



Leading Public Prayer

A Bondi & Waverley Anglican Church workshop.

Equipping Workshops are designed to be done either in groups or 1:1. They are focussed, brief, practical and designed to help the congregations and ministry teams of Bondi and Waverley Anglican Parish. Before going through this workshop, ideally you should review the two core workshops: *'the equipping church'* and *'every member ministry'*.

This workshop "Leading Public Prayer" helps equip people who want to join the Public Prayer team, but is great for everyone in our church to go through, as we build and grow our culture. At the workshop, participants work through this paper with a leader, sharing responses on the content and to the specific questions, with a focus on ministry skills, next actions and a prayerful response.

Public Prayers

What are we actually doing when we lead prayer in church? We need to equip more people to be helpfully involved in the ministry of public prayer. Leading God's people in prayer isn't just a case of reading out prayer points. It isn't just an afterthought in the meeting of God's people. It is a vital part of the ministry we all share in when we come together in Jesus' name.

This 'leading prayer in church' workshop covers what the Bible says about public prayer; the best way to prepare for it and some practical suggestions. We want public prayer to be one of the "*acts of service*" that build up the body of Christ (see Ephesians 4:12).

Read Acts 2:42 & Acts 6:4

As the ministry of the gospel was launched in Acts, both these verses show a tight connection between the ministry of the *Word* and the ministry of *prayer*. Why do you think this bond so important?

How might the prayers in our gathering as God's people reflect this link between the Word and prayer?

Read Ephesians 6:17-20 and discuss.

Again we see this link between Word and prayer: if the Word of God is the 'sword of the Spirit' (verse 17), how does this help us understand what it means to 'pray in the Spirit' (verse 18)?

What are the main things Paul reminds the Ephesians to pray about in verses 19-20?

What are the implications of this passage for priorities in our public prayers?

Read Ephesians 1:15-23

How does Paul model 'gospel prayer' in these verses, turning his celebration of the gospel in the previous verses into prayer?

Why is it important to keep the focus on Jesus in the way we pray for people?

How does the gospel of Jesus change the way we pray about *all* things?

Preparation

We have seen how important it is that your prayer be gospel-focused. We have also seen that your prayer needs to connect strongly to the particular focus of the ministry of God's Word that it accompanies. All that points to the need for preparation. Of course, these principles also apply to our personal prayer. But there is a particular need when leading others in prayer to be thought through and prepared in order to lead effectively.

It is important for the person leading the prayer to realise they are a model for the rest of the congregation in how to talk to God and what to pray about. This means preparation must be put into praying aloud at church.

Prayers need to be clear and concise so that the congregation can follow what you're praying and give our "amen" to it. So that you'll not be sloppy and ramble on, it would help if prayers are written out at first. Don't preface your prayer with an introduction or short sermon. Just Pray. Remind yourself that it is God we are glorifying by our prayers, not bringing attention to ourselves.

How and What to Pray

The content of our prayers (both private and public) should be shaped by the way God's word tells us to pray. When Jesus taught the disciples to pray (e.g. Luke 11:2-4), he gave us a model of what to pray about. We should have God's priorities and purposes first - *his* name, *his* agenda and *his* kingdom. Our needs come next.

One way of structuring your public prayers is to think of A.C.T.S

Adore - we are addressing the sovereign ruler of the universe who has become our heavenly Father through the saving work of the Lord Jesus his son.

Confess - once we recognise God as perfect and holy, we need to acknowledge what we are like as sinful human beings. You may want to do this by recognising we have all done what we shouldn't have and not done what we should have. Don't get too specific here.

Thanks - this cannot help but be the overflowing response from God's graciousness to us in so many ways and especially in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Supply - this is where we ask God to supply our needs and the needs of others. Here we express our dependence on God and thus glorify him. We pray for evangelism here and all over the world, for our lives to grow in Christ likeness, for problems and challenges to occur in our daily living. Again, let the prayers of the New Testament shape the way you pray for needs.

Response to the Word

If you've been asked to pray after the Bible Talk, you have really been asked to give expression to our *response* to God's word. This may involve all of the elements of prayer listed above, but a focus on confession, thanksgiving and supplication is typical. If others are also involved in this 'prayer of response' you may be asked to focus on just one element in particular. You can still do much of the preparation of the prayer before getting to church (see notes on the previous page). Then as you listen to the Bible Talk attentively you can fill out your notes and formulate any other points you want to pray. Do this being mindful of length, and the other issues covered in the dos and don'ts. Don't summarise the whole Bible Talk again but lead us in a prayerful response to God's Word.

Communal prayer-points

Leading communal prayer points also requires preparation. You need to be clear in your invitation asking people for prayer points. You need to write the prayer points down and think of what you need to ask God for. You may need to categorise and order the points. You normally don't need to pray all the information again. You need to ask God to do something about what we've heard.

Practical Tips for leading in prayer

- Pray clearly and deliberately, remembering you're leading us in prayer - don't mumble or race through. Use the microphone.
- Be aware of the Biblical content for Bible Talk and think of how to shape your prayer around that.
- It's good to be concise for most people's attention span (about 3 minutes at the most)
- While it's good to have prayers written out, make sure they're read with meaning - remember it's God you're talking to.
- Avoid using strange religious jargon or unusual ways of phrasing things. Speak with reverence, but naturally.
- Pray in the plural, as you are praying on behalf of everyone in the congregation. That means using "*we*" and "*us*", not "*my*" and "*me*"
- Actually be a person who prays. Jesus talked about the temptation involved in praying aloud. There is the temptation of 'seeking the praises of men.' Jesus speaks in Matthew 6:4-6 of the hypocrites who "*love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth, they have received their reward in full*". Jesus instructed his disciples rather, "*but when you pray, go into your room, close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen. Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you*".