

Guidelines for the First Two Companioned Prayer™ Learning Sessions

These guidelines are for companions who are facilitating the first two learning sessions of a small group Companioned Prayer program. Typically, this group will not have less than two or more than three people who are learning the prayer, per experienced companion. An hour-and-a half should be available for each session. If a person misses the first session, they should not participate in the second, but should be encouraged to start again with another first session.

A sample outline of the first two learning sessions is offered below.

Suggested Outline of the First Two Sessions

1st Session:

1. Opening: Welcome; scripture reading; opening prayer; and introductions.
2. About the program: A brief overview of the program (what happens when); read Bishop Quinn's remarks and hand out that page; read the Disclaimer; discuss confidentiality; and provide blank journals to participants who did not bring one.
3. About Companioned Prayer: Share your own personal experiences of the prayer (and their significance to you); very briefly discuss how companioning works, i.e., praying with a companion. Explain that we learn the prayer primarily by praying it. Do not describe each prayer movement. (If you find it is necessary to review the prayer movements, do not go into detail beyond that in the supplemental handout "The Companioned Prayer Movements.") Read out loud the "Guidelines for Praying" but do not read out loud the sixth bullet about sharing symbols. (In this first session, do not provide any instruction regarding the sharing of symbols.) Do not yet share the printed prayer form.
4. Companion one person at a time: Use the standard Companioned Prayer form for Ordinary Time regardless of what time of year the sessions occur. Immediately after each person is companioned ask them questions or provide observations intended to help them reflect upon their prayer experience and its significance to them. See the section below titled, "Guidelines for Reflecting the Prayer Experience." Do not use this individual time after each prayer for instruction in the prayer. Include individual journaling after each person's prayer reflection.
5. Group sharing/discussion: Individual sharing and discussion of their prayer experiences. Also invite and answer any questions, including any instructional feedback as necessary.
6. Closing: Hand out the Companioned Prayer Disclaimer, the CP form for Ordinary Time (and let them know that there are other forms as well), and the "Guidelines for Praying"; and say a closing prayer. Do not provide additional handouts at this session.

2nd Session:

1. Opening: Welcome; scripture reading; and opening prayer.
2. About Companioned Prayer: Brief Q&A. Discuss sharing of symbols and cycling; read out loud the sixth bullet about sharing symbols in the “Guidelines for Praying.”
3. Companion one person at a time: Use the standard Companioned Prayer form for Ordinary Time regardless of what time of year the sessions occur. Immediately after each person is companioned ask them questions or provide observations intended to help them reflect upon their prayer experience and its significance to them. See the section below titled, “Guidelines for Reflecting the Prayer Experience.” Do not use this individual time after each prayer for instruction in the prayer. Include individual journaling after each person’s prayer reflection.
4. Group sharing/discussion: Individual sharing and discussion of their prayer experiences. Also invite and answer any questions, including any instructional feedback as necessary.
5. Closing: Discuss the next two learning session where they can continue to experience the prayer (and bring their journals), and when they feel ready, to also companion others; discuss ongoing prayer meetings and any follow-on retreat; hand out the “Guidelines for the Companion” and the “Summary of Companioned Prayer”; read Bishop Quinn’s quotes, and say a closing prayer.

Note that in these first two learning sessions, if the group is not large enough to break into smaller subgroups for companioning, then the fourth activity, “Group sharing/discussion” can be quite brief since all participants have already heard each other’s prayer experience.

Journaling

Individual journaling is part of the self-reflection and discernment of the prayer experience. Prior to the first session, ask participants to bring a journal to write in. At the first meeting, provide a blank journal or small writing pad to each person who did not bring a journal.

Request that after their individual time of sharing and reflecting, they write about their experience in their journal. They can do this while the next person is praying, or if no one else will be praying, give the person a few moments of quiet time to write before proceeding with the next activity. Encourage them to write and/or sketch about the feeling, insight and closeness to God that they experienced in their prayer and as reflected upon. Suggest that at this time their entries should be brief, even just writing or drawing a symbol if they wish. Encourage them to stay within the essence of their prayer experience, and to not expand into theological, social or personal implications of their prayer experience at this time. Suggest that they can always expand upon their journal entries when they are home.

Also let them know that these journal entries will not be shared; they are theirs alone. Also, they should not journal about what anyone else is sharing or experiencing.