

Prayer

Bible study groups quickly settle into a pattern. Once that pattern is set it is difficult to change. Any attempt to do so will be met with opposition. We don't like change. Not that there is anything necessarily wrong with doing the same thing over and over again, except that it can get boring.

A common pattern for prayer, with some variations is as follows: We turn up on the same night every week. We have a chat and something to eat and drink. After about half an hour we settle down in chairs in a circle. Whoever is leading asks for things to pray about and we go through the list from last week to see if anything is different or needs to be added. Then we pray for the same things we have just talked about except the person praying about a particular point is not the same person who suggested it.

Often the leader says he/she will "close in prayer", i.e. be the last one to pray so that everyone else knows that the prayer session is finishing. The closing prayer usually includes some words concerning the passage we are about to study. After the study we have another prayer by the leader or someone he/she nominates.

Colin Marshall in Growth Groups has written a chapter about prayer in Bible study groups. He mentions some problems with the list of prayer points i.e. it can become repetitive, self-centred and takes a lot of time. He suggests more things to pray for that may take even more time than the prayer list.

Matthias Media has a Bible study booklet called Bold I Approach by Tony Payne. There are 6 very good studies that should help your Bible study group if they are having problems with prayer.

Here are some suggestions:

- One sentence prayers can quicken things and add some variety.
- Try cutting up the prayer list into individual points and placing them in a hat. Each person takes one out and prays for that item during the following week.
- Put HALF the member's names in the hat and the other half pull out a name each. At the end of the study (and this might take 15 mins) each person with the pulled out name and the person *of* that name get together and talk about things they can pray for each other during the week. The idea is to pray specifically for the person.
- Maybe we should be a bit more spontaneous and, when something comes up during the study, stop and talk to God about it.

If your prayer time becomes boring there is something wrong. Prayer should be an exciting time. We are praying to the cosmic God who is intimately involved in our lives. We speak, he listens and all sorts of things may happen.