



THE PRAYER CLOSET

Encouraging & Equipping Believers in Prayer

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ISSUE 5

WHEN GOD'S PEOPLE PRAY TOGETHER

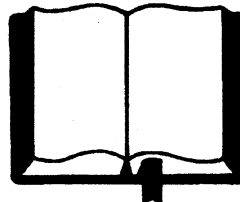
Prayer is the gift of God to every believer. God has given the individual believer access through Jesus, "For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father" (Ephesians 2:18). Through faith in Jesus, the believer can enter the presence of God through prayer. The believer has an open door to God. He can speak and listen to God personally. This is a remarkable privilege that each believer needs to take advantage of daily.

Yet, the Word of God reveals that God calls His people to pray together, "Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving" (Colossians 4:2). This call to pray is aimed at the church – the whole body. When Paul says that they are to continue earnestly in prayer, he is calling on the whole church to pray. It is a call for the body to continue in intense prayer.

An essential part of every believer's prayer life is corporate prayer – praying with other believers. Every believer needs personal times of prayer. Every believer must get alone and get with God individually. However, every believer must also spend time in prayer with the people of God. A healthy, mature prayer life has both the private and corporate elements. For a believer to grow and mature in prayer, he has to have both.

There has been much emphasis on the need to pray in churches. Most of this emphasis has been aimed at the individual. While this is important, there must also be an emphasis on believers praying together – whether at a prayer meeting, a prayer group, or a part of the prayer ministry. There is no substitute for corporate prayer. It is absolutely crucial and necessary to the church. If a church is going to carry out God's will and have profound spiritual impact, believers must pray together.

This issue of *The Prayer Closet* will focus on corporate prayer – when God's people pray together. We will examine the biblical basis for this. We will also look at some hindrances to corporate prayer. There will also be suggestions on how to enrich and enliven your times of corporate prayer. This is a crucial subject that cannot be ignored. It is my hope and prayer that God will unleash a spirit of corporate prayer in your church.



**The Biblical Basis
For
Corporate Prayer**

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The Word of God is explicitly clear – believers must pray together. It is crucial to the life and ministry of your church. Why should believers pray together? The following are some biblical reasons for corporate prayer.

The basic reason for corporate prayer is that prayer is God's gift to the church. Prayer is a blessing that God has bestowed on the church. He has given the church this gift that it might seek Him. The Model Prayer in **Matthew 6** reveals this truth. Have you ever noticed that this prayer calls for corporate prayer – for believers to pray together? Listen to Jesus' words:

"In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen" (**Matthew 6:9-13, emphasis mine**).

Do you see the emphasis on "we," "our," and "us"? Jesus didn't say to pray, "Give me this day my daily bread." He didn't teach us to pray, "And forgive me my debts, as I forgive my debtors." The text does not say "And do not lead me into temptation, but deliver me from the evil one." The emphasis in the Model Prayer is on the church seeking the Father through prayer. It is a call to corporate prayer!

Obviously the Model Prayer can apply to the individual believer. The believer can and should use it in his praying. It provides the individual believer with a basic and rich outline to seek God. Yet, the primary emphasis of the Model Prayer is on believers praying together – corporate prayer. God desires that His people pray together. In teaching us how to pray, Jesus emphasizes that the church is to seek the Father corporately, as a body. He teaches us that we are to call on our Father as a body. Prayer is a gift to the church. We have a Father that wants us to seek Him as a body.

The example of the early church reveals that believers are to pray together. Throughout the book of Acts, believers pray together. They

joined their hearts and voices in fervent prayer to the Father:

"These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers" (**Acts 1:14**).

"When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place" (**Acts 2:1**).

"And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers" (**Acts 2:42**).

"So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: 'Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them'" (**Acts 4:24**).

"And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness" (**Acts 4:31**).

"And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch" (**Acts 5:12**).

"Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church . . . So, when he had considered this, he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying" (**Acts 12:5, 12**).

Other relevant texts are **Acts 1:24, 3:1, 6:4, 9:40, 10:9, 13:1-3, Colossians 4:12, and James 5:13-18**. All of these passages are explicitly clear – the early church prayed together. They sought God corporately.

The example of the early church should stir us today. It reveals God's desire that the church pray corporately. It also gives us insight into the life-transforming power of the early church. Their powerful influence and witness resulted from their praying together.

We cannot dismiss the example of the early church.

The promise of praying in agreement calls for corporate prayer. Jesus gives an amazing promise for those who will pray in agreement, "Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven (**Matthew 18:19**). God does hear and answer the prayers of the individual believer. Yet, when God's people pray in agreement, it moves the heart and the hand of God. There is something about believers praying together in agreement that delights and stirs the heart of God. This promise should motivate us to pray together.

The promise of Jesus' presence is given to believers who pray together. Jesus provides this powerful promise in **Matthew 18:20**, "For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them." When believers join together for prayer, Jesus is in their midst. This means much more than Jesus is present when you pray. It means that Jesus is present to touch and change lives. Jesus Christ is in the business of touching and transforming lives and circumstances. Whether in the Old Testament as the Angel of the Lord or in the New Testament as the incarnate Son of God, Jesus changes and blesses lives. When believers pray together, Jesus is present to change, bless, and meet the needs of people. If we want the life-transforming power of Jesus in our churches, we must pray together.

The foundation for effective ministry is prayer. This is revealed in **2 Thessalonians 3:1-2**, "Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you, and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith." Paul asks them to pray for his ministry in Corinth. He knew that the only way that he could be effective in proclaiming the gospel in Corinth was through the prayers of the church. He asks the whole church to pray about his ministry in this wicked, hardened city. He understood that this was his only hope of reaching Corinth.

This text shows that a church must pray if it is going to be effective in ministry. Any

type of ministry that is going to touch people and affect eternity has to be saturated in prayer. Prayer unleashes God's power and blessing into our minister efforts. It is His power and blessing that makes the difference in lives and situations. The church that desires to have genuine impact must seek Him for His power and blessing.

The Word of God lays the foundation for believers praying together – prayer is the gift of God to the church, the example of the early church, the promise of Jesus to believers who pray in agreement, and its necessity to powerful ministry. It is important for the individual believer to seek God. Yet, it is just as crucial for the church to seek Him – to seek Him as a body. This is God's desire and He will honor and bless the church that seeks Him. God will hear and respond mightily!



The Roadblocks To Corporate Prayer

There are some roadblocks to corporate prayer. These are hindrances that make it difficult to lead a church to pray as a body. The following are some of the major roadblocks and some suggestions on facing them.

A lack of understanding

For many believers, the emphasis on prayer has been for their individual lives. They have been taught and encouraged to seek God in their personal lives. Many believers don't understand God's desire and call for believers to pray together. They are not aware of the importance and necessity of this part of prayer.

- ✓ *Preach and teach on the necessity and importance of corporate prayer.* Use the Word of God to show that this is God's desire and calling for the church.
- ✓ *Emphasize and magnify 1 Timothy 2:1-2.* These verses reveal that it is God's will for the church to be a house of prayer. This is

first and primary calling of the church. It is the key to everything else in the life and ministry of the church.

Dull And Predictable

One of the main hindrances to corporate prayer is that the prayer meetings are often dull and routine. On many occasions, it is going over the same prayer list with the same names with the same people praying. It is lifeless and predictable. Members aren't interested in attending because it is dull and predictable.

- ✓ *Pray for the work of the Holy Spirit.* Prayer is dull and predictable apart from the power of the Spirit of God. In our flesh, we are incapable of bringing the necessary energy to prayer. But, the Holy Spirit can give us the power, the fervor, and the energy that we need to pray. He is the indwelling Teacher of prayer. Ask God to help believers to rely on the Spirit in their praying.
- ✓ *Emphasize that prayer meeting is an encounter with God.* Prayer meeting is a time of coming before God. It is a vivid encounter in which we speak to God and He speaks to us.
- ✓ *Prayerfully plan your prayer meetings.* It is crucial to plan the focus and the direction of your prayer meetings. Preparation and depending on the Spirit are not contradictory; they go hand-in-hand. Have a clear focus of what you are going to seek God for in the prayer meetings. You might consider preparing prayer meeting guides that will guide the congregation. You might also consider using virtual prayerwalks of your community in prayer meeting. There are a host of ideas that you can use. The key is to have a focus and a direction for your prayer meetings. One principle to keep in mind is that the more immature the congregation is in prayer, the clearer you need to be in your focus and your direction. By prayerfully planning your prayer meetings, it will help you to move away from the dull and predictable to the powerful and supernatural.
- ✓ *Pray over a wide variety of issues.* There are a variety of issues that you can cover

in your prayer meetings – your church, your staff, the lost, the schools, missionaries, state and national leaders, and nations. These are just some examples. Prayer meeting will be dull and routine if you have a narrow, continuous focus.

Lack Of Faith

The corporate prayer of many churches is hindered by a lack of faith. Members do not feel that the prayer meetings will have no effect. They do not see them as a priority for the church.

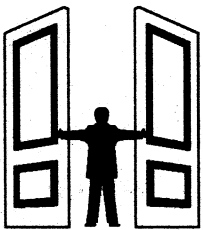
- ✓ *Emphasize the importance of praying in faith.* Without active faith, our prayer meetings are simply a routine, a going through the motions of prayer. The Word of God is clear – we must believe in order to receive, "And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive" (**Matthew 21:22**).
- ✓ *Focus on thanksgiving.* In the Word of God, we find believers thanking God as an incentive for present and future faith in Him, "I will praise You forever, because You have done it; and in the presence of Your saints I will wait on Your name, for it is good" (**Psalms 52:9**). Thank God for the answers to prayer. Make known how God is moving in response to your prayers. As you thank Him, it will increase the faith of the people to pray.
- ✓ *Teach people to pray the Word of God.* The Word of God is the Spirit's tool for increasing our faith. As you saturate your praying with God's Word, you will have the confidence to expect God to answer. When you pray the Word, you are praying God's heart and will. This should stir within believers the confidence and expectation that He is going to hear and respond.
- ✓ *Ask God to increase the faith of the congregation.* If the congregation needs greater faith, ask God for this (**Matthew 7:7**).

Lack Of Faithfulness

Prayer meeting is often the least attended service of the church. Many times only a small

number of people will gather to participate in the prayer ministry of the church. People are inconsistent in their participation in corporate prayer.

- ✓ *Don't get discouraged.* Whether you're a pastor or a lay leader attempting to lead the church to a passion for prayer, don't give up. God will bless and reward your efforts. God desires that the church pray; this is His will for the body. Know that you are doing eternally significant work in leading the church to a passion for prayer. God will respond, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58).
- ✓ *Have enthusiastic and excited prayer leaders.* The leaders of corporate prayer need to be enthusiastic and exciting. There is nothing worse than a leader who acts as if he or she has been sucking on pickles. Prayer is the privilege to speak to and listen to God. This is something to be excited about.
- ✓ *Don't expect a big crowd if God is the only attraction.* Encourage and train the people who will participate in corporate prayer. Pray for and work for an increase in the numbers of those involved in prayer in your church. But, start where you are and work.



Opportunities For Corporate Prayer

The church needs to offer various opportunities for corporate prayer. Each church is different; a strategy must be developed to fit your church. The following are some suggestions that you might consider. These are only scratching the surface; they are offered to help you begin praying and thinking about what will best fit your church.

Early Watch

The early watch format is for those who can meet early in the day. It is offering a time of

prayer for believers that can meet together early in the morning and pray in agreement.

Affinity Group Prayer Meetings

These prayer meetings are for people who have a common interest or who are at the same stage in life – mothers, fathers, singles, senior citizens, and teenagers. Prayer meetings can also be formed around particular interests like missionaries and nations or national leaders and concerns. It is drawing people together who have the same interest or are at the same stage in life for the purpose of prayer.

Church-wide Prayer Meeting

This is one of the traditional methods of corporate prayer. Historically this has been done on a Wednesday night. The prayer meetings need to be focused and well planned. A variety of issues and concerns need to receive time and prayer in these meetings. It is an excellent opportunity to teach people to pray and to lead them to pray with their brothers and sisters in Christ.

Home Prayer Cells

Prayer does not have to happen in the church building. Believers can join together in a home to pray specifically for their neighbors and their neighborhood.

Prayer Partners

Believers can join together in teams of two or three for prayer. Prayer partnerships can be formed for a variety of concerns or needs. This enables believers to pray together and prepares them for the church-wide prayer meeting.

Prayerwalking

Prayerwalking is praying on location for transformation. It is praying in the places where you want to see God work and move. By prayerwalking, believers can pray together in agreement. You might consider periodic prayerwalking in your city or area. This will provide believers with the opportunity to hit the streets and pray with their brothers and sisters in Christ.

Prayer Driving

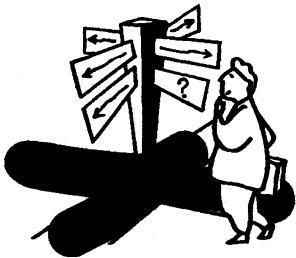
This is the same concept as prayerwalking, except it is done with teams in vehicles. This allows the church to cover a broader geographical area with prayer.

Leadership Prayer Support

This is one of the most common ways to involve believers in corporate prayer. It is also a good way to get believers involved in the prayer ministry of the church. The primary way to do this is by having a Pastor's Prayer Partner ministry. This would involve believers who will join together to pray for the pastor and the leaders and their families. The Prayer Closet has developed "The Hedgebuilders" ministry to equip and train believers to pray for the pastor and the leaders.

Prayer Visitation Teams

You might consider developing teams who will go out and pray with the sick, the hospitalized, the shut-ins, or those who need an extraordinary touch from God. This can be a powerful ministry and will enable believers to practice corporate prayer.



Leading Your Church To A Passion For Prayer

You see and know the necessity and power of prayer. Yet, you may be wondering, "How do I lead my church to a passion for prayer?" Every situation is unique; different approaches will be needed in particular situations. But, I would like to share some basic principles for leading a church to a passion for prayer. As a pastor and a prayer evangelist, I have struggled and battled with this issue. This is some counsel from one struggler to fellow strugglers. These are suggestions that you might consider in leading your church to a vibrant, healthy prayer life.

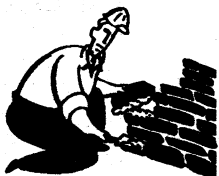
- *Prayer must be a priority with the leadership.* The foundation of a prayer church is a leadership that is committed to prayer. The pastor and other leaders must be committed to seeking God personally and leading the church to prayer. If you are a pastor or leader, you must take the lead. You must model and practice prayer. It must be the emphasis of your life and ministry. If you're not a leader, you must pray for God to give your leaders a heart for prayer.
- *Plead with the Holy Spirit to unleash a spirit of prayer in your church.* The Holy Spirit is the author of prayer. He is the One who stirs us to prayer (**Galatians 4:6**). Call on Him to convict, challenge, and encourage all the believers to pray and seek God individually and corporately.
- *Make prayer meeting an encounter with God.* Plan and prepare for prayer meeting. Make it a significant time of worship and prayer. Have a focus and direction for the prayer meeting. Develop and use themes and prayer guides. Use PowerPoint presentations. Call on God to teach you how to make prayer meeting an encounter with God.
- *Give opportunities for prayer.* Provide people with a variety of opportunities for prayer. You might consider beginning some different prayer ministries with the prayer meeting as the anchor.
- *Train and equip people to pray.* This is a crucial issue. Provide the people with teaching and training in prayer. You might consider using the prayer meeting time for this. You might also seek to provide with prayer guides and other materials concerning prayer. Have prayer events like prayerwalks at local schools or the church, prayer retreats, and seminars on a regular basis.
- *Develop prayer themes.* You might consider having prayer themes in your prayer meetings. At one church, we had intense, specific prayer for the church during a year. Each month of that year, we prayed specifically for some aspect of the church – worship, unity, leaders, and evangelism. By having a theme, it can

give focus and direction to the church's prayer life.

➤ **Have a prayer room.** A prayer room is a valuable tool in developing a praying church. You might consider having a room large enough for a number of believers to come together for times of corporate prayer. You can place a variety of tools in the prayer room that will facilitate prayer – prayer notebooks, prayer guides, maps of your area, prayer requests, pictures of the pastor, leaders, and families.

➤ **Organize a prayer ministry.** You must be intentional about prayer. It's not enough to preach sermons on prayer. A praying church is built on sound preaching and teaching about prayer and directed and focused opportunities for prayer. There must be specific opportunities for the people of God to pray. You might consider selecting a prayer coordinator and a prayer team or council to implement, guide, and encourage the prayer ministry of the church.

➤ **Pray, work hard, and don't give up.** Leading a church to a passion for prayer is a demanding and sometimes a discouraging task. But, don't give up. God will help you and empower you. It is worth the struggle. Your labor in the Lord will not be in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58).



Praying For A Faithful Ministry In A Faithless World

October is Pastor Appreciation Month. One of the best ways to show your appreciation is to pray for your pastor. The following prayer guide can help you pray the Word for your pastor. It is based on 2 Timothy 4:1-5. In this passage, Paul instructs Timothy on how to have a faithful ministry in a faithless world. You can use this text as a model to pray the same for your pastor.

- ❖ Ask God to give your pastor grace and strength for the burden and responsibility of pasturing a church (v.1).
- ❖ Pray that your pastor will faithfully preach the Word (v.2)
- ❖ Plead that your pastor will be thoroughly prepared to preach the Word (v.2).
- ❖ Pray that your pastor will be protected from discouragement (vv.3-4).
- ❖ Ask God to give your pastor power to deal with the hardships of ministry (v.5).
- ❖ Plead that your pastor will be a personal witness for Christ (v.5).
- ❖ Ask that your pastor will be faithful to carry out all his responsibilities (v.5).



Celebrating Pastor Appreciation Month

The Prayer Closet has developed a variety of materials to help you celebrate Pastor Appreciation Month.

Praying For Your Pastor Key Ring

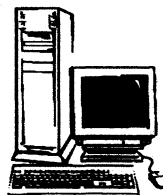
This key ring is designed to help you pray intensely for your pastor. It provides you with numerous Scripture prayers that you can pray for your pastor. \$2.00 (10 or more - \$1.50)

The Hedgebuilders

This material will aid you in building a prayer ministry of intercession for your leaders. It is a four-week study that will equip and encourage people to pray for their spiritual leaders. The study comes in a binder with four tapes or two CD's. \$10.00 (10 or more - \$8.00)

The Praying Pastor

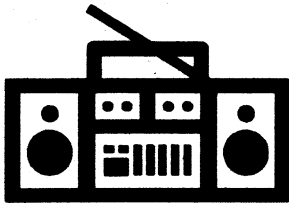
This is an excellent gift for your pastor. It provides your pastor with Scripture prayers to cover your pastor's life, ministry, and church. It is an invaluable tool for any busy pastor. \$8.00



Web Site Updates

We would like to invite you to visit our web sites and take advantage of our updates. We have added new materials to the bookstore. We have also added new messages by Dr. Meador along with listening guides for the messages. Check us out on the web!! Visit us at

our main site, www.prayerclosetministries.org
and our prayer evangelism site,
www.kingdompraying.com.



Our Radio Ministry

Dr. Meador's radio show, "The Prayer Closet," is now being aired on WLMR 1450 out of

Chattanooga, TN. If you're in that market, we invite you to listen to his show every Saturday morning from 11:45 AM to 12:00 PM. This radio show provides biblical teaching on prayer, fasting, healing, and spiritual warfare.



Partnering With The Prayer Closet

Each October, we ask people to make donations for the support of The Prayer Closet. This ministry is faith-based and is dependent on the gracious and generous giving of God's people. Your

gifts support the international outreach and ministry of The Prayer Closet.

This ministry is growing and is receiving more and more opportunities. We are in the process of building a prayer center to train and equip believers and churches in prayer. We are developing our radio and television ministries. We are working to produce a variety of materials that will be used to aid believers and churches in building vibrant, powerful prayer ministries. These materials are being used worldwide.

Yet, as we grow, the financial burden to support this ministry becomes greater. We have enclosed an envelop for you to make a donation. We ask you to prayerfully consider making a donation to support this ministry. Your gift of any amount will bless and help this ministry.

I would also like to ask you to consider becoming a partner with this ministry. We need believers and churches that will pray and give monthly to support this ministry. Please prayerfully seek God about this. Your prayer support is crucial to our outreach and effectiveness. A monthly gift of any amount will help this ministry continue to bless and encourage people and churches. If you or your church would like to partner with us, please contact us at The Prayer Closet.



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