

IN A HALF-NIGHT OF PRAYER

WHY?

- Imagine the impact on your church and community if you all come together for one evening to pray. That's the vision: to place God at the centre of *everything* you do—and what better way to do that than to pray together as a church?
- Something supernatural happens when a congregation gathers together for an extended season of prayer to pray for its ministry. Prayer builds faith and unity and grows an expectation that God is going to move.
- The Bible is full of examples of people praying together for their ministry. This includes prayer before important decisions and for success in battles. And when they prayed, amazing things happened!
- Maybe you're having trouble getting your congregation to regular prayer meetings. Perhaps they'll come to a special one evening of prayer.
- Jesus had at least one night of prayer with his disciples (**Luke 22:39-45**—even if his disciples fell asleep!). He obviously thought prayer was essential!

TIPS

- 1 A suggested format for a half night of prayer is: introductory praise and worship, followed by four 45-minute prayer sessions (separated by breaks). For example:**
 - 7:30 pm, Introduction, praise and worship
 - 8:00 pm, Session one (then a 15-minute break)
 - 9:00 pm, Session two (then a 30-minute break for supper)
 - 10:15 pm, Session three (then a 15-minute break)
 - 11:15 pm, Session four
 - 12:00 am, Conclusion
- 2 Choose a different topic for each 45-minute session**
 - Mission areas make great topics for prayer: evangelism, disciple-making, Community Ministries and other Salvation Army services in your area, youth and children, leaders, etc.
- 3 Choose a different leader for each session and encourage them to bring a range of topics and to use different prayer styles and creativity, such as:**
 - Conversational prayer with one person speaking at a time
 - Everyone prays out loud at the *same* time
 - Small groups
 - Intercession by leader only
 - Silent prayer
 - Capture prayer topics and display where they can see them (screen or whiteboard)

- Laying hands on people (eg, if praying for leaders)
- Interactive prayer styles (eg, drawing or writing on post-it notes)
- Pray through the building (provide written prayer points in each room)

- 4 Start each session with thanks for the good things that are happening and for previous answers to prayer.**
- 5 If the leader presents a range of topics and then says 'let's pray', the 45-minutes can really drag! Instead, drip feed topics one at a time. This will encourage people to pray more deeply for each topic (and the time will race by!).**
- 6 Take a note of what you pray for so that you can celebrate answers in the future.**
- 7 Make your prayers bold and specific, not vague. Expect God to make a difference—ask him to do so!**
- 8 At the end of the evening, provide time for people to express what God has been saying to them and to the group.**

ANSWERS TO COMMON MYTHS AND OBJECTIONS

- *If I can't pray for 10 minutes, how could I possibly pray for half a night!* Our time is divided into smaller sessions and the leader will prompt for topics every few minutes, so there's heaps to pray about. Besides, you don't have to pray out loud unless you want to.
- *I can't think of anything more boring!* You won't get a chance to be bored. This is not a lengthy 'be quiet and fall asleep session'; this is people praying excitedly for God to bless us. But be warned, most people tend to stay longer than they planned, not the other way around!
- *I doubt I'd last more than half an hour—definitely not till midnight.* You'll be surprised at how the time races by, and there are plenty of breaks. People come and go all evening.
- *We can't get a babysitter.* How about one of you come for the first half and then swap at half time?
- *Is it worth it?* Absolutely! You'll see some incredible answers to prayer and a real unity grow in our congregation.