



# HOW TO LEAD A PRAYING CHURCH

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## I. ESTABLISHING A CULTURE OF PRAYER IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

- A. **Embrace the Process** - Developing a culture of prayer takes time. Understand that it will take some time to develop the prayer culture you want to see. The critical thing is to begin the process and take the steps necessary to build a prayer culture. Goals like 24/7 prayer are noble if the Lord has put that in your heart, but the important thing over 24/7 prayer is to begin to build a culture of prayer. The goal is to build a community that prays not just build a prayer meeting. Strategically develop prayer so that the congregation grows in prayer while also growing in relationship, in the Scriptures, and the other elements of community life. You want a congregation that is praying and growing together not just attending meetings as individual intercessors.
- B. **Lead by Example** - A praying culture always begins with the leaders. The best way to build a culture of pray in the church is to get the leadership praying together. This foundation must be laid first if the congregation is going to catch the vision for prayer.
1. Begin a daily prayer meeting for staff at the church. The senior leader in the church must lead this. He cannot delegate his responsibility to lead prayer meetings.
  2. Prayer meetings must be led in a way that is very participatory. The prayer meeting should have the feel of praying together and not just one person praying.
  3. Prayer meetings should be the first thing on the daily schedule in the morning. If they are done later in the day, the staff will be distracted with other pressing issues.
  4. Begin with something obtainable such as an hour each day with the goal of working up to four hours a day. For example, you could start with 8-9 each morning with the goal of working up to 8-12pm.
  5. Use a prayer model that makes sense for the size of the church leadership to help facilitate prayer.
  6. If necessary, use tools such as the IHOP web stream to get started. Live prayer is the goal, but something like a web stream can help jump-start the prayer meeting. The live stream could be used to begin the meeting with corporate worship and then shifted to the background as you begin to pray for each other.
- C. **Teach a Culture of Prayer** - Most people do not have a good theology of prayer and pray only because of a crisis or a pressing personal need. You must teach a sound theology of prayer to develop a culture of prayer. Give people understanding of why a prayer culture is important. People feel like they should pray, and have been told they should, but very few have a vision for prayer beyond obligation and personal needs.
- D. **Invite the Congregation to Lead in Prayer** - Once the leadership of the church has established



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regular prayer together, begin to invite the congregation into regular prayer meetings and give them places of leadership to help them own it.

1. At this point it may make sense to begin the morning prayer meeting earlier in the day. For example, you could add prayer from 6-8 am so that members of the congregation can gather in the place of prayer before they begin their work for the day.
2. Mothers, retired individuals, and others who do not work during the day should be invited into the morning prayer meetings. Many people in the church have time during the day that could be invested into a morning prayer meeting which would tremendously strengthen their own lives as well as the local church.
3. Prayer meetings can also be strategically added during the week in the evenings. The church leadership should attend these meetings to support them, but members of the congregation should also be given leadership in these meetings so that they own them. Develop meetings that work well for the rhythm of life in your particular church with regard to the dynamics of the individuals and families in the congregation.

E. **Establishing a House of Prayer** - Once the leadership and the congregation are growing in prayer, the church should consider building a culture of prayer for extended hours each day. There are many different ways to establish a prayer culture during the day:

1. Engage students and young adults in the congregation and give them the opportunity to lead prayer meetings in the afternoons and evenings.
2. Consider bringing interns into the church. Even in a small church, there will be ministry minded young men and women who will want to learn “on the job” training. These interns can be given responsibility for building prayer meetings in the afternoon, for example, in addition to other duties working alongside church leadership.
3. Consider adding Intercessory Missionaries to the church staff. Create the opportunity for young people that are interested in building a house of prayer to build prayer meetings by creating an intercessory missionary role within the church. These missionaries would raise much of their support, but the church can give them a stipend to help provide for their needs. Their primary job would be leading hours of prayer to help the church develop extended hours of prayer during the day.

F. **Build a Community of Prayer** Always focus on building a community that prays together. Be patient with the process of growing a praying church. Ask the Lord for wisdom and creative ideas for your particular context. The first steps are for the leadership to commit to a daily life of prayer together, then begin teaching a sound theology of prayer, and then begin very approachable prayer meetings for the congregation