

Leading an Effective Time of Skype Prayer

Skype prayer groups are a valuable tool in mobilizing and sustaining prayer initiatives. With this simple and free software it is easy to facilitate effective times of prayer from anywhere with an internet connection. This can be done through computers or mobile phones with an adequate internet connection speed. Normal land or mobile phone numbers can also be used for these calls but Skype charges a fee for this service.

Below are a list of tips in setting up and facilitating a Skype prayer session. With a little practice Skype prayer times become a fun and effective way to join others in prayer.

Getting Started

- First, download the Skype software. You can find this free at <http://www.skype.com>. Download the appropriate computer or mobile application.
- After installation, take a tour of Skype to learn its functions. The interface is simple and can be learned in a few minutes. An optional tour will auto-launch the first time you open Skype.
- Connect and test your headphones and speakers before a Skype call. Skype has simple steps to test you ability to hear, speak and adjust volume.
- It is best to have a headset with a mic rather than built-in computer speakers and mic. Headsets remove call “echo” and background noise which distort a speaker’s voice.
- Find and use your “mute” button. If you are not speaking, you need to have yourself muted. This keeps out background noise. When you are speaking you simply click to un-mute. Note that the mute button only appears when a call is active.
- Utilize the “chat” function during a call. When the call starts you will see pictures of all the callers. Click on the picture of a dialogue balloon to open up the chat. You can also chat without a call being open.

Hosting

- Appoint a “host” before the call begins. The host will take care of calling participants and retrieving dropped callers.
- Select a host with a fast internet connection since they will be the server for the call.
- The host needs to create a group for the call, drag the names of all call participants into the call window and click “call group” to start the call. Note that to add participants the host will have to “friend” each user.
- If a user drops from the call or gets added in late, the host drags the user into the call window to call in the participant.
- The host is responsible for a prompt start and end to the prayer time. It is essential for group sustainability to respect the prearranged time for the call.
- It is useful to have the host or another participant take prayer notes in the chat window. This will provide an easy-to-copy call record for all participants.

Facilitating

- Appoint a “facilitator” before the call begins. The facilitator will guide the prayer time.
- The facilitator should prayerfully prepare for the scheduled time. The structure of the prayer time should reflect the maturity and comfort level of the group praying. Less experienced prayer

groups are wise to start with several times of concrete facilitation. Later the group can move into less structured and more spontaneous prayer.

- The facilitator should have all participants “sign in” just before the call. The facilitator then makes a prayer order with those names and puts the order into the chat box. The group prays one at a time in this order so there is no talking over one another.
- The facilitator should post scriptures or points of prayer into the chat box. This helps keep the prayer time focused and informs participants who may have stepped away or had difficulty with their connection.
- Facilitators are wise to use Youtube as a resource for worship songs. Each caller can click on a Youtube link and listen. As some participant connections are slow, the facilitator should post songs to be played at the beginning of the call.
- The facilitator partners with the host in making sure the call stays within the prearranged time constraints.

Sustaining the Group

- The facilitator should send out a reminder for the prayer time via email and Skype. Ideally the reminder is sent 24-48 hours before the call.
- Often participants will be from all over the world. Learn to effectively communicate call time and dates by sending a list of multiple times or teaching the group to properly translate a standard time, like GMT, into their time zone.
- Always start the call on time even if some participants are running late. Upholding the prayer time is critical to long term success.
- Groups can vary in size. Ideally groups are from 4-12 participants. Less than this and the group lacks diversity, more than this and prayer turns are too infrequent.
- Carry a vision to multiply but patiently wait for the right time. Groups will fluctuate in attendance so wait until a consistent large group attends the call. It will then be appropriate to divide the group so the prayer effort can grow further.
- Over time diversify leadership. This will add variety to the calls and spread the burden of preparation. This will also raise up leaders for other prayer times.