

6.3 How can I prepare to start a specific time of dynamic corporate prayer?

This is what I normally do before I begin a time of prayer. The Lord may lead you in an entirely different manner. I would not say there is a universal, *best* way to prepare. I would say, however, that it is vitally important that you take time to go through a process so that you are confident both your heart and your mind are prepared.

Before each session of prayer, I always try to get by myself or with another leader or facilitator for about 15 or more minutes. If I am by myself, I first take time just to enjoy God for Who He is. As the song says, I take time to, “tune my heart to sing Thy praise.” Often, I will read, meditate, and pray through some Scriptures, sing songs which allow me to see His greatness and glory. During this time, I am not necessarily considering how the time of prayer should develop. I am just enjoying Him. Sometimes I pray for individuals I know who will be in the prayer group, that they would be impacted in a special way.

If, prior to this time, I have a sense of how we are to begin, I present that idea before the Lord for confirmation. If I do not have a specific sense as to how we should begin, and if this is a group that meets on an ongoing basis, I reflect on how we were praying the last time we were together. Sometimes the Lord will remind me of something that may have been unfinished, and it is right for us to return to that topic. At other times I just dialogue with the Lord about what we could do. I consider passages of Scripture that have been *life* to me recently. Sometimes that is where we go.

If I am with another person who has leadership responsibilities in this group, we often have a time of prayer asking for God’s clear direction. We will then share with each other if or what direction we may want to consider. We may talk about some specific passages of Scripture and consider if they may be helpful. And we also express to God and each other our dependence upon Him for this time as well as our willingness to go where He may lead us.

As I consider the different thoughts, some weigh more (or fit better) than others. Sometimes there is only one really clear thought. That makes it easier. Sometimes I (or we) have to decide what we think the Lord wants us to do. I try to think through the starting point and see how well I could follow the suggestions I am considering giving to others. If they don’t work well for me, chances are good we don’t want to go there. And there is a point at which it is very appropriate to do that which seems obvious or best.

Sometimes all I know is that we are to start with a specific song, or Scripture passage. Sometimes it is just a word like, “forgive,” or “exalt.” I have facilitated sessions of prayer that were entirely tethered to just one idea. We began and together we caught the flow of what God wanted to accomplish. Other times I have sensed I am to set the scene by sharing some very brief thoughts from a passage of Scripture and a suggested starting point.

Once, after I had been impressed with some of the “one things” of Scripture (see for example Ps. 27:4, Luke 10: 42, and Phil, 3:13), I shared a few minutes introducing this thought to a group of pastors and encouraged them to get together in groups of 5 or 6 and each one pray from one or more of these passages. With less than 5 minutes’ worth of instruction, some of these groups took up to two hours in prayer. And, in this setting, the groups that prayed the longest enjoyed it the most.

Other times the starting time approaches and I do not have a clear direction. When this happens, it gives me an opportunity to walk in faith. It is always rather uncomfortable to seemingly be completely unprepared, but some of the best times of prayer have come when I had no idea how we were to proceed.

We should never use the following comments as a cop-out for lack of preparation, but perhaps one of the best ways to begin a time of prayer is to simply say something like the following. "Let's just take some time to turn our hearts toward the Lord as we begin and see how He would lead us. So, let's take some time in silence before Him. Consider Him. Then, if there is a passage of Scripture or a song on your heart, I invite you lead out with that. Let's each of us be sensitive to how the Lord wants to lead us in this time of prayer with the confidence that He has wonderful things He wants to do in our midst. So, open your hearts, open your spirits, and open your Bibles and let's see what the Lord has for us."

I have found it is always important for me to take time beforehand to interact with the Lord. Many times, He makes a starting point clear. Many times, He doesn't. But as we submit our minds, hearts, and spirits to Him, He proves over and over that He really is the best prayer facilitator. It is wonderful that He lets us come along with Him.

- **Blessed by Doing** – Develop the habit of regularly setting aside time just prior to facilitating a time of corporate prayer. Spend time enjoying Jesus and listening to the Holy Spirit for any specific direction He may want to give.