



15 dead-certain recipes for an insipid musicians' prayer-group

1. The inner attitude with which you go to group meetings is luckily unimportant. The important thing is above all loyal fulfilment of duty, which you, as a good Christian, are willing to take upon yourself. No-one is really counting on your expecting something special from God during the meeting. So: drop in, and see what's going on.

2. It makes a bit of an impression if you arrive too late. This shows a) that you have a full appointments diary and b) at the same time you have a deeply spiritual attitude: you look in, even though you really have some pressing things to practise.



3. Don't have a bad conscience when the same old things disturb you even during the first greetings of the evening: that F. seems so insecure, that M. is always talking about her successes (she isn't actually that good, anyway), and that L. always sounds so religious. Unity isn't made by generously looking away from the faults of others but by recognising the faults for what they are and trying to convince oneself that God loves these people as well.



4. Last time, someone asked you if you would lead the prayer time, and you responded enthusiastically. Now, it was right that you didn't prepare yourself specially for this. The more spontaneous, the more spiritual. The others should contribute wishes. If there are prolonged pauses, just ask "What shall we do now?". This stimulates discussion. The opposite, a prepared plan, leads on the contrary to a serious disturbance of the discussion.

5. During personal sharing, it is important for everyone to give the full story of all the little things that happened in the past week. The smallest details are particularly interesting, and lively discussions on technical matters often develop - for example on this or that teacher or on yesterday's concert.



6. Feel free as well to say out loud where someone has got on your nerves in recent days. Perhaps the same has happened to others, and we can pray precisely for the person concerned. Unbridled criticism is edifying when it is laid aside again in prayer.



7. Say long prayers and use that theological language which God understands. Short, powerful prayers only betray a simple mind.



8. It is generally true that concrete prayer rapidly becomes embarrassing. How do you respond when what you have prayed for doesn't happen? God (and the people praying) should not be pinned down to definite wishes. It is better to pray "Lord, let many come to faith at the Conservatory" rather than "Help me to start a conversation about you with S. in the next few days and enable me to pass on your love."

9. The prayer requests should not demand too much faith. It seems exaggerated if you have big goals in faith. It is better to let humility speak and to be particularly thankful for small things. As Christians, we are not worthy to receive great things from God.



10. Matters for prayer often weigh heavily upon us. This fact should be reflected in a serious, oppressive atmosphere. Especially in times of intercession, praise and thanks for God's powerful working should be avoided. Our gaze should be fixed entirely on the mountain of problems, which can only be levelled by grim wrestling. This - and nothing else - is what moving mountains is all about.



11. A point concerning songs. Suggest difficult songs, not the familiar ones that perhaps help people to fix their gaze worshipfully on God. You are musicians and have to show your ability in prayer times as well.



12. Take care that no close contacts develop between members of the group. This could detract from serious studies. In

addition, fellowship amongst Christians should be marked by spiritual earnestness and never by a lot of merriment. Remember: Christians who like laughing are suspicious...



13. What should you do if a group has been spiritually asleep for weeks on end? It's best to do nothing, for, remember, "While they sleep, the Lord provides for those he loves"!

14. The spiritual and mental state of the others is basically none of your business. If someone is feeling bad, recommend some good books or a pastor. It would be a mistake to deviate from the programme in favour of a deeper discussion or perhaps to have an extended time of prayer for a problem that has suddenly turned up. By the way, the silliest thing that can happen in a prayer group is for someone (perhaps even a man) to start crying. Strict measures are to be taken to prevent such situations arising.



15. Just a last word on being inter-denominational: this offers material for hours of discussion. Questions about baptism, the significance of Mary, communion, etc., are so central that one really can't pray until these things have been sorted out. So: we hope you have a good time!

Beat Rink / Zeitschrift CRESCENDO Juni 1988