

concern and love of close friends shown through a hand gently resting on their shoulder or the heartfelt gesture of a warm hug.

Teaching Objects

Teaching objects are concrete embodiments of abstract ideas. The Bible is replete with them: spreading the Gospel is like a sower spreading seed, a broken nation is like a pot dashed to pieces. Stretch your imagination and learn to think visually. Use word pictures as symbols or use literal objects to convey a thought. For example, during a time of confession you might ask group members to each hold a stone, then ask them to drop the stones in a bucket to represent God's heart. They will know not only the freedom of confession, but also the freedom of releasing secret burdens to God.



Prayer Group Leading: Tools You Can Use

Your job as prayer group leader is to invite others into Jesus' presence so that He can use them as channels of His love through intercession. You have a silent partner in this, the Holy Spirit. Plan ahead how you will lead, but always be prepared to adjust or even abandon your plans as the Holy Spirit reveals His direction in the power of the moment. Here are some tools to help you lead:



Always a favorite:
have the group praise Jesus for one attribute in as many ways as possible or have them praise Him for different attributes that are meaningful to them; e.g. mercy, tenderness, strength.

Scripture

It is easiest to begin with a thought from Scripture or an actual verse. This can be chosen ahead of time or on the spot. Be receptive in your devotional times leading up to the meeting you will lead. Often God reveals His specific Word for the group then. Is there a particular passage, single verse, even a phrase that strikes a chord in you? Could it have significance for others? Ponder it for awhile and let the Lord bring to birth the ideas He might want to share. (Always be mindful that there may be a prophetic passage spoken not just to you or to your group, but also to your congregation at large.)



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Perhaps there is a single thematic idea that God is challenging you to explore; e.g. faith. Using a concordance, jot down different verses on faith and have people read them in the group, sequential or not.

A more open-ended, free-wheeling way to open the group is to have everyone open their Bibles right then and praise the Lord with whatever passage “grabs” them. I call this “popcorn praise.” You will be amazed by the themes that build as the Holy Spirit fashions a direction even from this spontaneous approach.

Music

Music has great power to help people be present to the moment. It relaxes and stills the mind or stirs and inspires, a great aid to help create whatever mood you desire and one of the most effective avenues of worship. If you do not have “live” music, use praise tapes (Integrity Music, Hosanna! Music, Maranatha, Hillsongs Australia, Campus Crusade’s Praise and Worship Series, John Michael Talbot, etc.) or sound tapes (Mary Beth Carlson, Meadowlark Samplers, Maranatha Praise Strings, environmental recordings).



Scripture and music combined can be very moving; e.g. intersperse verses that tie into and are reinforced by a sequence of songs. This takes forethought, but it is worth it!

Interactive Prayer

Interactive prayer allows people to step into Scripture and interact with Jesus in a deeply personal way. This involves “painting a picture” that people can walk into, imaging the sights and sounds of a Scripture scene and picturing actually being there. You can use a particular biblical story that centers around Jesus or a setting where the Lord has taken you in your own prayer time. Music helps create a mood;

e.g. before picturing being in a garden with Jesus, you can sing “In the Garden”, a well-known hymn with lots of visual details and a powerful emotional pull. In interactive prayer you can pray out loud and let the group respond to Jesus privately in silence or you can invite everyone to share what they are seeing and feeling through the experience.

Silence

This is the tool least used and most overlooked. People in prayer groups tend to get nervous when silence falls on the group. Unfortunately, we are usually too anxious to fill in the gap with talk. It is often in silence when God does His deepest work.

Touch

Touch is particularly effective when praying for an individual present or can be used to intercede for someone “in proxy” when an intercessor stands in for someone who cannot be there. Touch is a point of contact which allows God’s love to flow freely from His heart to one in need. It can heal, comfort, strengthen, release what needs to be released, when words alone cannot.

How do you know when to use it? You may sense a need to use the “laying on of hands” as you pray or someone else in the group may. Trust your instincts. It is not that mysterious. A parent knows when to reach out and comfort a hurting child; she does it naturally. Touch is a response to alleviate hurt. In the same way, the Holy Spirit will reveal that someone is hurting deeply and everything in you will gravitate toward the hurt. The most natural thing in the world is to stretch out your hand and touch just as Jesus did. He is still doing it—through you! Of course it is courteous to ask first if the person being prayed for is comfortable with this approach. Most people are grateful for the



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