

Engaging Millennials and Gen Zs in Group Prayer



Many prayer leaders desire to see those of all generations engaged in their church's prayer opportunities. But since a majority of prayer leaders are usually baby boomers or older, we have a tendency to design prayer gatherings for our age intercessor and hope younger adults will join in. But they often do not attend.

I want to encourage you that you can draw younger adults to prayer gatherings . . . if you include elements attractive to younger generations. What are some of those elements?

Include Meaningful Worship.

Sitting around in a circle of a room taking turns praying is not exciting to a younger audience. In fact, it is even intimidating.

Making worship a central part of the prayer time will draw in the younger audience. They long to experience the presence of God, and to them His presence is most often experienced in worship. And it should go without saying, but I will say it anyway: if you want to attract a younger audience, make sure the worship style is contemporary!

Plan Short Prayer Segments that Come Out of Worship.

The most effective prayer format that attracts a younger audience is to have shorter prayer segments that are interspersed with the worship.

As a song is either winding down or is at bridge section, have a leader (it can be the worship leader or a different prayer leader) announce a prayer topic. Then put people in groups and have them pray on that topic for 3-5 minutes.

Put the topic and a few related prayer points on the screen. If they can, it is even good for the worship instruments to keep playing through the prayer time.

As the prayer time winds down, cue the worship team to start the next song or continue singing the song they are currently playing. This will naturally cause the prayer time to stop. Do this multiple times throughout the prayer gathering.

For this to work smoothly, some prior planning and discussion between worship leader and prayer leader is necessary.

Focus on Meaningful Prayer Topics Important to Them.

Most church prayer meetings focus more on the needs of the congregation (usually illness) and not so much on kingdom issues. For a number of reasons, this is an absolute yawner for a younger audience. Millennials and Gen Zers are not going to get excited praying for people they likely do not know. Instead, look for topics of interest to them.

Social justice issues and praying for the salvation of their friends or community transformation will be a much larger draw. Things like racism, human trafficking, homeless situation, and so forth are topics of interest to millennials and Gen Zs. Include those topics in your prayer time,

especially within the context of seeing these things improve within their city or the nation.

Mentor a Younger Person to Lead

An obvious way to draw a younger audience is to let a younger person lead the prayer meeting! Many prayer leaders who are reading this article are older than 50. It is natural in a church that seasoned individuals become leaders. But is there someone younger (20s or 30s) in your church you can mentor to lead the gathering or part of it? You will be rewarded with increased attendance from their age group!

If you revamp your group prayer gatherings to focus on these things that are of interest to a younger audience, you will see them start to participate more. Of course, if you make changes to your prayer times trying to attract a younger audience, make sure you let those of that age in your church know how you have changed the format.

Note: We have just released two excellent 31-day prayer devotionals that millennials and Gen Zers will really like. *Make Us One: A 31-Day Prayer Journey Toward Racial Healing* focuses on a social issue of deep interest to those groups; and *Praying What Jesus Says*, a 31-day prayer devotional that teaches the user to pray the hard-hitting words of Jesus into his or her life. If you do an all-church or small group prayer initiative, either of those resources will draw millennials and Gen Z members of your church to participate.

—Jonathan Graf is the president of the Church Prayer Leaders Network.