
A liturgy for commissioning and interceding for community group leaders

- (1) **Provide a framework:** “We’re going to transition now into a time of ‘intercession,’ which simply means we’re going to go to God together and ask him to do things for us that are on his heart, and that we cannot do for ourselves, in the confidence that he hears us and will answer us.” [By combining the commissioning liturgy with the intercession liturgy, it will take longer than intercession alone normally would, but won’t take as long as commissioning and intercession conducted separately would.]
- “In our time of intercession today, we are also honored to pray over and commission newly-launching community group leaders, so at this time I would like to invite up:
 - [first name] [last name] and [first name] [last name], who are leading a multiplication out of [first name] [last name] and [first name] [last name]’s group.”
 - [If you want, you can briefly describe the neighborhood they’ll planting the gospel flag in.]
 - (Alternately, you could simply invite them up—unnamed—and then give them the mic and invite each couple to introduce themselves, describe their group, and cast vision for the geographical gospel flag they’ll be planting with the launch of their group.)
 - “I would also like to invite the pastors up to lay hands on them as well.”
- (2) **Point to the sadness:** “Group multiplications are gospel goodbyes—which means they come with tears and sadness, but ultimately a deep joy. Every time a group multiplies there is joy amidst the pain of growth, but there is also celebration, because we know that we are making room for more people to meet Jesus and receive care. There is no one in our lives constantly except for our Lord Jesus Christ—by means of the power and presence of His Spirit—so we trust in Him as we say our gospel goodbyes with great hope and joy in the advance of the gospel.” (If you would like to read Scripture at this juncture, a good passage to briefly read aloud would be the following heavily edited excerpt from Acts 20, when Paul takes leave of the Ephesian elders.)

And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit... I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God... In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’ ... And when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all. And there was much weeping on the part of all; they embraced Paul and kissed him, being sorrowful most of all because of the word he had spoken, that they would not see



his face again. And they accompanied him to the ship (Acts 20:22a, 24, 35b, 36–37, 38b).

(3) Plant yourself on the joy: “As we pray, let’s thank God that shepherds are being raised up and hearth fires are being kindled and those without hope and without a home are being invited into the warmth and table fellowship of a spiritual family.”

(4) Provide direction for prayer:

- “Let’s pray for these leaders to be equipped and filled with the Holy Spirit!”
- “Let’s ask God for workers to be sent into the harvest! The laborers are few, but the fields in [city] are white. Pray for people to not just receive God’s love, but also be sent by God’s love into our community as ambassadors.”
- “Let’s ask God to deeply plant the lonely in this spiritual family. God introduces himself in Psalm 68 as the God who ‘sets the lonely in families’” (Ps 68:8).

(5) Pray a passage (or two!):

- Lord, we ask that, “according to the riches of [your] glory [that you would] grant [each of these leaders] to be strengthened with power through [your] Spirit in [their] inner being[s], so that Christ [would increasingly] dwell in [their] hearts through faith—that [as they are more and more] being rooted and grounded in [your] love, [that you would empower them to] comprehend... the breadth and length and height and depth [of your love] ... [so that they might] be filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph 3:16–19).
- Lord, you introduce yourself to us in Psalm 68 as the God who “sets the lonely in families” (Ps 68:8). Would you set the lonely in this congregation and this city in spiritual families? Would you empower this body to adorn the gospel message with gospel hospitality? Enable us to open our homes and our loves to each other and break bread around a common table, and serve and love each other, to your glory.

(6) Pause to celebrate: Say “amen” and invite everyone to celebrate out loud. “Let’s clap and celebrate what God is doing in and through these leaders.”

(7) Pivot into the welcome: Your liturgy of inviting people to welcome each other in light of God’s prior movement towards them can hold hands really easily with the language and imagery of Psalm 68:8.



Gospel goodbyes

We acknowledge the pain

God has not called us to live life as stoics. The sense of loss should not only be acknowledged but also, in a real sense, celebrated! The loss tells us a beautiful story of having enjoyed something good and real.

We feel the pain

It will be very difficult to celebrate multiplication unless we feel and experience the pain of gospel goodbyes. As one author puts it, 'We should never be able to simply shrug our shoulders, walk away from friendships and move into the next phase of life... The sense of loss over a good thing is a truly good thing. Which is why we needed to embrace it and feel it, not spurn it and short-circuit it.

We celebrate that the gospel is running swiftly and multiplying

Jesus reminds us in Matthew 28 about our call to go into all the world and make disciples, this requires us to 'go'. Every time a group multiplies there is joy amidst the pain of growth, there is celebration knowing that this means there is space created for more disciples to be made and more people to meet Jesus and for more people to be cared for. There is no one in our lives constantly except for our Lord Jesus Christ by the power and presence of His Spirit, we trust in Him as we say our Gospel goodbyes with great hope and great joy in the furtherance of the Gospel.

Intercession

Why?

God is sovereign over the means and the end of the restoration of the world, and he has decreed that his sovereign will be deployed and advanced through the priestly prayers of his people. God is the author and finisher of history and actively works in history through the prayers of the church. Much like the early monastic orders believe, the prayers of the church literally hold the world together.

"...and the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel." - Revelation 8:4

What?

We pray and interceded for the city, state, and world, asking for God's justice and goodness to be poured out on Christian, non-Christians, leaders, cities, states, and nations. Through this time of Intercession, the church is advancing God's mission in the world through prayer. We are modeling God's heart for the world, as well as learning about God's mission for the world.

How?

Intercession must be intentionally planned and participatory for the congregation. The focus needs to be geared away from personal, devotional prayer and towards the external, specifically praying towards the advancement of the Kingdom in all its facets in the city and the world.

Who?

For the Christian: Intercession teaches the believer how participate in the mission of God through prayer.

For the non-Christian: Intercession gives the non-Christian an idea of what heart of God is for the world.

