

Worship-Based Prayer Service Guide

This practical guide has been developed as a resource for corporate prayer services in a wide variety of situations, sizes, and styles for local churches. Please feel free to adopt and adapt this guide however best meets the needs of your church or situation. We hope that this guide will encourage you church in your pursuit of a vibrant culture of enjoyable and effective prayer.

A Tool for Unity and Confidence

This guide is designed not as a strict set of rules, but as a tool for everyone to participate together with confidence and unity as the Holy Spirit leads. This service format allows structure and spontaneity to coincide in complementary relationship with clear expectations. Understanding the basics of the format reduces distraction and gives even the newest member permission to engage and contribute with confidence and clarity. Once familiar, the format is easily transferable, interchangeable, and replicable.

This format does have a learning curve that requires practice. Approach it gradually and patiently with plenty of grace for mistakes, recognizing that it will take time to become familiar. The longer you stick with it, the more expressive and unified the team will become. Over time, this format often becomes a favorite for corporate prayer.

Why Prayer with Music

Music adds enjoyability, cohesion, and inspiration to corporate prayer. Prayer with music is the biblical model of the Tabernacle of David, the New Testament church, and of the heavenly throne of God. Adding music to corporate prayer alleviates awkward silence, facilitates agreement, and is a meaningful expression of ministry to God. No particular musical genre or style is required.

Team Members

A strong worship-based prayer service typically includes the following team members. You can simplify or expand this list according to your situation or available team members.

Worship Leader: Usually an acoustic guitar or keyboard player who will co-lead the service with the prayer leader by initiating corporate worship songs and directing supportive music beneath the prayers.

Prayer Leader: A designated facilitator who will co-lead the service with the worship leader by initiating corporate prayer segments.

Band: Musicians who will support the flow of the music for the duration of the service. Advanced bands can designate a music director to facilitate the development of spontaneous musical themes under the direction of the worship leader and prayer leader.

Chorus Leader: A designated singer, usually the strongest singer, who will be responsible to initiate, repeat, or end a spontaneous chorus based on the prayers or selected passage. For simplicity, this role can also be assumed by the worship leader.

Singers: Additional singers can provide strong support during spontaneous singing under the direction of the worship leader and chorus leader.

Sound/Media: Designated to carefully facilitate the seamless transition of service components between prayer and music.

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Worship-Based Prayer Service Format

Prayer with music can be organized by a series of segments. Each segment flows seamlessly in the order shown below. Times may vary according to your service.

1. **Corporate Worship** (10-15 minutes) - Corporate worship songs bring the room into unity as the most recognizable form of corporate participation. Corporate worship also directs the attention of the room toward God. To emphasize this effect, prioritize the use of songs written to God rather than *about* God.
2. **Spontaneous Singing** (5 minutes) - Flowing directly from the last song, the worship leader can invite the room to sing simultaneously in their own words to the Lord. Functionally, this adjusts the focus from corporate worship to personal engagement with God in preparation for prayer. In larger groups, the greatest engagement is typically achieved when Spontaneous Singing initiated at the height of the song when the singers and band are strong. A simple phrase like “sing your own song to the Lord” can initiate Spontaneous Singing at the end of a strong chorus and can naturally resolve when you are ready to transition into prayer. Spontaneous Singing serves as a signal for prayer leader to prepare to transition to the prayer segment.
3. **Prayer Segment** (15-20 minute) - This segment can be approached in either of two ways often labeled “Intercession” or “Worship with the Word.” During this segment, the music will adjust to an appropriate level while supporting the prayer leader. Musically, it is best to maintain a recognizable tempo and chord progression as a foundation for further development. Brief exhortations directly relevant to the prayer service can be very helpful but be careful to avoid “preaching prayers.” Lengthy exhortations often detract from the nature of the prayer service.
 - a. **Intercession**: The prayer leader, or group of prayer leaders, will lead the room in a prayer from a passage of scripture while the band continues to play appropriately. Once the prayers are concluded, a moment can be given to allow the singers to sing a chorus that engages the room (2-3 minutes). The prayer leader can also transition into small group prayer, spontaneous “popcorn” prayer, or personal prayer ministry.
 - b. **Worship with the Word**: The prayer leader will introduce and read a segment of Scripture for the worship team to sing (Psalm 145 for example) while the band continues to play. The prayer leader and singers will alternate reading/singing through the passage phrase-by-phrase. The singers can sing responsively, develop lyrical/musical themes, and create choruses for the room to sing by repeating a phrase, paraphrasing, and cross-referencing related passages. Over time and with practice, this is a highly effective form of songwriting and biblical study.
4. After the final prayer or chorus is concluded, the segments can seamlessly recycle with new songs and prayer topics for the duration of your service.

The timing of each component can be adjusted to fit your service length. Multiple teams can be interchanged and sequentially scheduled to easily sustain extended lengths of time. An entire day could easily be sectioned into hourly or two-hour segments of continual worship and prayer.

It is common to need time to become comfortable with this format. Do not be discouraged if you cannot incorporate every component right away. Start simply and take time to practice each component and add them gradually to your services. You will begin to recognize increased engagement, enjoyment and creative expression as your team becomes more familiar with the format over time.