

# Practicing Prayer

by

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Just as Jesus modeled prayer to his disciples, we must lead the way in implementing prayer in our church ministries. We suggest you implement some of the following ideas:

## **1. Pray**

Prayer must support all we do. It should be a natural thing for us to pray about everything –decisions, problems, giving thanks, prayer for each other, asking His blessing and guidance before each ministry activity, etc.

**Implementation:** Renew your commitment to a life of prayer. Set a new goal for length of prayer time. Take time to pray with all people who enter your office. Be sensitive to statements of need from your staff, family, friends and church members. Don't just say "I'll pray for you." Take the time right then to offer a word of prayer.

## **2. Encourage significant staff and leadership prayer.**

When church leaders and staff pray, it lets the congregation know they are cared for and provides a model for them to follow.

**Implementation:** Require staff to set aside time each day for personal prayer. Once each week, bring the staff together to pray for each other, your church and the needs of the congregation.

## **3. Organize prayer partners.**

Partnering together for prayer provides a prayer covering for key leadership, strengthening their relationships and appreciation for each other, as well as creating a unified working environment.

**Implementation:** Organize key leadership, including staff, into prayer teams to pray for each other on a rotational basis each quarter. For example you could have two lay leaders for each staff or simply three leaders in a group. Pray for each leader's personal walk with the Lord, ministry schedules, relationships, moral strength and finances.

#### **4. Integrate prayer into your small groups.**

Small groups are an excellent place for leaders to model prayer, develop closer bonds and encourage church members.

**Implementation:** Give each person the opportunity to share prayer requests and answers to prayers in their own lives. Provide a list of general concerns or requests for the corporate body. Allow 10 minutes to half an hour of group time for prayer. Ask each group to read and discuss a selected book on prayer and then begin using insights in their small group.

#### **5. Include prayer as an agenda item.**

Generate a heart for seeking God's wisdom, guidance and will by spending a significant time of prayer at the beginning of each meeting. Not only will this put prayer into its proper place in the structure of a meeting but it will lead the members into a common understanding of God's will and direction.

**Implementation:** Put prayer on the agenda! Suggest that the prayer time be focused on the specific areas to be discussed and covered. Take a short prayer break whenever you sense that time is being wasted or friction is beginning to develop.

#### **6. Conduct prayer seminars.**

While modeling is the best way to train people, prayer seminars are a superb way to teach and involve people in prayer quickly.

**Implementation:** Schedule a seminar at least every other year on the basics of prayer. Encourage leaders and staff to attend. Set aside one third of the time for actual prayer during the seminar.

#### **7. Hold leadership prayer retreats.**

In our busy society it is often difficult for people to find time to pray. Prayer retreats offer people space in our world to relax, meditate, read God's word and to pray.

**Implementation:** Hold weekend prayer retreats with leadership alone or with leadership and laity prayer partners. Teach and model various prayer styles as well as have extended times of prayer. Prayer retreats are also advisable when major decisions face the church.

#### **8. Offer early morning prayer times.**

One way to provide a fresh approach for general prayer is early morning prayer times. This is especially desirable where the traditional prayer meeting is non-existent or poorly attended. Because of the variety, it tends to involve new people who are not attending "the prayer meeting."

**Implementation:** Where feasible, open your church during early morning hours for people to come for prayer. If there is space, set aside a room specifically designated for prayer. Make prayer requests available from church members, missionaries and church leaders. Provide a topical counseling book so those with prayer burdens can look up Scriptural and godly wisdom.

### **9. Develop prayer opportunities in Sunday school.**

Take time to pray in each Sunday school class. Ask youth and adult classes to schedule a quarterly prayer Sunday and a yearly class prayer retreat.

**Implementation:** Try some of the following: 1) Offer an adult elective course on prayer. 2) Encourage classes to have prayer for each other's needs. 3) Challenge all Sunday school teachers to get to know the needs of each member and to pray specifically for him or her.

### **10. Encourage leadership to read resources on prayer.**

Books, tapes and articles are an excellent way to broaden the vision, knowledge and understanding of the intricacies of prayer, and give a greater appreciation of its importance to their particular area of leadership,

**Implementation:** Start a prayer library. Suggest books for leaders to buy and read. Then hold discussions at staff and leadership meetings on the content with applications for their own lives and ministry. Encourage them to share this truth with whom they minister.

### **Conclusion**

There was a man who called his doctor very late one stormy night. Over the phone he said, "Doctor, my wife is very, very sick. Can you come out and help me?"

The doctor replied, "I'd love to come over, but my car is in the shop. If you will come and get me, I'll be glad to help."

There was silence on the phone for a long time. Then the man replied, "You mean, you want me to come out on a night like this?!!!!!"

That's exactly what we do with God, isn't it? We want God to do all kinds of incredible things for us while often neglecting to spend serious energy in prayer.

The times are changing, but increasingly prayer will be the power supply and the fuel for effective ministry.

Those who use it wisely and often will find their God-given goals reached and will be victorious in the spiritual battles they encounter.

Where is your church strong in prayer? Where is it weak?

What ideas noted above could you begin to employ this month? This year?