

LIFE Group Leader Handout

October 13, 2019

You're in Charge!

Pastor Michael O'Connor

Scripture--2 Corinthians 9:6-15

6 The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. 9 As it is written,

"He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor; his righteousness endures forever."

10 He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. 11 You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way, which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. 12 For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. 13 By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, 14 while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. 15 Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

Main Idea--Scripture Tells Us How to Give

God is able...(Note the "alls")

Scripture calls for a double shift--

First shift: Shifting the source of my security off of self and on to God--v. 10

Second shift: Shifting the purpose of my blessing off of self and on to others--v. 11

When we make the shifts: Enduring Righteousness--v. 9

You're in Charge: How will I sow? (v.6)

The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

You're in Charge: What will I decide in my heart? (v.7)

Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

Cheerful, really?

- Our decision to give promotes our deepest values
- Our decision to give proves the genuineness of our faith
- Our decision to give honors the Lord

We will never outgive God.

Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift! (v. 15)

Application--

- Can you give an example when you were hilariously cheerful to give to God for his cause?
- How did this message move past money to our deeply held values?

A Proper Understanding of Group Prayer

Here are some questions to answer and ideas to consider.

By Spence Shelton

In a lot of small groups prayer requests take far more time and energy than actual prayer. God calls us to be a people of prayer, not prayer requests. If you aren't careful you can "prayer request" your group into spiritual demise.

So let's take your group prayer time through a boot camp of sorts. We'll start by asking a few questions, and then we will look at some ideas to help cultivate a rich, participative, belief-saturated prayer life among your group members. This assessment will operate on the following definition of prayer: Prayer is God's means for people to acknowledge their dependence on Him for all things. So when we praise Him, when we confess to Him, when we believe Him for a brother's need, we put ourselves where God designed for us to be: dependent on His provision. A rich prayer life is one that regularly and unreservedly cries out "Abba, Father."

Assessing Your Group's Prayer Life

1. Who is the main character of your group's prayer time? At first you may say: "God, of course." But who do most of your prayers really center around? God and His character? The nations? The orphans and widows? Or is it you and the people in your group? You were created to be a part of something bigger than yourself. Most of the prayers in the psalms, for example, are filled with praises for God—with requests for His help coming only in the last verse or two. If we really are only here by God's grace, our prayer life should be fueled by a God-focused mind and heart.
2. How is the Bible involved? It is not uncommon to find a big disconnect between a group's Bible study time and its prayer time. During Bible study, everyone has a Bible open and pages flipping. But when the leader transitions into prayer, just about everyone shuts their Bibles and puts them away to begin explaining to one another what they need to see or hear from God. The irony is that God's Word contains all of His promises, and it is sitting right there—unused. Is the Bible just a textbook for your group, or is it something more—as [2 Timothy 3:16-17](#) suggests it may be?
3. Who is praying—and with whom? This is a straight-up group dynamics question. Are you praying in one large circle with everyone in the group? If so, chances are good the same people (if any) are volunteering over and over again. You may have created an unnecessarily large barrier to a vibrant prayer life. Are guys praying with girls? Are new Christians praying only with other new Christians? What is the set up?
4. How are you preparing for your group's prayer time? I know you feel obligated to say, "I could always be doing more." But it's important simply to look at what is happening so you can brainstorm a starting point. Are you putting enough effort into your group's prayer time?

Ideas for Moving Forward

With your questions answered, here are some ideas for breaking free from prayer normalcy. These are simple concepts I've seen be a great help for moving groups into rich seasons of prayer.

- Index cards. Pass out an index card to each person at the start of each meeting. Ask everyone to write their prayer requests on the card at some point before prayer time. Here's the secret: people will write the "need to know" information on these cards without all of the side-track stories they would share if given the chance. When everyone is done writing, collect and redistribute the cards for prayer time and have each person in the group pray for the needs on the card they receive.
- Subgroups. Divide up guys and girls where applicable, then get into groups of three. Sharing takes way less time here and usually will draw out the prayer needs of someone who wouldn't share with 10 to 15 people.
- Single-gender prayer groups. Men and women become much more transparent when they are only speaking with others of their gender. I encourage you to try this out and see what happens.
- Prepare. Come to the prayer time with an agenda for what you will be praying for. Check in with your leadership (pastor, elders, director) to see what the entire church or organization is praying for. Maybe even hand out a prayer guide that walks everyone through what the group will be praying for that night. This is a great way to keep things fresh in the group. You may even try devoting one entire meeting to prayer. (Bonus: collect individual prayer requests, written or by email, and send them to the group so they can pray throughout the week.)
- Pray through Scripture. Find a resource to help your group think and pray through passages of Scripture. Consider memorizing a passage of Scripture together and pray the promises of God in those passages each time you pray.
- Delegate prayer time to another group member. As a group leader, part of your role is to raise up more disciple makers. The prayer element of your group is a great one to delegate to someone you are hoping to see take an increased leadership role or eventually serve as a group leader.

Small-group leader, this all starts with you. God designed prayer to be a holy, worship-filled communion between you and him. Do not settle for anything less!