

Opening Prayer Guidelines

First of all, thank you for your willingness to serve God in this important capacity. Being called on to lead an opening prayer is a meaningful responsibility. These prayers are not thoughtless, hollow, meaningless rituals. Fervent prayers offered in earnest with believing faith make a difference. *The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective* (**James 5:16**).

Men who are asked to lead opening prayers should understand the purpose of these prayers, and know what to do when giving them, as well as what not to do. Here are some general tips:

- Avoid praying a canned or rehearsed prayer. Let God inspire your words.
- Be careful not to turn prayers into sermonettes. Prayers should be brief. Brevity does not make prayer ineffective.
- Avoid vain repetitions, **Matthew 6:7**. Don't just mouth words. Some have repeated Father, or similar expressions, a half dozen or more times in a short opening prayer. This certainly can be vain repetition. On the one hand, this can be a sign of nervousness, or just a bad habit we can fall into, so it's understandable in one sense, but we need to be thinking about avoiding it.
- Talk to God, not the audience. Keep in mind that you are speaking to God. It is a prayer.
- Be sincere, straightforward, and unaffected. Get your mind off yourself and say what you have to say. Be confident and yet humble. Use a normal, clear, voice and avoid theatrics. Avoid false humility or an emotional display.
- Always pray "we" and never "I". Remember, you are praying for the entire group. This is not a personal prayer.
- Remember the primary purpose of the opening prayer. Ask for God's inspiration on all aspects, especially the speaking and hearing.
- Be sure to thank God. Express gratitude for being able to meet in peace, for the meeting place, for the weather, or for other ways God has blessed us, **Ephesians 5:20**.
- Ask for God's inspiration on the speaker's talk. Ask that Jesus Christ be present in spirit to guide the proceedings. Ask God to speak through His servants to provide the group with what it most needs.
- Stick to the point. A brief opening prayer is just that – it is meant to open services. You do not need to cover the entire spectrum of current events, plan of salvation, or events of the week.

These points are given as guidelines and are not a set of rigid rules. If you are called upon to lead an opening prayer, thank God for the opportunity and be sure your prayer is one to which the entire group can sincerely say AMEN.