

Growing a faith filled church prayer culture



Queensland Baptists Priority— Faith-filled Prayer.

In God's grace, through prayer, he offers us an important role in the spiritual battles on the front lines of God's growing kingdom. We build faith by listening to God, standing on his promises and celebrating his powerful work. We intentionally foster individual and corporate prayer throughout our Movement. We believe that God wants us to ask him for even greater things than what we have seen so far. ([John 14:12-14](#))

The significance of prayer



Tensions

- Praying consistently is very difficult personally and in churches.
- The pressures of leadership impinge on the time needed for personal and corporate prayer.
- The lack of commitment to corporate prayer in the body can be so discouraging.
- Some prophets and intercessors can be awkward.
- Leadership and prayer are separated. Leaders lead and intercessors pray.
- Dark forces don't want anyone to pray.
- Many struggle to believe that prayer to our Father is the most important and powerful ministry any person can engage in.

Why prayer is so significant

- Prayer is our intimate relational connection with God, recognizing that *without Christ we can do nothing*. John 15:5.
- It is the place of worship ...*worthy are you O Lord* Rev 4:11 and of repentance...*if we confess our sins...* 1 John 1: 9.
- It is where we seek God's vision and direction. *Jesus is Lord of his church*. Col 1:18.
- It is what Jesus instructed us to do... *to ask the Lord of the harvest* Matt 9:38.
- It is where we receive power for ministry... *Not by might nor by power but by my Spirit*. Zec 4:6.
- It is where the spiritual battle is won in our lives and world... *we are fighting against evil rulers* Eph 6 : 12. *Until we know that life is war you cannot know what prayer is for*. John Piper.
- It is the practice which causes spiritual breakthroughs in lives and situations.... *Please grant me success by making the King favorable to me*. Neh 1:11.
- Prayer is what Jesus modelled and taught his disciples to do... Matt 6:9-13.
- The apostles knew the key importance of prayer... *devote ourselves to prayer and teaching the word*. Acts 6:4
- It is a sin not to pray for those entrusted to our care.
As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you. And I will teach you the way that is good and right. 1 Sam 12:23
- The bible constantly connects prayer to the presence and works of God throughout salvation history. See summary by Tim Keller "*Prayer*" p. 26-28.
- The high spiritual points of our lives are connected with prayer... salvation, calls of God

Prayer and leadership



Foundational principles:

1. God leads

Spiritual leadership is founded on the truth that God is the real leader. This means putting God and not ourselves at the centre of His church. This is the great battle of both our personal and corporate lifeto keep God where He should be.

"Go and tell my servant David, 'This is what the LORD says: Are you the one to build me a house to dwell in? The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you.
2 Sam 7: 5 & 11

And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.
Col 1:18

2. Humility

The key heart attitude is humility so we are teachable, willing to follow and willing to put God's agenda ahead of our own. This is why Godly character is so important in spiritual leadership.

It's not me first

I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will have nothing to do with us.
3 John 9-10

Willing to promote others.

He must become greater; I must become less.
John 3:29-30

Willing to serve others

Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave.
Matt 20:25-28

Courage to withstand opposition and overcome our fears.

After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.
Acts 4:31

3. Hearing God

We follow God by hearing and obeying what He says. Fundamental to this process is prayer and the Word of God.

One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles.
Luke 6:12-13

While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.
Acts 13:2-3

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.
James 1:5

Prayer in a leader



Getting prayer deep in our lives

Who you become, is determined by how you pray. Ultimately the transcript of your prayers becomes the script of your life. The Circle Maker Mark Batterson p14.

Helpful practices

- Find devotional rhythm that works for you... walk in creation, read and pray at breakfast table, find your secret place.
- The help of a journal – write prayers, personal history, church history, answers to prayer.
- Meet to pray regularly with others – mentors, intractable situation, prayer meetings.
- Seize hold of every opportunity to pray everywhere in your life- family, pastoral care and counselling, every need you hear, text people to tell them you are praying.
- Develop prayer support team especially when engaged in significant ministry.
- Our godly character develops as we commit to prayer and the word and this brings the spiritual authority we need to lead in Christ's body.

Modelling the importance of prayer in our corporate leadership

- Pray for others immediately whenever a need or blessing is shared....anywhere and anytime.
- Pray before and after any significant pastoral conversations with the person/s aloud.
- Value prayer by leading /attending church prayer meetings. This also helps us to be a praying person/leader.
- When things don't work, you don't know what to do etc pray aloud for God's help.
- Pray regularly with church leaders.
- Lead major prayer events.
- We need to model the prominence of prayer in our lives, constantly.... people learn as they watch us and hear us pray.

"Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

Prayer in the church



Growing a culture of prayer in the church

- Preach and teach on prayer ...a lot.
- Pray in services, pray in response to God 's word, pray after services.
- Create prayer meetings... start small, sustainable.
- Ensure that key leaders are mentored in the importance and priority of prayer.
- Put leaders in charge of prayer meetings who are aware of what is occurring in the church.
- Teach people to pray immediately when requests shared... phone, email, coffee shop, church.
- Develop small group studies which can end in united prayer meetings attended by small groups.
- Write weekly prayer notes – unifies focus, content for leaders and pray-ers.
- Train people to pray.
- Raise up prayer teams and networks.
- Teach ministry leaders to pray with teams before and after ministry.
- Hold seasons of repentance and services where people can ask for healing prayers.
- Prepare well for prayer gatherings, have a clear focus and keep creative and dynamic eg significant outreach events, seeking wisdom and guidance, crisis.
- Engage in special seasons of prayer throughout the year e.g. Night of prayer, Three days of prayer, 40 days of prayer, 24/7 prayer.
- Develop annual rhythms of prayer...
 - Feb - opening prayer focus as year begins
 - March /April - seasons of repentance leading into Easter
 - Pentecost/ QB Prayer – unity with wider body, visions for year ahead
 - October/Nov – thanksgiving and prayer visions for year ahead

Reminders!

- Do not be discouraged with small numbers.
- Always start small unless God says otherwise.
- Only expand as you find good leaders.
- Special seasons can help you move to new levels of prayer.

Faith filled prayer



Raising faith in a community

- When prayer and the Word of God are visibly linked then people can see God at work. Visions and directions are seen as God's.
- Read the scriptures expecting the Spirit to speak to specific situations.
- Tell stories... answers to prayer in sermons, services, prayer meetings. It affirms the value and contribution of those who pray and raises faith.
- Keep telling the classic stories of church history.
- Let people tell their stories – annual thanksgiving booklet.
- We want people to believe God can and does do miracles. They seem to happen more with prayers for non-Christians.
- We long and believe for revival so prepare with repentance and unity.
- Have faith for God's work transforming work in individuals.
- Remind people about the spiritual battle and tell the stories which show its real.
- The history of God's leading should be recorded by key spiritual leaders as the linkage of events, sometimes over years, reveals the greatness of God.
- God fills us with faith words to encourage and believe... Is 60 the smallest family will become a thousand people!
- Words from the Lord God do cause mountains to move!

Some outcomes of being a faith filled pray-er

When we pray, the Holy Spirit affirms our identity as sons/daughters of God and directs and empowers us to engage in holy missions.

- It causes us to live continually aware of God's presence in our lives... it helps to overcome our unbelief and self-focus.
- It is in communion with the Father that his life and resources flow to us... forgiveness, renewed peace, healing, hope and courage.
- Reveals a humble, trusting heart...I cannot do it on my own. God's help is essential, and we are looking to him to provide
- We experience the body's power to bring encouragement and uplift.
- We are able to share the burdens of leadership in a spiritual environment.
- Voluntarily places him/herself in the place of accountability.
- Grows spiritual authority which is essential for Christian leadership.
- Negates the influence of the pseudo/super spirituals and power players.
- Keeps the focus on God's honour, not his or her own.
- Develops a personal history of God's leading and work

Faith filled prayer churches



Some outcomes of being a faith filled praying church

- It is affirming that Jesus is the leader and director of the church.. it centres us in Christ.
- Provides a forum for words from the Holy Spirit to flow in a safe environment – directives, rebukes, encouragements etc.
- Prayer meetings precede decision making meetings.
- Enables the body and not just the leader to hear corporately the voice of God.
- Brings credibility to the pronouncements that “this is believed to be the word of the Lord”.
- It grows spiritual authority and trust... these are leaders who really do listen and respond to God’s voice.
- Brings unity within the body. It is deeply unifying to pray together which is powerful in personal relationships and corporately as a body.
- There are occasions of exceptional agreement which brings great confidence and courage in undertaking costly and demanding tasks.
- Has a powerful means of sharing and capturing God given visions.
- Develops faith as answers are seen and stories are told in response to prayers.
- Provides places for everyone to share in spiritual heart of church
- Is less likely to fall into temptation.
- Overcomes spiritual opposition.
- Develops faith as answers are seen and stories are told in response to prayers... God is alive and He is mighty.
- Develops a corporate history of God’s leading and work...God is leading us on the journey.
- It fills individuals and churches with the presence of Christ... Jesus is among us and is working in and through us.
- Keeps the focus on God’s honour, not our own... This really is what God has done and not us.

Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³ And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴ You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it
John 14:12-14

Listening to God for specific corporate vision and guidance



- The need to listen is felt e.g. lack of clarity about the year ahead.
- Listen to the Holy Spirit promptings concerning the type prayer season to hold. eg call to “10 Days of Prayer.” Jeremiah 42:3,7
- Planning—emphasis of meetings, ministry groups to be involved, leaders, prayer guide,
- Commence meetings with key leaders if possible.
- Senior leader raises key issues of concern or guidance needed?
- Key leader/s attend all or as many prayer meetings as possible.
- Meetings involve corporate praise, sharing of concern, prayer in groups, opportunity to report on the Spirit’s promptings, further prayer usually in large group.
- Take notes at all the meetings of words, stories, verses, prayers that stand out etc.
- Leaders have special responsibility to collect information and discern God's will.
- Be alert during and following special seasons for further words, circumstances that unfold, blessings from God that affirm directions.
- Follow through on any leads or directions with follow up work... conversations with leaders, church conference, church meetings.
- Announce directions with courage and boldness when all dialogue processes are complete.
- Be aware that there will likely be discouragements as you set your face to the task of obeying.
- Be faith filled that whenever we move in response to the leading of God’s Spirit that fruitfulness will flow.

I will bless my church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. Matt 16:18

Jesus welcomed the crowds spoke to them about the kingdom of God and healed those who needed healing. Luke 9:11

Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow. Isaiah 1:17

The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged.” Deuteronomy 31:8

Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland. Isaiah 43:18-19

Leading prayer gatherings



Large Group gatherings

1. **Place the focus on God:** Commence with 2 or 3 songs of worship. Intersperse with songs with prayers of worship and thanksgiving in groups of two or three. Keep everyone standing so easy to flow into next song. Seek to get everyone praying.
2. **Raise faith:** Share stories of God's work and blessing. The leader should have some ready to share as well as opening to those gathered.
3. **Pray over key focus of prayer meeting:** Leader shares key need, vision, purpose of prayer meeting. Pray in small groups or at prayer stations or participate in prayer walk.
4. **Share thoughts or words.** People gather in large group and leader invites people (or group leaders) to share any thoughts, verses of scripture, etc that may have made an impression during the time of prayer. The leader guides and comments on these reflections.
5. **Pray in large group over key focus or persons:** Remove any chairs and gather pray-ers in large group huddle facing the leader. The leader directs prayers... Large group audible praying, praying in two's or three's, lay hands and pray over individuals, leaders or groups.
6. **Unite in final prayers and songs of worship:** Symbolise oneness through kneeling as a group, or linking arms (if permitted), sometimes aware of stillness in sacred moment and sing songs of praise and hope.

NB. Worship and prayer are linked. Music is a special gift which enhances prayer meetings. With musicians available worship can flow at any time through a large prayer gathering and musicians (keyboards especially) can be effective by playing throughout the prayer meeting.

Small Group prayer meetings (45 mins)

1. Share stories of God's work and blessing - Raise faith.
2. Time of praise and thanksgiving - Give thanks because he's always good.
3. Share focus of prayer - Pray in small groups if more than 5 or 6.
4. Pray for personal needs of pray-ers - build community in prayer group.
5. Conclude with corporate prayer - We are one in Christ.

Growing a prayer culture



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Discussion

1. What are the most effective prayer gatherings in your church?
2. What have you found helpful in raising faith in your church?
3. Are there any ways you could seek to grow the priority of prayer in your church?

Resources

Lord teach us pastors to pray, Chuck Lawless. (Contact Ken Conwell)

How to pray : A simple guide for normal people Pete Greig (24/7 prayer network)

