

CONVERSATIONAL



P R A Y E R

A GROUP PRAYER RESOURCE

CONVERSATIONAL PRAYER

We've all been in worship services when there has been an open time of prayer, and we listen to someone pray at great length with style and apparent ease. Secretly we think, "I can't pray like that. . . I guess I'll pass." It is then we should remember, "*For the Lord is watching his children, listening to their prayers...*" (1 Peter 3:12, TLB). Prayer is simply our reaching out to the Lord to talk with him. He delights in our desire to connect and commune with him.

Think about those times you have engaged in conversation with friends. You enjoy their company, you relish the moments together, you desire to hear their heart, and you want them to hear yours. In those moments, there is no scrambling for proper sentence structure or trying to talk over the other. It is a simple conversation built upon the last sentiment that was mentioned by a member of the conversation.

That is exactly how conversational prayer works! The beauty of this kind of divine discussion is the natural way it can evolve. There is no striving to think up what you must say next. You are concentrating on what the "person who has the floor" has to say. Possibly, it may trigger a thought on the subject at hand, and you respectfully wait until the thought of the one talking is finished. You then comment on adding a new dimension to the topic. There is no struggling to create sentences or creative things to say. In conversation with family and friends, we find engaging in dialogue unforced and comfortable. We should consider this model when praying with another or in a group, for it can melt away the fear of praying out loud. God designed us to be relational beings; therefore, simple group conversation with the knowledge that God is part of the group can be life-changing.

Where do you begin? Think about these steps to this prayer pattern:

- **Subject by Subject**

Subject by subject is praying in one accord with others about only one subject at a time. As one person prays out loud, the rest listen to the words being spoken and be attentive to what comes into your mind concerning this same subject. As one person speaks, it is important to be open to their words and *not plan your prayer* because you are “next in line to speak.” Listen, wait, allow the Holy Spirit to lead you to pray on another perspective of the same subject. This process assures complete concentration and fervent prayer on one request at a time. This way, no one is deprived of the privilege of praying for the request before going on to another.

You may be accustomed to praying for everything all at once, not so with conversational prayer. The leader or facilitator of the prayer time mentions a subject. Then sentence prayers are offered until the subject matter seems exhausted, and there is silence.

This pattern of prayer may sound something like this, “Right now, we are going to pray one simple sentence about _____.” Then, as the leader, you may want to begin by praying one simple sentence and wait for others to pray audibly on the same subject before going to the next request. Because the participants will have to “shift mental gears” before going to another topic, it is a good idea to pause between subjects. Then the group will be prepared to pray again. Don’t be afraid of the silence!

- **Short Prayers**

Short prayers are the secret to the small group prayer time. Just one, or only a few sentences from each person on each subject, allows time for all to pray if they feel led.

How are we going to do this? Start by praying just one simple sentence to encourage the shy, untrained members of this prayer time to pray. God is interested in the short statement of the praying novice as He is in an elaborate prayer uttered by one who has had years of practice (read Matthew 6:7-8)

1. Simple Prayers

When leaders and other participants avoid using complicated phrases or a special prayer vocabulary, those who have never prayed before will find it possible to utter one *simple* sentence from the heart.

2. Specific Prayer Requests

Specific requests listed and specific answers noted are a great encouragement to continuing and expanding prayer. You may want to use a notebook to record your request and answers.

3. Silent Periods

Silent periods between prayers are a privilege and a blessing. Don't panic when there's a lull – just listen! Prayer is a *two-way conversation* with God. Make the group aware there will be periods of silence and to rest in them.

Today silence is a lost art. After a few seconds pass without audible prayer, someone usually feels compelled to clear his/her throat, shuffle his/her feet or nervously finger a songbook or Bible. Somehow we think we have to talk at God all of the time, but there are marvelous things God wants to say to us. He has answers to our questions, secrets He wants to share, and yet we bombard Him with our “much praying.” We forget that God is on His throne in heaven, just waiting to say something great to us if we would only give Him a chance.

4. Small Groups

For some, it would take great courage to stand before a large group and raise their voice in prayer for the first time. But in smaller groups, they can gain confidence in praying audibly. Being at ease with conversational prayer takes time. It takes breaking down some of the habits and preconceived ideas that we have unknowingly built over time. Start with a friend(s) and together converse with God.

“O Holy One,

*I hear and say so many words,
yours is the word I need.*

*Speak now, and help me listen;
and, if what I hear is silence,*

let it quiet me,

let it disturb me,

let it touch my need,

let it break my pride,

let it shrink my certainties,

let it enlarge my wonder.”

Ted Loder –
Guerrillas of Grace



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