



# 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*

*lives (12:1-3).* The Holy Spirit is the only One who can enable the believer to confess Jesus as Lord. Plead for a fresh and unique work of the Spirit, asking for fresh commitment to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Pray that the believers will confess Him as never before in their lives.

- *Plead that the believers will recognize that God is the Source of your church's life and ministry (12:4-6).* Paul declares that there are different kinds of gifts, service, and working among the believers. Yet, it is God who grants these and provides the power and wisdom to use them. Ask that the believers in your church will have a fresh dependence on God for the life and ministry of the church.
- *Ask God to deal with any selfishness and improper motives that exists in the church (12:7).* God gifts and uses believers for the good of the church. Our focus is not to be the individual but the body. Pray that believers will be concerned for the body and not their own interests or position. Ask that the believers will use their gifts and ministry for the good of the body.
- ~~*Pray that the believers in your church will discover and use their spiritual gifts for ministry (12:8-11).*~~ Call on the Holy Spirit to stir believers to ministry and the discovery and use of their gifts. Plead that the Holy Spirit will grant and empower the gifts that your church needs to carry out God's will.
- *Ask that believers will grow in unity (12:12).* There is diversity in the body. Yet unity is the privilege and responsibility of the church of Jesus.
- *Pray that the Holy Spirit who indwells the believers will draw the believers together in genuine unity (12:13).* The Holy Spirit placed the believers into the body of Christ. Pray that this same Spirit will unite the believers in the daily life and work of the church.
- *Plead that every believer will be encouraged and acknowledged in his/her service (12:14-17).* Every believer is crucial for the life and growth of the church. Pray that this will be burned into the hearts of all the believers.
- *Ask that every believer will be faithful in his/her service to the Lord in the church (12:18-21).* Paul declares that God has arranged the believers in the body, as He desires. He has

placed every believer in the body according to His wise plan. For the body to carry out His will, each part must be faithful. Pray that every believer will be faithful in his/her service to the Lord.

- *Plead with the Holy Spirit to grant the believers a spirit of dependence on each other (12:21-23).* Paul's point in these verses is to show that we need each other. It has been pointed out that the church is like porcupines on a cold night—we **need** each other even though we **needle** each other! Ask the Spirit to create a sense of genuine need and dependence on each other. This is crucial to experiencing and maintaining unity in the church.
- *Ask that there will be no division in the body (12:24-25).* Pray that the believers will be focused on the Lord and ministry—ministry to each other and to the lost world.
- *Pray that the believers will share each other's blessings and burdens (12:26).* Plead that believers will have compassion for one another and will share in the ups and downs of life.
- ~~*Ask that the believers will accept their responsibility as members of the body (12:27-31).*~~ Paul declares that the church is the body and each believer is a part of it. This creates the responsibility to care for and minister to the other believers. Pray that each believer will realize that he or she is a part of the body with this responsibility.

## Pleading For 1 Corinthians 13 Love In Your Church

In 1 Corinthians 13 Paul declares that love is to be preeminent in the life of the believer and church. He also describes this love that should characterize the believer and church. For this reason, it provides you with a model to pray for a more mature, Christlike love among the believers.

Father, I ask that love would be preeminent in \_\_\_\_\_ Church. Teach us that nothing can substitute for genuine love for others (vv.1-3).

Father, enable us to be patient with one another. Deliver us from giving up on each other and from getting frustrated with the faults and peculiarities of one another (v.4).

Father, cultivate kindness in the hearts of the believers of \_\_\_\_\_ Church. I pray that we would care more for others than for ourselves (v.4).

Father, set the believers of \_\_\_\_\_ from jealousy. I ask that we would not desire what others have or are. Teach us to be content with what You provide (v.4).

Father, I ask that the believers of \_\_\_\_\_ Church would not be boastful. I pray that we would not have an exalted view of ourselves or our abilities (v.4).

Father, I ask You to humble the believers of \_\_\_\_\_ Church. I plead that pride would have no place in our hearts or lives (v.4).

Father, remove our rudeness and fill us with Christian courtesy. I pray that we would not force ourselves on one another but would have mutual respect for one another (v.5).

Father, I plead that the believers of \_\_\_\_\_ Church would not be self-seeking. Destroy any "Me First!" attitude that exists in this body. I ask that we would not demand our own way (v.5).

Father, I ask that the believers of \_\_\_\_\_ Church would not be easily angered. Set us free from being irritable and from flying off the handle (v.5).

Father, I plead that the believers of \_\_\_\_\_ Church would not keep any record of wrongs. Cause us to forget the sins of others and create within us a forgiving spirit (v.5).

Father, I pray that the believers of \_\_\_\_\_ Church would not delight in the evil and the failures of others. I ask that we would never be glad when someone else fails or is hurt (v.6).

Father, I ask that the believers of \_\_\_\_\_ would rejoice in the truth. Cause us to delight in the good and right in others (v.6).

Father, I pray that the believers of \_\_\_\_\_ Church will protect one another. Create within us a sacrificial spirit toward each other (v.7).

Father, I plead that the believers of \_\_\_\_\_ Church would trust one another. I ask that we would be available and open to one another. Deliver us from mistrust in one another (v.7).

Father, I ask that the believers of \_\_\_\_\_ Church would always be hopeful. Empower us to hope for the best in the lives of others (v.7).

Father, grant the believers of \_\_\_\_\_ Church a love that perseveres. I ask that our love for each other will endure all times and circumstances (v.7).

Father, I plead that our love for one another will not fail. Through all the ups and downs, increase and deepen the love that we have for one another (v.8).

Father, I ask that the believers of \_\_\_\_\_ Church would move on to spiritual maturity. I pray that we would especially mature in our love (vv.8-12).

Father, fill this church with faith, hope, and love. I pray that these things will characterize the lives of all the believers. Let love be preeminent in this church (v.13).

## Praying Christ's Relationship To His Church

In **Ephesians 5:25-33**, the apostle Paul gives instructions on how to treat and respond to their wives. He does this in light of Christ's relationship to the church. Christ's relationship to the church is the model for the husband to follow. Because of this, it gives us insight in how Jesus responds to us, His church. It also offers rich truths that you can use to pray for your church. The following Scripture prayers are based on the truths found in this text. You can use these or develop your own from them. This passage can help you pray with power and confidence for your church.

- ◆ Lord Jesus, You love the church and gave Yourself for the church. I ask that the believers of \_\_\_\_\_ Church would understand and experience Your love in new and fresh ways (5:25).
- ◆ Lord Jesus, I ask that You would heal the wounds of \_\_\_\_\_ Church. Through Your love, I ask You to remove the pain, bitterness, and resentment that have resulted through the years (5:25).
- ◆ Lord Jesus, I plead with You to make \_\_\_\_\_ Church holy and clean through the Word of

God. I ask that You would deal with the evil and impurity of this body of believers (5:26).

- ◆ Lord Jesus, I ask You to make \_\_\_\_\_ Church into a radiant church. I plead that You will make her into a bold and dynamic witness for You. I plead with You to purify her so that she is without stain or blemish. Make her holy and blameless (5:27).
- ◆ Lord Jesus, manifest Your love to this body. Because of Your love, bless, heal, and strengthen this body. Because of Your unceasing love, empower this body to declare Your good news and to minister to the world (5:28).
- ◆ Lord Jesus, I plead that You would nourish and tenderly care for \_\_\_\_\_ Church. This church belongs to You. Feed and grow this body through the Word of God. Take care of all of her needs by Your limitless power and riches (5:29-30).
- ◆ Lord Jesus, I ask that this church would pursue an intimate relationship with You. I pray that we would follow You and become like You. Help us to enjoy and experience this union and intimacy that we have with You (5:31-32).
- ◆ Lord Jesus, I plead that the believers of \_\_\_\_\_ Church would love You with all of our beings. I pray that we will cherish and treasure You above all things. I ask that You would be our first love. I pray that You would be our priority above all others (5:33).

## Praying Through The Church Directory

One of the most effective ways to pray for a church is to pray through its directory. You simply use the directory to pray for the entire church one person, one household, or one family at a time. You can pray for a person, a household, or a family each day until you pray for the entirety of the church. You could pray for multiple number of persons or families. The key issue is to pray for all the members of the church. You could set a goal of praying through the directory in a month or two.

You can do this even if your church does not have a directory. You can prepare lists of the membership and make these available. Then

believers can pray for the membership on a regular basis.

There are a variety of ways that you can use this prayer ministry:

- (1) Ask individual believers to commit themselves to praying through the directory or membership list. The believer can pray through the directory or list on a regular basis.
- (2) Produce and distribute a monthly calendar with names of families. By simply placing four singles/couples/families/households on a day, you can pray for about 120 households a month. If your church is larger, you might consider making multiple calendars so that everyone is prayed for.
- (3) If your church has a prayer room, you can create a prayer station with the specific purpose of praying through the directory or membership list on a regular basis. Have the intercessors place a Post-It note at the place where they stop. By doing this, the entire body can be prayed for on a regular basis.

~~The following is a prayer guide that you can use to pray through the church directory.~~ It is offered to help you get started in praying the directory or membership list. You should also pray for the Holy Spirit to guide you. Be open to the leading of the Holy Spirit as you pray for your brothers and sisters in Christ.

- ◆ Pray that each believer will grow and mature in the faith.
- ◆ Ask that each believer will be faithful to the Lord in public and in private.
- ◆ Plead with God's blessings on the family of the believers.
- ◆ Pray that God will bless the labor of the believers.
- ◆ Ask that each believer will be salt and light.

## *Classic Prayers From History*

"Holy Spirit of God, who prefers before all temples the upright heart and pure, instruct us in all truth; what is dark, illumine; what is low, raise and support; what is shallow, deepen; that every chapter in our lives may witness to your power and justify the ways of God to men. In the name of Jesus, giver of all grace. Amen" – William Temple.

***Our prayers must mean something to us if they are to mean anything to God.***

*Maltbie D. Babcock*

## *The Mississippi Prayerwalking Explosion*

The Prayer Closet Ministries is sponsoring ***The Mississippi Prayerwalking Explosion*** on June 14, 2003 at Hickory Baptist Church. The conference will begin at 9:00 a.m. and conclude at 3:00 p.m. Dr. Kevin Meador will be the main speaker. The purpose of this prayer conference is to encourage and equip believers in prayerwalking. It will help you to unleash God's power in your city, town, or area. If you desire to reach your city, town, or area for Christ, this conference is crucial for you. You will receive training and encouragement in learning to make prayer the priority of your life. Make your plans to attend now! **Please begin praying for this crucial and timely meeting!** More details will follow!



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