

## ***Guided Prayer Times***

### **When Guided Prayer Times are Needed:**

Many church members don't know how to pray in public. They are nervous and don't know what to say. Guided prayer is like "training wheels" that help them in getting started.

When church members are reluctant to pray out loud, a Guided Prayer approach allows members to pray silently. It relieves them of the "pressure to perform." Now, it's about the prayer, not speaking in front of a group.

Oftentimes, our members get stuck praying sentences they have heard others say in public prayers (Now, lead, guide, and direct us... We remember those less fortunate than ourselves...). They don't know what to say, so they just string together sentences they've heard others pray in their prayers. Guided prayers gives them ideas for how to word their prayers.

Have you seen this? You take prayer requests and listen to medical details for 20 minutes. Then, someone is asked to lead in prayer, and he doesn't pray for one person by name or for any request in any specific way. Instead, you hear something like, "Lord, you've heard all these requests and we ask that you would be with each one. Amen."

A guided prayer approach teaches our members how to pray. Further, this approach helps them to think, not in terms of medical needs only, but more in terms of the mission of the church.

**Procedure:** My approach has been to introduce the list of items on the day's prayer list and then to take their requests. Then, I ask them to bow their heads for prayer, starting with thanksgiving, as described below. After that, I would ask them to pray for three areas of pray (sample list shown below). I would then list the prayer requests "from the floor" so that each of their requests is prayed for. At the end, I closed in a brief prayer.

### **Start with Thanksgiving:**

This is a weekly item. If you ask many members to name something they are thankful for in a group, you will often hear overly-simple and "safe" answers. – "I am thankful for life... I am grateful for my family..." – and so forth. As Jesus would say, even the heathen do that! However, in guided prayer, we can help our members think more specifically and more meaningfully. For example, suggest they start the prayer time by silently thanking God for some specific way he has blessed them in the past week. You might suggest some areas of life in which the Father may have blessed them, to help them think specifically. At this point, one might also include praising God for his divine attributes (wisdom, sovereignty, compassion, etc.). However, when teaching members who've not been taught to pray, this needs to be added in very simple ways.

### **Praying for Our Services This Sunday:**

(This is another item to include weekly.)

- Pray that the Father will guide each person who is preparing for Sunday, whether to teach Sunday School or lead music or preach, etc.
- Now, ask God to bless each person who attends the service, that the Holy Spirit will challenge or convict or encourage or whatever – according to their needs.
- Ask the Lord to work in the hearts of those who *ought to attend*. Ask the Lord to call people to Himself and to church.

### **Prayer Focus:**

A prayer meeting about everything is a prayer meeting about nothing. So, in a single prayer meeting, I usually used two or three categories for a prayer focus. The exact number would depend on length. My approach in guided prayer was to call out an item and then give them a moment to pray for that item. I suggest that if they knew someone to whom this applies, pray for that person by name.

If your people are more experienced in praying out loud, another variation is to distribute a weekly prayer list, have your members pray around tables, and ask each table to volunteer to pray through the different categories on the list.

The following categories would vary from week to week. These examples are listed in no particular order. It's OK to copy and paste categories into your weekly list. Feel free to modify them to pray specifically for the needs in your community.

### **Praying for the Spiritual Growth of Christians in Our Community:**

- That each one will have a strong devotional life with Bible study and prayer that “fills their tank.” And that those who don't will get started in Bible study and prayer.
- That more and more believers in our community will be filled with the Spirit.
- That believers will learn to use their spiritual gifts to help strengthen their churches.
- That God will open doors for believers to witness and prompt them when the opportunities come.

### **Praying That the Lost in Our Community Will Be Made Hungry for the Lord:**

- That the Father will impress upon their hearts how incomplete their lives are without the Lord Jesus.
- That the Holy Spirit will show them the sinfulness of their sin.
- That the Spirit will make the “light come on” – and they will understand the gospel.

### **Praying for Hurting Children:**

- Pray for those children who are being neglected due to their parents being addicted to drugs or alcohol.
- Pray for children who are being abused – violently or sexually or verbally.
- Ask the Father to send Christians into the paths of these children who will show them godly love and concern.
- Pray that the Spirit will prompt Christian neighbors and school teachers when they need to say or do something.
- Ask the Father to send DHR to intervene in the situation if and when it's needed.
- Ask the Father to give them a clear picture of Himself and of the gospel – in spite of everything that has happened to them – so that they will come to Christ.

### **Praying for Christian Students at the Local High School:**

- Pray that the Holy Spirit will lead them to network together to reach their lost classmates and friends.
- Ask the Lord to send them encouragement from Christian members of the faculty.
- Pray that they will learn skills in evangelism and prayer that will help them serve the Lord as adults.
- That a spiritual movement of God in the High School will impact others in the community.

### **Praying for Local Christian Business Owners:**

- Ask the Father to guide them in making business decisions.
- Ask the Father to send them reliable and honest employees.
- Pray that their every honest business venture will be blessed.
- Pray that the Christian businesses will be a blessing in the community.

### **Praying for Sister Churches in the Community:**

I list the churches by name. Sometimes, all the Bible-believing churches; sometimes, just the sister churches of our denomination. I might suggest that each person select one of these congregations and pray for that one specifically.

- Pray that the Holy Spirit will guide their leaders.
- Ask the Father to direct their steps to ways that will enable them to count in the Kingdom.
- Ask God to send a fresh harvest to the churches.

**Praying for Families with a Member with a Severe Physical or Learning Disability:**

- When a family has a member whose needs consumes the efforts of all to take care of them, ask God to send inward renewal.
- Ask the Father to direct them to the right available resources.
- Pray that churches will have the resources to help them – and they will find that church.
- Pray that instead of this keeping them from Christ, it will draw them to Christ.

**Praying for Our Community this Christmas Season:**

- Pray that the Holy Spirit will prompt people to think about Jesus
- That the Lord will work in hearts to cause them to contemplate spiritual truths related to Christ's incarnation and birth.
- That more people will seriously consider the meaning of Christmas.
- Pray that the Father will draw people to Jesus Christ.
- Pray that people will accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.

**Praying for Our Community This New Year:**

- Pray that the Holy Spirit will prepare the hearts of people who don't know Him.
- Ask God to send Christian witnesses and "influencers" into these people's lives this year.
- Ask God to give people the repentance and faith they do not have right now.
- Pray that the Father will powerfully call people to Christ throughout the year.
- Pray that more and more people will become open to the gospel.

**Praying for Our Church This New Year:**

- Ask the Father to direct our steps this year.
- Ask God to show us what we can do to have the most evangelistic impact in our community.
- Pray that we will engage in ministry that will greatly impact our community.

**Praying for People Who Live in Our Community, But Don't Know the Lord:**

- Ask the Father to arrange circumstances in their lives to get their attention and draw them to Christ.
- Pray that the Holy Spirit will convict them of their sins.
- Ask the Father to draw them to Himself.
- Pray that the Lord will meet them in their thoughts and reason with them.

### **Praying for Senior Adults in Our Community:**

Some are homebound. Some others are active, but don't have anyone.

- Pray for those who are homebound.
- Pray for the recently widowed.
- Pray for those with no family to check on them or whose family neglect them.
- Ask the Father to sustain those who are his people, but lonely.
- Pray that the Holy Spirit will promote Christian neighbors when they need to minister and to know how.
- Pray that Christian retirees, who still have their health, will make these years count for Christ.
- Pray for those who are lost, with but little time left, to be saved.

### **Praying for Marriages in Our Community:**

- Ask the Father to protect and nurture those in marriages which are strong and happy.
- Ask God to intervene in marriages that are in a crisis and in peril.
- Pray that the Holy Spirit will work in that spouse who is holding out, to be willing to make the corrections needed to repair the relationship.
- Pray for salvation of the lost spouse, whose salvation would fix everything.
- Pray that the Lord will remind couples why they married each other in the first place.
- Pray that God will grant repentance to people who have poisoned their marriage with ungodly lives and values.

### **Praying for Children in the Community with No Christian Influence:**

These are children for whom Sunday is just another day to play. They know few Bible stories if any. They have no clue about the gospel. Many are pretty much raising themselves.

- What you grow up with is what you think is normal. Pray the Lord will work in their lives in such a way that they will grow up knowing that the secular home they came from is abnormal.
- Ask the Father to send Christian friends into their lives who will be a positive influence.
- Pray that the Spirit will prompt their classmates to invite them to attend Christian events at church. Vacation Bible School, for example. Wednesday night Youth Bible Study, when they become that age.
- Pray the Holy Spirit will work in these children's hearts, creating a desire to know Him and to walk with Him.

### **Praying for Single Mothers in Our Community:**

- Pray for single mothers who feel like they are drowning in work and taking care of their children. Some will be tempted to settle for any man who can take some of that pressure off of her. Ask God to protect her from the temptation to “settle.”
- Pray that the Lord would provide the legitimate needs of her family.
- Pray that the Holy Spirit would guide her in planning finances and meals and how to get each child where that child needs to be.
- Pray that the Lord would send godly men as an influence in the lives of children.
- Ask the Father to give her wisdom in rearing the children.
- Pray that the Holy Spirit would prompt her in seeking first the Kingdom of God – and show her how to do that in her present life circumstances.
- If there is an estranged husband whose repentance could improve the situation, pray that the Lord will work powerfully in him.

### **Praying for Church Planters in New Work Areas:**

These pastors are starting new churches from scratch in places where our denomination doesn't have as many adherents. Often they have to live in long, dreary, snow-filled winters. They are away from family. Starting with nothing, they may be enjoying little observable “success.” They often face a “vision-hijacker” who is trying to take over.

- Pray that the Father will bless their labors.
- Ask the Lord of the harvest to send forth workers into the harvest, to help him.
- Pray that the Holy Spirit will make the planter and his wife feel God's presence.
- Ask God to supply their needs – at home and in the church.

### **Praying for Church Planters Who Are Just Getting Started:**

- Pray that the Father will send them a strong launch team.
- Pray that, as they train the launch team, the team will “buy in.”
- Pray for the planting pastor as multi-tasks – planning, studying the community, advertising, incorporating, meeting people, etc. – that God will give him the energy he needs and will guide him in setting priorities.
- Pray for the pre-launch events, such as block parties, that people will come into their sphere of influence who are ripe for the gospel.
- They will need 50 to 70 people in the preview services – no less than 40 to 50 – ask God to send them the people.

### **Praying for those in our Community Who Hinder the Gospel and Hurt the Spiritual Climate:**

- Ask God to work in the hearts and minds of those who:
  - Are involved in the occult.
  - Homes without fathers.
  - Those in substance abuse.
  - Those in sexual addition of some form.
  - Those in who abuse their children in some way.
  - People with explosive anger issues.
  - Those who are hard-hearted rebels against God.
- Ask God to grant them a knowledge of the truth and to deliver them by the power of the blood of Jesus.

### **Praying for Our Church's Future:**

- A church thinks either strategically or selfishly; ask the Holy Spirit to work in the hearts and minds of our congregation to make strategic, evangelistic choices.
- That the Lord would direct our steps in determining a path forward for effective ministry and outreach in this community.
- Ask God to give us eyes to see the lost we are supposed to reach.
- Pray that the Holy Spirit will show us where to start.

### **Praying for Spiritual Awakening in Our Community:**

- Ask God to work in the hearts of those who've gotten out of church – to cause them to understand that the church is the body of Christ and you can't have one without the other.
- Pray that the Holy Spirit will work in those who merely attend church – that He will prompt them to be witnesses and become involved in the mission of the church.
- Ask God to work in those who attend a church that teaches false doctrine or is shallow – to give them the desire to get into the Word.
- Pray for those who have moved into the community, but drive to another community to attend their old church – that the Lord would guide them about blooming where they're planted.

### **Praying for the Members of Community Churches:**

- That they will be faithful in supporting their churches in attendance, giving, and spiritually.
- That the people who live here will join and support a church here.
- That each church member will think in terms of the Kingdom and mission.

**Praying for the Holy Spirit to Work in the Minds and Hearts of the Lost:**

- That the Holy Spirit will lead Christian witnesses into their paths
- That the Holy Spirit will cause people to understand the Gospel
- That the Holy Spirit will make people feel the need of Jesus
- That the Holy Spirit will attract people to Jesus
- That the Holy Spirit will enable them to respond to Jesus

**Praying for Our Community: *Thy Kingdom Come:***

- Ask God to bring more people – in this community -- into his kingdom.
- Ask God to guide each Southern Baptist and each evangelical church in Kingdom ministry.
- Ask God to promote a spirit within his people in the community: “Thy will be done.”
- Pray for those who fear what God would do if He were in control – Ask God to show them how their lives would be better with Him in control.
- Pray for those who love their sins and prefer their way to God’s way. Ask God to show them how His way is better.
- Pray for those who live in self-determination—determined to be in charge of their own lives (even if in a moral and respectable way). Ask God to show them that He is the Creator and they are a creature and they have a duty to their Creator.

**Praying for School Teachers in Our Community:**

- There are students who suffer at home; ask God to make the teachers know the appropriate response.
- There are Christian teachers and lost teachers. Ask God to lead the believing teachers in being a witness to those teachers who are lost.
- There are teachers who can build up students who are beat-down and give them dreams for a better future.
- There are students with learning disabilities or who are delayed in their development. Ask God to guide the teachers in knowing how to help each individual student.

**Praying for Christian Witnesses in Our Community (regardless of their church):**

- That they will be given opportunities to share the faith
- That they will recognize those opportunities when they come
- That they will be given the right words to get started
- That the Lord will water the gospel seed they sow
- That God will give the increase



### **Praying for Those in a Cycle of Dependency**

- Generation after generation has passed on the tradition of devaluing hard work and find it normal to live off the government and the generosity of others. They have no vision of living up to their God-given potential. They perceive calls to responsibility (including one's duties toward God) to be harsh, overly demanding, and unrealistic.
- Ask God to give these neighbors a change of heart and of mind (that is, repentance).

### **Praying for those Who are Trying to Dig Out of Poverty**

- Pray for the talented student in school, who swims upstream (against pressure of his family and peers) to study hard and to succeed.
- Pray for hard working, small business owners, trying to provide a service for their community and to make a better life for their children.
- Pray for those who succeed to not learn the wrong lesson from that experience – of self-reliance – but of dependence upon the Lord.