

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 mentors (experienced companions) who are facilitating the third and fourth learning sessions of a small group Companioned Prayer program. 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 companionship processes. These two sessions do, however, provide the opportunity to learn how to companion another person, when a person feels ready to try companionship.

Prior to breaking into small groups for companionship, read out loud the “Guidelines for the Companion” and answer any questions.

When arranging the small groups for companionship, it is better to have one mentor for two people who are learning the prayer than it is to have one mentor per learner. In this arrangement, the mentor will neither companion another person nor be companioned, if both new people are willing to try companionship. In this case, the experienced companion is present only in a supportive role as follows:

- The mentor can briefly encourage the new people to try companionship, 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 mentor 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 companionship, the mentor 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 person who has just prayed to briefly note something about their prayer experience in their journal.
- After that, the mentor 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 mentor companions that person first (without the prayer reflection; but with a blessing and journaling) before the new person companions the mentor (again without the prayer reflection; but with a blessing and journaling.) After that, the mentor 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 people learning the prayer 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.

A sample outline of the third and fourth learning sessions is offered below. A more useful sample outline in MS Word of all four learning sessions is available on the CPCF website at www.CompanionedPrayer/supplemental-resources.

Suggested Outline of the Third and Fourth Sessions

3rd Session:

1. Opening: *[can be done in a large group]* Welcome; opening prayer; and scripture reading.
2. How to companion: *[can be done in a large group]* Very briefly discuss how easy it is reading the bold text, with instructions for the companion in italic text. Explain that the *OPENING PRAYERS* should be extemporaneous, and that what is provided on the form are only samples. Inviting the person to also say a prayer either silently or out loud should always include the instruction to say “Amen” when they are ready to go on. Read out loud the “Guidelines for the Companion” and ask for questions.
3. Participants companion each other: *[should be done in multiple small groups of, e.g., a mentor and two learners]* Use the standard Companioned Prayer form for Ordinary Time regardless of what time of year the sessions occur. Immediately after each person companions another, encourage the companion to say a prayer for the person who just prayed, and then encourage the companion to invite the other person to write in their journal. Do not allow the companion to ask reflective discernment questions as occurred in the first and second learning sessions.
4. Group sharing/discussion: *[can be done in a large group]* Individual sharing and discussion of what companioning was like, and then invite sharing of their prayer experiences. Also invite and answer any questions, including any instructional feedback as necessary.
5. Closing: *[can be done in a large group]* Hand out the “Guidelines for the Companion” and say a closing prayer.

4th Session:

1. Opening: *[can be done in a large group]* Welcome; opening prayer; and scripture reading.
2. Brief check-in: *[can be done in a large group]* Ask if there are any questions from last time.
3. Participants companion each other: *[should be done in multiple small groups of, e.g., a mentor and two learners]* Use the standard Companioned Prayer form for Ordinary Time regardless of what time of year the sessions occur. Immediately after each person companions another, encourage the companion to say a prayer for the person who just prayed, and then encourage the companion to invite the other person to write in their journal. Do not allow the companion to ask reflective discernment questions as occurred in the first and second learning sessions.
4. Group sharing/discussion: *[can be done in a large group]* Individual sharing and discussion of what companionship was like, and then invite sharing of their prayer experiences. Also invite and answer any questions, including any instructional feedback as necessary.
5. Closing: *[can be done in a large group]* Read out loud Bishop Quinn's quotes. Discuss the follow-on weekly prayer meetings and attending a later retreat. Hand out the "Summary of Companioned Prayer." Invite them to consider how they may use the prayer in ministry after a little more experience with the prayer. Discuss inviting others to a Companioned Prayer learning program. Say a closing prayer.