your hands clasped in your lap? Do you close your eyes and bow your head? Do you kneel?

Think outside the box. How are feeling? What kind of prayer do you want to raise to God? As you praise, stand up tall, lifting your hands to the sky, eyes raised. As you submit to God, lie on the ground or kneel. As you ask for God's provision, hold your hands in front of you with palms up. As you let go of worries and cares, hold your hands in front of you with palms down. Allow your body position to enhance and deepen your prayer.

Praise Together. Hang a poster board on the wall or provide a long sheet of paper on a table. Place a container of markers, chalk, crayons, or other writing utensils nearby. Provide the following prompt:

Psalm 9:1–2 says: "I will give thanks to you, LORD, with all my heart; I will tell of all your wonderful deeds. I will be glad and rejoice in you; I will sing the praises of your name, O Most High." Take some time to think through all the ways God has been working in your life and the life of your group. What prayers have been answered? What blessings bestowed? What life-change has occurred?

Write or draw your praises on the poster board. Then take a moment to praise God for all the other praises on the poster board. Be encouraged that God is at work.

Moving Forward with Christ. This station will need slips of paper and pens. Provide this prompt:

Read Ephesians 3:14–21. This is a prayer Paul lifted for the church in Ephesus. He wanted them to be strengthened by the Spirit from the inside out, to be rooted and established in God's love, to take up the power of God, and to be filled with the fullness of God. There is a knowledge aspect, a heart aspect, and a spirit aspect. We could easily pray these same things for our groups. Where is your group with these things? Where do they need to grow? What are they struggling with? What is showing much fruit? Ask God what your next steps with your group should be. How can you help facilitate a deeper understanding of God's love, tapping into the strength of the Spirit, or taking up God's power? What specific goals should you have as the leader of this group? Pray that God will make this clear to you.

Use the paper slips to write down a few goals that God has brought to mind. What will you need in order to accomplish these goals? Will you need help from a coach, additional training, or another leader to hold you accountable? Decide what you will do to work with God to accomplish these goals.

After completing the activity, give leaders a copy of these station ideas and prompts for use in their own prayer lives and in their small groups. These prompts can also be used at retreats, with large groups, and with youth groups. Know that many of these can be modified to fit a number of situations. You might also use a single prompt during a small-group meeting or set up a few stations for a meeting dedicated to prayer.

Unpacking:

- What was this time like for you? Was it restful, peaceful, difficult, trying?
- Which prayer ideas were new for you? Which were your favorites?
- Which was most uncomfortable for you? Why?
- How might you incorporate some of these ideas into your small group?
- What other ideas can you come up with for creative prayer?

—AMY JACKSON is the Associate Editor of SmallGroups.com and a former small-group director. Copyright 2011 by Christianity Today.