

Making Small Groups Work: Leading Ministry

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How to pray for someone

“I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these because I am going to the Father.”

John 14:12

Whether that is here at church at the end of a Sunday service; in our small groups as we walk through life together and support one another through prayer; or out in our everyday life, with our non-Christian friends, work colleagues, or even with strangers on the streets.

The Spirit is not formulaic and this ministry is not formulaic either. However there are values that are taught (and can be caught) at Trent so this seems a good place to start. Everything we do in the power of the Holy Spirit flows through this grid of values.

Values in prayer ministry

1. We honour the work of the Holy Spirit

It's him who does it, not us. When we pray for someone it's not about the length of our prayers, we can't take the credit, it's him, it's all about him.

2. We honour the dignity of the individual

Whilst the power of the Holy Spirit in a meeting can be an exciting thing, it's always about people. David Pytches says, “If nothing else make sure they go away feeling loved.”

3. Everyone gets to play

We also believe that the Holy Spirit is given to every believer and that all of us are invited to join in the mission of seeing God's kingdom come here on earth. That means ‘Everyone gets to play’. So we can all pray for people, we can all pray for healing. God doesn't just use the mature, sorted, godly people, he uses all of us.

4. Being naturally supernatural

Expecting God to move supernaturally to heal, to

deliver, to encourage, to anoint and to speak but in a natural way. We can be down to earth and just invite the Holy Spirit to come. We don't want to manipulate or put pressure on anyone, just give space for people to meet with God. Valuing the work of the Spirit is about recognising that it is His ministry.

There's a phrase that you might have heard of before that, ‘It's not how you go down that counts, but the way you get up.’ (Referring to if someone falls down in the power of the Holy Spirit). So we don't focus on the blessing but the purpose of the blessing.

So how do we do it?

1. Girls pray with girls, guys pray with guys

You never know what God might bring up and receiving prayer can be a vulnerable thing. You don't know what people have gone through. Having a man comforting a woman crying or praying into a situation can make some women or men feel a little uncomfortable.

2. Stand where you can see the person's face

Often you can see signs of what God is doing in the person physically. So standing behind the person, with your eyes shut doesn't really facilitate this.

3. Lay a hand on them

That is what Jesus did when he prayed for people (Mark 6:5, Luke 4:40), it is what the apostles did to pray for people to receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:18), it is what Paul did to Timothy for him to receive the gifts of the Spirit (2 Tim 1:6); and if it's good enough for them it's a good enough model for us.

4. Ask and listen to the person wanting prayer

It is important to listen to the person but we don't need to spend too long doing this. They haven't come forward for counselling or for our wisdom, they've come forward to engage with God. However there are also times when they are already meeting with God and all we need to do is bless what God is

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doing; sometimes the last thing people need is us interrupting them.

5. Wait and Watch

Wait - Something powerful happens when we allow space and silence. God can take the lead, the person can listen for God's voice not ours and we can bless what God is doing and listen for the specific word that might be helpful or even unlock something in that person.

Watch - "She had clenched fists and was holding her arms up to her chest... I sensed she was struggling with control in a particular area of her life and needed to trust God and let go. I started to pray that she would have a larger vision of God that she would be able to trust him."

6. Pray

Not too long; but say something! We do have a part to play. Jesus has asked us to play a part.

7. Give people permission to cry if necessary

It is almost always a good and healthy thing. Don't feel like you need to give out tissues the moment a tear forms in someone's eye. It's ok to cry. A tissue correctly timed can be a really caring thing, but too early can actually communicate to someone that they should hold it together.

8. You can interrupt

How to lead a ministry time

One of the key skills we can work on therefore is trying to sense and then follow what the Holy Spirit is doing.

Firstly, the key to all this stuff is intimacy with and dependency on God, which comes from developing our own intimate relationship with the Father - there is no shortcut. The model for this is Jesus. Jesus said in John 5:19, "I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself, He can only do what He sees His Father doing."

4 basic skills to work at which will allow you to develop in this ministry:

1. Dialling down

This is about tuning into God and getting rid of the clutter. It's a discipline.

Maybe pray, "Holy Spirit would you help me quieten my thoughts, would you still my heart." When you are leading a ministry time at small group this can be a really good thing to do together, but certainly personally.

2. Waiting

It is a natural tendency in all of us to stay in control, and to truly wait saying, 'God do whatever you want in me' can be a scary thing for people. But by getting out of the way, whether you are leading people in ministry or praying for someone, you are practically giving people space to engage with God themselves. It is so important for people to just wait and say, 'Ok, God meet with me', and it takes time to be open like that.

Part of what I see my role as in leading a ministry time is to make the silence feel safe, not awkward. Waiting is the practical way of being dependent. It says, 'If you're not going to do something God, I'm stuffed! And I think God loves that!'

3. Seeing in the Spirit

Learning to watch and identify what the Holy Spirit is doing; where he is particularly working in that moment, and joining in with that.

Practically that means keeping your eyes open and really watching, both in the natural and in the Spirit. The gift of prophecy is very helpful as we pray for people - hearing God's voice for people.

'Everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort.' 1 Cor 14:3

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4. Blessing what the Father is doing

Not necessarily praying specific prayers for someone but standing alongside, encouraging, talking with them, guiding them through, hearing God for them, speaking over them. Sometimes all that is needed is phrases like, 'More of you Holy Spirit' and 'We bless what you're doing'. If you pray in tongues, you might want to do so quietly.

Praying for people outside of church

We cannot do ministry without saying that this Kingdom ministry is for everyday life. It is not just confined to the church, it is just as much, if not more so, for those outside of the church: for those we work with, for members of our family or friends, for strangers.

In the gospels (Luke 4:17 – 19, Matt 11:2-6) Jesus is usually on his way to heal someone, on his way back from healing someone or actually healing someone. Today Jesus lives in his church; therefore we should be doing what He did.

Is it easier to talk to someone about Jesus after they've been healed or before? What could this look like in your life? Whether that's in small group, being open to God's promptings at work, with friends and family.

Fear can stop us stepping out in this. What if God doesn't show up? What if nothing happens? What if I offer to pray for healing for someone and they don't get healed?

One thing to remember is that God is always working and he longs to meet with us. He will always come when we ask him. It will look different at different times but that is up to God, not dependent on us. Let's remember the now and not yet element of the Kingdom. God's Kingdom is here to heal. But also not fully here yet until Jesus comes again so until then we won't see everyone healed but the more we pray the more we see.

John Wimber always used to say 'Faith is spelt R-I-S-K'. And the Bible says that 'without faith it is impossible to please God.'

Often it is in our weakness that God works. Remember it is His ministry, He will do it.

Recommended Books:

'Naturally Supernatural' by Gary Best

'Everyone Gets To Play' by John Wimber

'The Way It Was' by Carol Wimber

'The Way In Is The Way On' by John Wimber

'The Quest For The Radical Middle' by Bill Jackson

'Doing Healing' by Alexander Venter