

Guidelines for Leading Meetings

“Therefore, my brothers, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.” 1 Corinthians 14:39-40

We are told in 1 Corinthians 1:7, when Paul addresses the church in Corinth, that they lacked no spiritual gift, and yet he had much to say regarding how they were to practically function. It is much the same in our meetings; we typically experience a rich flow of spiritual gifts, and therefore require a substantial need for leadership and order.

The following is an outline of many of the responsibilities which we hope will prove to be a useful guide for brothers who are given the sobering responsibility to lead the church in our meetings together on Sundays. Please don't be daunted by this fairly extensive list; in reality many of these points are obvious and will be naturally outworked without need for much consideration. However, those who are new to leading meetings may find this thorough overview particularly helpful:

1. Set aside time during the week prior to the meeting to pray and seek God regarding any strategic instruction He might show you for the meeting.
2. Make contact mid-week prior to Sunday with whoever is leading worship, and talk through anything they might be sensing in terms of direction for the meeting. Also, find out what songs they are considering, and if you have an opportunity, use these songs in your personal times of worship leading up to Sunday.
3. At some point on Friday or Saturday, it would be good to make contact with one of the elders or the main administrative person to discuss the announcements. List them in a clear, orderly fashion, giving real attention to how you can express this important information in an inspiring and effective way.
4. Try not to have too late a night on Saturday, and take some time before you sleep to prepare your heart. Organize and plan anything you can to help the following morning flow frustration-free. This might mean discussing with your wife the plan for getting the children ready and preparing for the challenges of a busier and earlier morning than usual on Sunday.

SUNDAY MORNING: PRE-MEETING

5. Arrange to arrive early enough on Sunday (usually 1 hour prior to the start of the meeting) to engage with God in worship as the team practices.
6. This is when some of your practical leadership might start as often the musicians and sound people can experience a number of organizational and/or spiritual challenges in setting up and getting prepared for the

morning. In this, you should be a calming and encouraging influence; helping everyone focus on the Lord and the privilege we are about to have in leading His people into His presence.

7. If you haven't already received some direction from God regarding how to start the meeting, this will often come in the time you prepare as the worship team practices. Be careful not to over-prepare, this is not a time for a mini-preach. Usually, a short passage of Scripture or a brief exhortation is all that's required to help our folks focus and ready themselves to enter His courts.
8. Ask the worship leader if they have anything they feel to start the meeting with. Often they will, and many times it is best to let them run with it. Quite frequently you will be blessed to discover a great similarity in what you both have on your hearts. It is not usually necessary for both of you to share, so determine which of you should. God will guide you in directing this, but if the worship leader is passionate and clear, it's usually best to let them go for it.
9. The practice should be finished at least 20 minutes before the meeting begins, allowing folks to arrive to quietly playing recorded music, rather than the full volume of the live musicians practicing. This also means you can join the team for a time of prayer prior to the start of the meeting.
10. Make sure the musicians are in place and ready for the start time, and ask the lead musician to start playing quietly. This generally helps folks transition from greeting and chatting to getting ready to worship. Aim to start around 5, but no later than 10 minutes after the meeting is scheduled to begin.
11. Even before the meeting starts, some might come to you with a contribution they would like to share. Rarely should this be something you allow to replace what you have agreed to start with, but it can be helpful to bear this input in mind for later in the worship time.

THE MEETING

12. Start by giving a 2 minute warning. After 2 minutes, welcome everyone; be warm and enthusiastic. If you don't have everyone's attention immediately, don't take it personally. People are often excited to connect with one another, or are just distracted with many things, so gently but firmly persist until you have everyone with you (inviting everyone to join you in prayer often proves to be a very effective means of drawing attention). Asking people to stand can often help them to focus so consider doing this straight away, but always before passing things over to the worship leader.
13. After you, or the worship leader has started the meeting, engage the best you can in worshipping God on a personal level, but remember you are there to serve, and a huge part of your role is being a bridge between the worship team and the congregation. Do your best to keep aware of where the people are at, while at the same time remaining connected to the worship leader. This will require you to maintain a level of awareness and not allow you to get too 'lost in worship.'
14. Usually after the first or second song, a number of people will approach you with prophetic words, pictures, visions, scriptures, or testimonies (hopefully not all at once). Listen to what they have to say and do your best to help weigh whether these contributions are indeed from God or not. Try and help them determine the following:
 - Whether the word is more for them personally versus the church
 - Whether the word is in keeping with everything else that is happening in the meeting

- Whether the person sharing with you seems in the right state of mind and emotion to effectively communicate their message

Note: It has become quite common for the meeting leader to have a support person helping him screen the words, and also as a means of training and development. This can be a helpful practice, but be careful that too much discussion is not taking place between the two of you, as this can be confusing for the worship leader and awkward for the church.

15. Although we don't want to be closed to exceptions, we would generally recommend caution with testimonies. It is rare that a testimony is brief and prophetically relevant in the flow of a worship time, and the reality is few things can bring a worship time to a grinding halt like a long and poorly communicated testimony. If you feel a testimony should be shared, consider whether this should be at the close of the worship time or during the announcements.
16. Feel free to change the order of when people share if you feel it will help the church follow what God is saying, but provided people are being responsive to God's promptings, the order will quite often be in the same sequence as people have come to you.
17. In keeping with our practice of acknowledging God's creational order in our public worship times, instruct any male who's wearing a hat to please remove it before bringing his contribution, and any female to use some type of head covering when bringing her contribution. If the individual happens to be a visitor, simply explain to them that this is our practice. This hasn't proven to be a problem for people, but if it is, do not let their contribution come.
18. At times, there can be an abundance of folks wanting to contribute and some leaders have found it helpful to jot down the essence of what is being shared and then allow the contributions as they seem to fit. This can help with order, but be careful not to introduce a level of control which is based on your timing versus the natural flow of the Holy Spirit.
19. In terms of instructing those who are about to share, often there is nothing more than an encouragement to 'go for it', particularly with the many experienced prophetic folks we lead. However, following are examples of the kind of gentle direction that might be appropriate:
 - OK, that's great, but just share what you've shared with me, nothing more.
 - Try and express something of the emotion of the things you are saying.
 - Try and reign in your emotion, so that you can get through what you have to bring.
 - I'm not sure of the timing of this; can you stay close, so I can bring you up if and when I feel it fits?
 - Is this supposed to be spoken or sung?
20. Listen to what is actually being delivered over the mic, as this can quite frequently be very different from what was shared with you. Feel free to ask the next person wanting to contribute to wait until you've heard the current person sharing.
21. Someone may approach you with a tongue; the only thing to determine with this is the confidence you feel regarding the person bringing this and whether it fits with the timing of everything else going on. For example, be wary if this happens right at the end of the time, as it will typically add another 15-20 minutes to the meeting time due to waiting for the interpretation (which must come, and is your responsibility to bring if it's not forthcoming) and possible responses.

22. If you let a tongue come (or even if one is brought spontaneously through the congregation), instruct the church to incline their ears to God for the interpretation.
23. Sometimes directional prayers or prophecies will come from the congregation and bypass the screening process. In those instances, bring whatever direction you feel is necessary to keep the flow of engagement with God.
24. In general, don't be afraid to leave time for the congregation to respond to prophetic direction. When leading, we can become very sensitive to times of pause, and they can become exaggerated in our minds. Finding the balance between giving time and not allowing blank, direction-less spaces is something learned by experience.
25. Feel free to walk over and discreetly check with the worship leader to ensure that you are sensing the same direction. Also, it is a good idea to check with one of the elders if you are needing clarity or confirmation at any point.
26. Be conscious of not usually going beyond 50 minutes (or an hour from the meeting's official start time). Obviously, there will be times when the Holy Spirit will cause the worship time to run longer, even to the extent of taking up the entire meeting. However, if you ever sense this is the direction things are going, always check with the elders who are present before allowing this to happen.
27. It is usually best to close the time with a prayer that encapsulates the essence of what has come during the time of worship, and then asking everyone to take their seats.
28. It may be that once everyone has sat down, and before taking up the tithes and offerings, you bring something of a summary or explanation of the key things that came prophetically during the worship time.
29. Before starting the announcements, take up the tithes and offerings (typically there will be some folks ready to help with this). We tend not to be too elaborate, or long winded about this, but remind the church that it is a joy and a privilege to give generously, and this is very much part of our worship to God.
30. Levels of attention vary during announcements, so again, be gracious with folks. Also, try and be succinct and clear as you go through the list. If someone approaches you with an unscheduled announcement, have them check this with one of the elders before allowing it to come.
31. After the announcements, dismiss the children to their classes and give the congregation five minutes before the speaker starts. Encourage them to get their children settled as quickly as possible, so we don't limit the speaker's time.
32. Often times, there will be no need or desire for the speaker to be announced, but always give consideration to this, and obviously, this is a must for visiting speakers. Also, ask the speaker if he needs anything, and make sure he has a glass of water.
33. Your responsibility is not over at the end of the announcements, and it is important for you to remain in the meeting during the teaching. It may be that things arise during the message, like a disruptive person or element, that will require your attention. Also, there may be a need to instruct the congregation in response to the message, or even the organizing of prayer ministry for those who are responding.
34. There will often be people who will want to talk to you at the end, so be open to this. Visitors, in particular, will

consider you a leader, and may well have questions or observations for you.

35. Finally, although many well organized people will be part of the cleaning up at the end of our meetings, as the meeting leader, you are responsible to make sure nothing has been missed, i.e., everything is cleaned up, switched off, cleared away, and locked up.

Thank you for being willing to serve in this way. The meeting leader plays a huge role in helping the church respond rightly when we meet together, and although it can be challenging at times, it is also a great blessing — both here and eternally — for those called to this.

ABOUT ONE CHURCH MINISTRIES (OCM)

One Church Ministries administrates the care and equipping of local churches by Ephesians 4 ministries, currently led by the apostolic ministry of John C. Lalgee.

The goals of One Church Ministries

- To bring to maturity and effectively care for a God-determined number of local churches birthed through or adopted by OCM
- To influence the wider Church by way of resource and example.
- To raise up and release Ephesians 4 ministries.

