



THE PRAYER CLOSET

Equipping & Encouraging Believers
In Prayer

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CHANGING YOUR CHURCH BY PRAYER

Is your church perfect? Is your church doing all the will of God? Is your church reaching people for Christ and leading them to follow Him? If you cannot answer all of these questions with an emphatic "Yes!" then you should pray for the life and health of your church. No church has advanced to the place where it does not need to pray fervently. No church can ever grow and do God's will apart from dependence on God through prayer.

~~On the other hand, you may feel that there is~~ no hope for your church. It may appear to you that your church will not move, grow, or accomplish anything for God and His kingdom. Your church may be stagnant or dying with no apparent hope for the future. If this is the case, then you can and must pray for the life and health of your church.

Prayer can transform your church. It can alter and mold your church. Whatever condition your church is in, crying out to God can make a difference in the life and health of your church. It can do this because it releases the almighty power of God into the church. This power can remove obstacles to growth and impact, breathe new life into the believers, and create substantial change in the ministry and impact of the church.

You may be reading this and feeling skeptical at this point. Prayer is not a quick fix for the church. It is not magic that changes the church overnight. It is not a substitute for preaching, teaching, ministering, and all other responsibilities to which God has called the church. Yet, prayer is the foundation of the health and life of the church.

It is the source of the church's power and effectiveness. It is only through prayer that the church will carry out God's will and fulfill its responsibility before God.

There is not a book, a program, an evangelist, or a ministry that can substitute for prayer. Prayer is to be the top priority **IN** the church and **FOR** the church (1 Timothy 2:1-2)! Believers must plead with God to bless, empower, and grow the church. ~~This is vital and the church suffers when this truth is neglected or ignored.~~

How do you pray for your church? This issue of *The Prayer Closet* provides you with strategies to pray for the transformation of your church. The suggestions in this newsletter will help you plead with God for new life and change in your church. The transformation of a church is not about formulas but about relationship. God works and brings about change as we seek Him. The purpose of this newsletter is to provide you with strategies to seek Him and His transforming power for your church.

Pleading For A Spirit Of Dependence

The preeminent obstacle to change and growth in a church is pride. Because of pride, people see no need to change. They are content with the status quo. They are comfortable with their own walk with God and the spiritual condition of

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the church. This pride is summarized by the words of Jesus, "Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'—and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked" (**Revelation 3:17**).

The Laodicean church did not see its need of Jesus and dependence on Him. Their pride caused them to believe that they were sufficient in and of themselves. It blinded them to their true condition. They failed to see their utter need of Jesus and His power and guidance. They were content with the way things were—believing that there was no need to change and seek Jesus.

This is a dangerous attitude to develop and maintain. On one hand, it deadens the desire to pray and depend on God. It blinds you to your need of fervent seeking after God. On the other hand, Jesus hates this kind of attitude. Jesus reveals His distaste for this attitude by saying, "So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth" (**Revelation 3:16**).

In order to see new life and change in a church, we must pray for God to remove pride and replace it with a spirit of dependence. The following prayer guide can help you plead with God for a spirit of dependence in your church.

- *Pray that God would deeply convict the believers about their pride.* Ask the Holy Spirit to show believers how offensive and deadly pride is. Plead that He will convict them about the pride in their life and any unwillingness to make changes. Pray **James 4:6** for the body of believers, "But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."
- *Plead that God would grant the believers in your church a spirit of repentance (1 John 1:9).* Call on the Holy Spirit to work repentance into the heart of the believers in your church. Pray that the believers will respond to the Spirit's conviction with sincere repentance. Ask that the believers will have a desire to confront, confess, and forsake their pride and unwillingness to change.
- *Ask that the believers will not be comfortable or content with the condition of their lives or the church.* Pray that your church will develop the same attitude that Paul had, "Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended, but one thing

I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reach forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (**Philippians 3:13-14**). Ask that the believers will know that they are not where they should be and that they need to reach forward and press on toward the goal of Christian maturity and usefulness. Plead that they will have this same attitude concerning the church—that the church is not where it should be and must press on to what God has purposed for it.

- *Pray that God would create a hunger in the believers to seek Him (Psalm 42:1-2).* Call on the Holy Spirit to create a new and deeper hunger for God in all the believers. Plead that believers will desire God more than anything or anybody in this world. Jesus declares the solution to the pride and self-sufficiency of the Laodiceans, "Behold, I stand in the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me" (**Revelation 3:20**). Fellowship with God destroys pride and self-sufficiency. ~~When you are hungering and seeking God,~~ withers your pride and causes it to fade away.
- *Plead that the believers will hate pride and self-sufficiency.* Jesus does not hide his feelings concerning these things. He declares His hatred of them (**Revelation 3:15-16**). Pray the believers will have the same hatred of them. Ask that they will not be content in their pride or self-sufficiency and will seek God and depend on Him.

ACTS-L And Your Church

The acrostic ACTS is a popular model for teaching believers how to pray. It can also be used to help you intercede for your church. It can provide you with a framework for you to build your praying for the life and health of your church.

The acrostic ACTS is A for adoration, C for confession of sin, T for thanksgiving, and S for supplication. I add an L for listening because listening to God is an essential part of our communication with Him. Each part provides you with an area that you can use to intercede with God for your church.

Adore The God Of Your Church

When you pray for your church, you should praise God for what He is to your church. Adore God for His relationship to the church. Exalt Him for His love, grace, patience, and longsuffering toward your church. Just as the individual praises God for His character, the church should adore God for His character and its effect on the church. At the same time, adore God for His mighty works in behalf of your church. Praise Him for His works that He has done in your church and through your church.

Why should you adore God of your church?

- *God is worthy of this adoration.* God is great and He has done great things in your church and through your church. He deserves the glory and the credit for these things.
- *It increases your faith to pray for your church.* When you focus on who God is and what He has done for your church, it builds your faith to ask for great and mighty things.
- *It focuses you on God who is able to transform your church.* Praise leads you away from people and circumstances to God who is almighty. When you focus on people and circumstances, you can sink into discouragement and despair. Adoration fixes your eyes and faith on God who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we can ask or think.

Confess The Sins Of Your Church

The individual believer is to confess his or her sin, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Each believer has personal sin that he or she must confess and forsake. The believer is to be diligent in confronting and dealing with the sin in his or her life.

At the same time, a church must confront and deal with its sin. Just as there is individual sin, there is also corporate sin. The body can be guilty of sin. For this reason, it must be diligent to acknowledge and turn from its sin.

One of the ways that you can pray for your church is to confess the sins of your church. Why should you confess the sins of your church?

- *It is a powerful way to plead for mercy.* By confessing the sins of your church, you can plead with God to show mercy to your church. Confessing the church's sin means that you are acknowledging that the church is not worthy of God's blessing or help. It is a unique and persuasive means of pleading with God for mercy.
- *It is crucial for spiritual awakening in your church.* Sin grieves the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30). He withholds the fullness of His power when sin is tolerated. By confessing the sins of your church, you can pray against those sins that are hindering the fullness of the Holy Spirit's work in your local church.
- *It will increase your humility before God.* Confession of sin leads to deeper humility. As you confess the sins of your church, you will see in a more distinct way how much you need God and His grace. It will also deepen your understanding of how much your church needs God and His grace. This will in turn fuel your intercession for your church.

How do you confess the sins of your church? One of the ways that you might consider doing this is to make a place in your journal called "The Church Sin Sheet." Or you could simply have a notebook or a sheet of paper entitled this way. List the sins of your church. Pray for the Holy Spirit to open your eyes. As He reveals these to you, confess these to God. Claim them. Admit their how evil and abominable they are. Then ask God to deal with them. Plead for His work to bring the body to repentance and removal of this sin. Ask Him to fill this place in your church with righteous thinking and behavior.

Thank God For His Work In Your Body

When you pray for your church, it is vital that you also give thanks to God for what He is doing in the midst of the body. God desires that we give thanks for the blessings that He provides to His

people, "In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 **Thessalonians 5:18**).

What should motivate you to give thanks to what He is doing in your church?

- *Giving thanks honors God.* God is the Source of all your church's blessings. The entire spiritual good in your church and through your church is the result of God's work and grace. By thanking Him, you are honoring Him for what He is doing in and through the body.
- *Giving thanks stirs your faith.* When you thank God for what He has done, it causes you to realize what God has done. It stirs you to believe Him for greater blessing and usefulness. Too many times we focus on what's not right in the church. Our attitude toward the church is sometimes negative. Giving thanks to God causes you to see the good that God is giving in the midst of your church.
- *Giving thanks prepares you to ask of God.* When you thank God, it is preparation to ask of God. You cannot ask God with power and confidence for future blessing if you are not thanking Him for past blessings and mercies.

You might consider starting a place in your journal for listing God's blessings in your church. However you choose to do this, give thanks to God for what He is doing in and through your church. Ask God to open your eyes to the blessings and the mercies that God is pouring out on your church.

Supplication For Your Church

The word "supplication" refers to the requests that you can make for your church. You should seek God for your church because it is the way that your church receives blessing from God. It is only God who can bless, empower, equip, and change your church. Through prayer, your church can experience all these things.

How can you pray for your church? The crucial way to pray for your church is by using the Word of God. Ask the Holy Spirit to lead you to the verses and promises that you need to claim for your particular church. When problems arise, look for Scripture to pray to God concerning these

things. You will also be provided Scripture prayers in this newsletter. *The Praying For Your Church Manual* produced by The Prayer Closet is an excellent introduction to praying the Scripture for the church.

Listening To God For Your Church

Prayer is two-way communication with God. On the one hand it is speaking to God. Yet, it is also listening to God. When you pray for your church, be sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Why should you listen for the Holy Spirit?

- *It opens you to follow the Spirit as you pray.* We must enter God's presence with Scripture, promises, and pleadings. Yet, we must also be open to how the Holy Spirit wants to guide us in intercession for the church.
- *It provides you with fresh insight to pray.* By listening to the Spirit, you can receive insight to pray. He can guide you in praying for those things that are in line with the will of God.

In order to listen to God, I have found it helpful to ask God questions. When you pray for your church, you might consider asking the following questions:

- What do You want me to pray for concerning Your church?
- What is Your will for Your church at this time?
- What obstacles to growth and change should I pray to be removed?
- What do You want me to do in Your Church?

Once you ask, be still, know that He is God, listen for His guidance.

Praying 1 Corinthians 12 For Your Church

1 Corinthians 12 is one of the most powerful sections concerning the church. Because of this, it provides insight on how to intercede for your church.

- *Pray that all the believers in the church will confess Jesus as Lord both with their words and*