

## Developing a Culture of Prayer in a Church (Peter Sweetman, Founding Pastor, Bridgeman Baptist)

### What is the most important single factor in growing a praying church?

The **senior/solo pastor** is crucial in developing a prayer culture. Acts 6:4 says the two priorities of the apostles were to *spend time in prayer and teaching the word*.

Pastors need to champion the value of prayer, preach on prayer, lead all major prayer gatherings and lead at least one weekly prayer meeting. This models the priority of prayer and helps pastors remain faithful in their calling to be praying leaders.

Pastors also provide the most up to date information for prayer and provide the best encouragement through knowing what the Holy Spirit is doing in response to prayer.

### How do you develop a praying culture?

1. Communities need to believe that God hears and answers prayers and that things change when people pray.  
The stories of the Holy Spirit's work in response to prayer need to be told in prayer meetings, in services, in sermons and in communications. The classic stories of answered prayer in a church's history need to keep being told. This raises faith in the people, affirms the crucial priority of prayer, and values the contribution of those who pray.
2. Communities need to be filled with prayer.
  - a. Encourage every person to publicly pray for others, whenever a concern or need is raised in any conversation, anywhere, anytime.
  - b. Teach ministry leaders to fill their ministries with prayer, praying before and after every ministry occasion.
  - c. Hold special services where prayer is particularly prominent e.g. worship and prayer evenings, prayer and healing services, services of repentance.
  - d. Immerse every significant move, outreach, and development in prayer e.g. special prayer events, days and seasons of special prayer.
  - e. Hold as many weekly prayer meetings as can be sustained.
  - f. Encourage people to request prayer, develop prayer teams, create spaces for people to pray.
  - g. Keep prayer prominent in church communications. Publishing prayer guides is demanding but it affirms the priority of prayer in a church. It also provides a unified church wide focus for prayers and provides leaders with content for prayer meetings.

### How do you sustain prayer in a church?

Because prayer is the most powerful of all ministries in a church (spiritual battles are won in prayer), it is the most difficult ministry to develop and sustain.

Just one regular weekly prayer meeting supported by a small group of godly people is a mighty victory.

Holding special prayer events and seasons for specific reasons is a great way to introduce people to the power and joy of prayer. Special seasons of prayer can sometimes be the catalyst for an increase in regular prayer meetings.

Like all ministries, prayer needs tending. Energy is needed for finding those in the body with prayer gifts, training and equipping people to pray, listening to the Spirit's promptings about issues to focus on in prayer and resisting every temptation to sleep and not pray.

### How is a church impacted through growing a culture of prayer?

1. Faith does develop as answers are seen and stories are told in response to prayers. God is alive, he's mighty and he's leading us on a journey.
2. It is deeply unifying to pray together. This is powerful in personal and corporate relationships.
3. Prayer keeps the focus on God's honour, not our own. This really is what God has done and not us.
4. Prayer is communion with God himself and it fills individuals and churches with the presence of Christ. Jesus is among us and is working in and through us.