

How to Start an Intercessory Prayer Group or Partnership

The power of prayer is multiplied when you offer prayer requests in group prayer. That's why many people want to know, "How do I start a prayer group?"

Starting an intercessory prayer group is actually much easier than you might think. I have had the privilege and honor of leading and developing processes for Intercessory Prayer Groups and Partnerships in the church as well as starting a Prayer Line Group, so this article contains ideas based on those experiences. I believe in the power of agreement through a healthy prayer partnership. I hope you find this information to be effective in aiding you to start your Prayer Group Partnership!

1. Answer God's universal call to pray His will and power for our world.

The first step one takes is to answer God's universal call to prayer! Prayer is a universal call. Prayer is a vital part of the Christian faith. Every Christian is commanded in scripture to pray. Our prayers are ways we advance the kingdom of God in the world because God moves in situations and circumstances because of our faithfulness to pray and intercede according to His will. As the word tells us in various scriptures, pray constantly, continuously, always, and without ceasing. (1 Thessalonians 5:17, Philippians 4:6, Romans 12:12 and Ephesians 6:16) Prayer is a spiritual discipline and in Prayer Partnership, it provides us also with accountability to be disciplined in the ways of God. Praying continuously is hard work so why not illicit some help!

Did we not forget that the church was actually birthed through prayer! Acts 1:13-14 confirms this "When they had entered the city, they went up to the upper room where they were staying: that is Peter and John and James and Andrew,.....These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers". As we continue to read into chapter 2 we see that the Holy Spirit showed up as a result of those praying and Pentecost happened as a result of Prayer Partnership! Peter spoke boldly his first sermon "Then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the same day there were added unto them about three thousand souls" (Acts 2:41) what a great example of the power of agreement that comes through Prayer Partnership!

2. Start with one person – yourself!

It only takes one person to get things going and to begin to plant the seed of a Prayer Partnership. God will certainly honor the obedience of one with the right heart to seek Him. The bible says “One can chase a thousand, and two can put ten thousand to flight”. (Deuteronomy 32:30) This scripture as well as many others tells us that there is power in two agreeing together! God honors the prayers of one but when two come together there is more power to move heaven and earth. Your prayers are powerful and effective!

John Maxwell in his book “Partners in Prayer” which is an excellent source for pastors and prayer leaders and is extremely useful to those also who would like to start a Prayer Groups or Partnerships, John Maxwell shares the experience of a Pastor, C.H. Spurgeon. “In a moment of revelation, Spurgeon had discovered that neither his sermons nor his good works accounted for the spiritual impact of his ministry. Instead, it was as one writer put it, “The prayers of an illiterate lay brother who sat on the pulpit steps pleading for the success of the sermons”. “It was his partnership with people of prayer that made him effective”. (Maxwell, 1996)

What a great example of how God honored the heart of one man to stand in the gap for an entire church and granted success based on this one man’s faithfulness to pray and stand in the gap for his Pastor to be effective and to advance the Kingdom of God.

3. Use the power of “agreement.”

“*Do two men walk together unless they have made an appointment?*” (Amos 3:3) The place of *agreement* is with God’s Word, and this is the harmony that will produce *power*. The place of agreement is the place of power!

The ministry of prayer is a Ministry of Power! The bible speaks of the power of prayer and the power of agreement. “And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. *The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective*”. (James 5:15-16) “Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth *agree* about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven”. (Matthew 18:19-20) The sincere agreement of two people is more powerful than the superficial agreement of thousands because the spirit of God is with the sincere person. That’s why we must pray daily “Create in me a clean heart O God and renew a right spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10)

4. Identify a Prayer Leader

You may be the one God has called to get the ministry set up but not to lead the ministry. A Prayer Ministry Leader should be identified to lead and shepherd the group. The leader is the one that will set the pace for the prayer group and set up guidelines for the ministry. The leader should be strong in their faith and well disciplined in the things of the Lord, able to communicate well and have administrative skills to communicate via technology to the ministry members. The Prayer Leader should know how to lead the group in sharing and how to bring the group back on point when conversations seem to get off track from prayer.

5. Set up guidelines for the Ministry

It is extremely important to set up ministry guidelines for the ministry to effective.

The focus should always be on prayer unless you are meeting with the ministry to talk about ministry needs, ministry events, and ministry business. These meetings should be separate from the times the ministry comes together to pray. Be very careful when meeting together with your prayer partner/s that when sharing in any form, is kept to a minimal and that sharing does not get to the point of being overwhelming where the whole focus is taken off of prayer and onto an out of control conversation that leads the group astray. There should always be a leader identified.

The leader should give clear instructions when allowing for time to share or in asking for prayer request. For example, one way of avoiding lengthy conversation that may take the focus off of prayer, the prayer leader could give everyone a moment to write down prayer request that can be exchanged and the person who gets your request will pray for your request during the prayer time or the prayer leader could give instructions for you to write down your prayer request and then praying the need yourself during the prayer time. The point is to keep things moving decently and in order.

For more ideas on [how to care for intercessors](#) click here.

6. Make sure time is allotted for both intercession (praying strategically for the world and others) and petition (praying for your own needs.)

Intercession: A prayer partnership helps to target prayer in a more strategic way and takes us beyond praying for just our own needs. We are able to 'stand in the gap' and pray for a wider range of prayer concerns as we partner with others. Standing in the gap is another term which means to intercede on behalf of others. Ezekiel 22:30 says "And I sought for a man among them that should build up the wall, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none". This scripture tells us that God seeks intercessors to pray on the behalf of the land and

others who govern over the land in order for His will to be done. Another very familiar scripture that confirms the same thing is (2 Chronicles 7:14) “If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land”.

One writer put it this way, “God is Master, and we are His servants. He is working in the world to reconcile the lost to Himself through Christ. In carrying out Kingdom purposes, God has chosen us to labor with Him. One way to work with God is through prayers of intercession. Intercessory prayers are for God’s Kingdom purposes to be completed in the lives of others”. (Hunt & King, 2007)

Biblical examples of intercession: There are numerous scriptures that give us examples of intercession in action as well as different types of intercession. “Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, our ancestors, keep this desire forever in the thoughts of the hearts of Your people, and confirm their hearts toward You” (1 Chronicles 29:18) An example of a church’s intercession: “Peter was kept in prison, but prayer was being made earnestly to God for him by the church” (Acts 12:5) Read Jesus’ intercession for us in (John 17:11,15,17,20-23) Paul’s intercession (Ephesians 3:16-19) and Stephen’s Intercession (Acts 7:60)

Petitions: Petitions are prayers we pray to God for own needs and desires. “God is our Heavenly Father. Through us He wants to show the world what a child of God looks like. Therefore He will also guide our petitions. Through these prayers we will work with God as He helps us become more like Him” (Hunt & King, 2007)

Biblical examples of Petitions: “Give Your servant an obedient heart to judge Your people and to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?” (1 Kings 3:9) For other scripture examples of petition read (1 Kings 18: 36-37, 1 Chronicles 4:10, Nehemiah 1:11, Nehemiah 6:9 and Matthew 26:39)

Make sure that during the prayer group gatherings that time is allotted for both intercession and petition. Those who are praying for others need to be constantly prayed for and they need to know that they are being covered through group prayers as well.

7. Pray and ask God to send laborers and then pray for discernment as to who is a good fit for your group.

It is extremely important to pray and seek God for direction in identifying persons to become a part of a Prayer Group or Partnership. Because we all come from different walks of life it is important to use discernment and have a process set up for persons who are interested in becoming a part of a prayer partnership “especially and “mainly” if the prayer partnership involves a ministry within the church but use discernment whether the Prayer Partnership is within the church or an outside group.

Here are some suggested questions or open ended statements that you may want to ask if your ministry is within the church:

What is your testimony as to how you feel God led you to become a part of the Ministry of Prayer?

- Have you ever been a part of a prayer group? (If so ask questions regarding the previous group such as how it was set up to see similarities, structures, and disciplines)
- What is your ministry background and how have you used your spiritual gifts in serving?
- Do you feel that you are a person who knows how to hold the confidence of others?
- Do you live a lifestyle to the best of your ability that pleases God?

Depending on what the roles and responsibilities of your church or personal prayer group are your questions may be posed differently. Keep in mind, everyone does not want to join a prayer group for the reasons you may assume which in this case would be to pray and agree together according to the will of God to advance the kingdom of God. Some people may have wrong intentions and may be looking for what they feel would be “easy access” to the Pastor or leader. It may be a way that some may feel they can get noticed or sadly enough some people just want inside information and feel that this would be a way for them to get it which is another reason for the question on confidentiality!

Another question to expound on for purposes of helping you understand the importance of what questions to ask would be the lifestyle question. First let’s be clear on the word of God that says in Romans 3:23 “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,” No one is perfect but for the purpose of spiritual protection for your group know that habitual sin is a danger to all in the partnership. The spirit will lead when confession of sin needs to be done. He works out the when, how, and where.

The message here again is to use discernment and allow the spirit to lead you. Just make sure you are in a place to yield to the spirit of God. Seek God through His word and through prayer. Hebrews 4:12 says “The word of God is alive and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, dividing soul from spirit and joint from marrow and is able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart”

8. Determine when and how the group will come together to pray (conference call, in person, at somebody’s home?)

Today we have other alternatives outside of meeting in a physical space but it is necessary in order to build relationships and to bond with other ministry members that time always be set aside for the ministry to come together in person for times of prayer. Touching and agreeing in person is powerful and it also holds the ministry members accountable to pray for the things it has been called to pray and stand in the gap for. The one thing that I cannot stress enough is holding your prayer group accountable for what has been agreed upon to pray for. For example, if you have been led to start a Prayer Group in your church and you have been asked to pray for your pastor, leaders, the sick and shut in, etc. it is more likely that these things will NOT be regularly prayed for if the group is left on their own to pray because what mainly consumes us is our own concerns. On the other hand, when the group comes together for the specific purpose to pray for specific things then the group together is holding each other accountable and prayer will go forth for these specific areas. This is not always the case because over time we become more disciplined and Holy Spirit led in our prayers but make sure your group is growing is the disciplines of prayer before you leave to themselves to pray regularly for the specific areas agreed upon.

It may be easier for the group to meet altogether in one place in a church Prayer Group setting because the ministry members are members of the church. If the prayer group has members that are spread apart then the ministry should come together at least once a quarter or once a year. These types of prayer groups may have members that live in different states, or different counties in a state and have members who don’t know each other at all. Their prayer times may be specifically done from a conference call as well. If there is anyway that the group can come together it should be done. It makes a huge difference when people get together in fellowship and know who they are praying with and for.

For information on [how to do a prayer conference call](#), click here.

9. Prepare for the flow of the prayer gatherings

Have a clear plan about how the time will be structured and what will take place when the ministry meets. A good idea is to have the leader lead the group by welcoming everyone. After the welcoming the leader can share a scripture or devotional or something the Lord has spoken to their heart since the last time the ministry gathered. After sharing in this way the leader can give specific prayer request that are outside of the regular items the ministry has been called to pray for. Before going into prayer the leader can ask if anyone has any request to add to be prayed for and then move the group forward in prayer. When there is order, prayer flows and the minds and hearts of the people are constantly turned toward God for prayer. There is not much room open for the focus to get off track. It is also a good idea to alternate leaders so one person doesn't get burned out but also because others have a lot to share and add to the experience. God speaks through us all!

10. Keep track of prayer request and answered prayer

A great way to track the success of your prayers is to keep a journal that includes prayer request and answered prayer. This is in no way to brag or boast about our accomplishments because it is God who accomplishes everything through us. It is for the purpose of recording God's answers in response to our prayers and it will encourage the group to continue to pray and pray even more boldly. It is a great way to record scriptures promises prayed for different situations and circumstances and to see how God shows up.

Assign someone in the group to be the one to write down the prayer request when the group comes together as well as to keep track of other prayer request that come to the group for prayer. Use a log or a spreadsheet with all prayer request recorded and whether the prayer was answered and how it was answered. This person would also be responsible for following up with persons who have asked for prayer who are not a part of the group to check on them and to get updates. This process can also be rotated weekly or monthly.

11. Determine to be a Ministry of Power!

Surrender to God and don't give up no matter what things look like or what comes your way. The enemy will try to do things to discourage you and the group from being effective. John 10:10 says "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy;" Satan will try to steal your focus from prayer in various ways; relationship conflict and disagreements. He will try to steal your time by trying to bombard you with little things that need to be done or unexpected occurrences so you will not have time to pray or prayer will not be a priority. Through all these things and more he tries to kill our determination to pray and kill our spirit, overall he wants us to turn away from

God and serve him. His strategy is to keep us down and ultimately destroy us spiritually, mentally and physically. These are only some ways the enemy works to discourage us and it will be different for each of us based on the things the enemy knows are triggers for taking you off focus. The enemy is wise and he has studied us and knows our triggers.

We are told in 2 Corinthians that we are not ignorant of the enemy's schemes. "Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices" So knowing this, all the more, remain focused and determined to serve God and advance the kingdom of God through the Ministry of Prayer.

Reference List

Maxwell, J. (1996). *Partners in prayer*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

Hunt, T.W., & King, C (2007) *Pray in Faith*, Nashville: Lifeway Press

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