

Faithful in prayer... Romans 12.12

Praying in a Small Group



God's revelation of himself is not just for giving us "facts" about himself, but to bring us into a loving relationship with himself. Personal private prayer is an important part of that relationship. There is also strength and encouragement in having a group of people (a prayer cell) with whom we can pray regularly.

Pattern of Prayer

There are a number of important elements in praying. ACTS is a useful mnemonic for remembering them.

Adoration (or Praise) – reflect in awe and wonder on God's greatness and love. Often the words of one of the Psalms can help us express our adoration. (Ps.95.1-5)

Confession – open to God those parts of our lives which conflict with his will. (Ps.51.1-5,10; 139.23-4; 1 Jn.1.8-9)

Thanksgiving – consider with thankfulness God's goodness to us in Jesus and his guidance and help throughout the week (be specific). (Rom.8.28,38-40; 2 Cor.9.15; Eph.5.19-20; Phil.4.6-7; 1 Thess.5.16-8)

Supplication – firstly for others (intercession), specifically bringing their need to God, then for ourselves (petition), coming with our own needs with openness to God guidance and will for us.

Conversational Prayer

Often our praying together (if church, for example) is like a **delegation**. We are together and agreeing with what is said, but one person is presenting it all on our behalf. And our small group prayer has been like a series of delegations – perhaps with each person going through some or all of the ACTS and ending with "Amen".

But our prayer cells can be more like a **conversation**. In a conversation one person isn't "holding the floor" all the time. Rather each person contributes a sentence or two and lets someone else speak. And that person doesn't go right back to the beginning, but continues, adding to the thought of the previous person or leading the conversation to another topic. And the conversation doesn't come to its "end" until all have spoken.

In our prayer cells, let's pray conversationally. First, agree about some of the specifics you want to pray about and decide who will conclude the prayer. Then, following the ACTS pattern, pray a sentence or two at a time. It may be that at some points someone will remember a Bible verse of assurance or promise that can come in as part of God's sharing in the conversation. But the "Amen" doesn't come until the end of the prayer time.