

Guidelines for the Third and Fourth Companioned Prayer™ Learning Sessions

The third and fourth learning sessions focus on learning to companion.

These guidelines are for experienced companions who are facilitating the third and fourth learning sessions of a small group Companioned Prayer program. The format and content of the third and fourth learning session are the same. Overall, continuing to learn the prayer in these sessions will continue to be experientially based (that is, learning from praying and sharing), rather than based on instruction in the prayer or companioning processes. These two sessions do, however, provide the opportunity to learn how to companion another person, when a person feels ready to try companioning.

These third and fourth learning sessions can be standalone meetings or they can be part of ongoing Companioned Prayer ministry meetings that include people who have been practicing the prayer for a while. If there is not a regular ongoing ministry, these two learning sessions can be the beginning of such a group if desired.

- If the third and fourth learning sessions are part of an ongoing Companioned Prayer ministry prayer meeting, the meeting format need not change in order to include people who are new to the group. For example, the group meeting may meet for 90 minutes, may use the prayer form for the church season they are in, and may include additional prayers such as Lectio Divina, as may be the custom of the group.
- During these meetings all participants may companion each other in pairs (or three's as necessary) as in a typical Companioned Prayer ministry meeting. Those who are attending as their third or fourth learning session, should be encouraged to companion another person, but only when they feel ready to do so. In preparation for companioning, they should be provided a copy of the "Guidelines for the Companion" document.
- If two people who were together in the learning sessions have just joined the group, when it is time to form pairs, these two individuals can again be together, joined by an experienced companion (preferably the person who led their first two learning sessions). In this arrangement, the experienced companion will neither companion another person nor be companioned, if both new people are willing to be a companion. In this case, the experienced companion is present only in a supportive role. This arrangement should be used only for the new persons' third and fourth learning sessions, in which the following procedures can be used when it is time for companioning:
 - The experienced companion can briefly encourage the new people to try companioning, and to answer any questions in a spirit of faith and openness, assuring them that they don't have to get in right or do it perfectly, etcetera.

- The experienced companion can assist each new person to companion the other by sitting next to them and being quietly available to assist the new companion or to help the new companion by pointing where to go next in the prayer form if the new companion is not sure.
- Use the standard Companioned Prayer form for Ordinary Time regardless of what time of year these third and fourth learning sessions occur, and regardless of what prayer form the larger (experienced) group is using.
- Immediately after each companioning, the experienced companion can encourage the new companion to say a prayer for the person who just prayed, and then to encourage the new companion to invite the other person to briefly note something about their prayer experience in their journal.
- After that, the experienced companion can ask the person who has just prayed, if there is anything that they could tell the new companion that might help the new companion be a better companion. (Typically, such feedback can be to go more slowly, to have a softer voice, etcetera. This feedback is often positive as well.)
- Once that feedback is provided, the experienced companion can ask the person who was in the companioning role, what it was like being the companion, and then if there was anything that the person who was praying could have done differently that would help them in their companioning role.
- Next, if applicable, the experienced companion can offer supportive observations or suggestions to the person who just companioned.
- In this small group prayer session, the type of facilitated discernment (prayer reflection) by the companion in the initial two learning sessions should not occur. That is, no one should ask about the other person's prayer experience or expect the person to share about it. An opportunity to share will occur after all small groups rejoin the larger group, or if there is no larger group, then after both (or all three) new people have been companioned.
- After the feedback has occurred, the roles of the two new people are exchanged if the other person is also ready to be a companion, in which case the experienced companion again provides the support in the manner described above.
- After this second companioning/praying and feedback, all three individuals can rejoin the larger group.

The above procedures can look complex on paper, but are remarkably simple in practice.

- The above procedures can similarly be used when there is only one person learning the prayer. In this case the experienced companion companions that person first (without the prayer reflection; but with a blessing and journaling) before the new person

companions the experienced companion (again without the prayer reflection; but with a blessing and journaling.) After that, the experienced companion can provide feedback and ask the person what it was like being the companion and if there was anything that could have helped them in that role, etc.

- If there are two people who are learning the prayer in the small group, but one is not willing to try companioning, ask them if it would be okay for the other person to companion them. In any case, all new people should be companioned and should have an opportunity to be a companion.
- Once the new people have had an opportunity to be a companion during two meetings, their continued experience should be as in a regular ongoing Companioned Prayer group.
- As in a normal Companioned Prayer ministry meeting, sharing of experiences when back in the larger group will be offered for those who in that moment wish to share. No one should be pressured or expected to share if they do not wish to. The type of facilitated discernment (prayer reflection) by the companion in the initial two learning sessions should not occur in any follow-on prayer sessions or meetings.
- When people are present who are relatively new to the prayer, experienced practitioners can very slightly expand upon how they share their companioning and prayer experiences, thereby providing additional instruction by example. For example, a person could say how they took extra time to allow a clearer awareness of something special rather than moving quickly on; or how they stayed with their prayer subject while simultaneously letting go into the love of Jesus; or how they were able to notice how something felt in their body; or when they were companioning, what they did when they were not sure what the person praying said; and so forth.
- New participants should be encouraged to bring their journals and continue journaling their prayer experiences. Ongoing participants can also model this activity.