

START THE
CHURCH PRAYING

CHAPTER 1

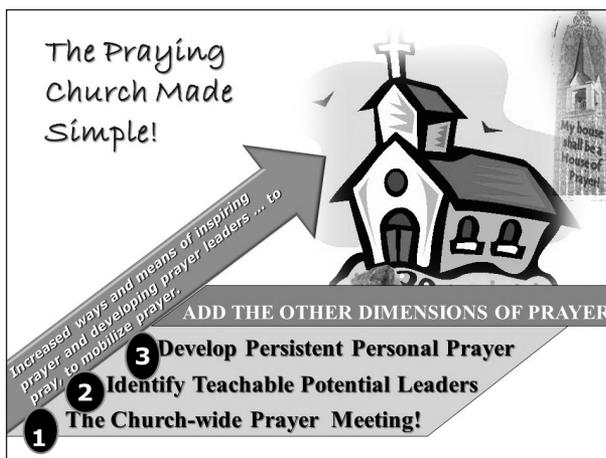
The Seven Markers of a Praying Church

Jesus said, “*My house shall be a house of prayer for the nations!*”

1. Led by *a praying pastor, aided by a prayer leadership team*, we commit to bringing prayer to the heart of all we do! “*Without Christ, we can do nothing!*” Without prayer, we fail to invite Him into the process. Therefore, our resources – spiritual and material – our plans and programs, we will bathe in prayer.
2. We will encourage *at-home, daily, Jesus-be-Jesus-in-me praying*. We will reestablish personal and family altars. We will embrace the discipline of daily time with God, with one another as couples, and as families, until daily prayer is a delight, and we take joy in spending private time with God. We will champion the idea of personal prayer rooms/closets.

3. We will call our congregation to *regular prayer*, with the goal of establishing a regular weekly prayer meeting for the entire church. We will make the prayer meeting as important as Sunday morning singing and preaching. We will emphasize special days of prayer. We will lace prayer into the fabric of the Sunday worship service. We want a pervasive movement of prayer, not merely prayer activities. Eventually, we will offer numerous ways to connect in prayer – prayer groups, prayer chains, embedded intercessors for various ministries and more.

The Praying Church Made Simple – the first three of the ‘Seven Markers of a Praying Church.’ 1. A praying pastor with praying prayer leaders. 2. At-home personal and family prayer. 3. The church at prayer.



DISCOVERY MOMENT: Read “Building a Prayer Meeting.”

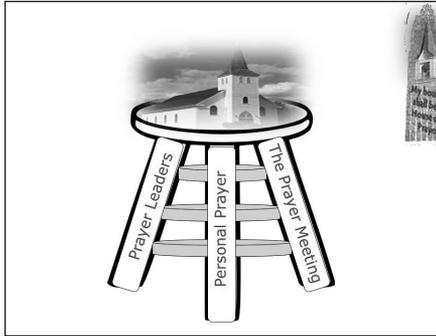
Three Markers

The first three markers constitute ‘the three-legged stool’ of ‘the Praying Church Made Simple:’

1. Leaders who pray.
2. People who pray at home.
3. A church that prays together.

Begin by **calling the church to prayer** and by offering a time for them to gather for prayer.

- From among those who respond, **look for teachable potential praying leaders.**



- During your congregational prayer gathering, and among your developing prayer leaders, **encourage daily personal prayer**, with an eye toward the family altar, and beyond that, a culture of Christ-sensitivity in the home.
- To have **a praying church** demands **a praying people.**
- And it demands **leaders who exemplify prayer.** That makes daily time with God as a critical non-negotiable.

These three,
personal prayer,
corporate prayer
and developing leaders,
out of the seven markers, are the primary
first steps in launching a prayer effort.

ADDITIONAL MARKERS OF A PRAYING CHURCH

4. We will honor those who carry a special calling to pray – ***intercessors***. We will identify intercessors, encourage them, train them, team them, deploy them and debrief them. But we will not confine the intercessory ministry to this team; rather, we will see them as models for prayer, as those with white-hot hearts whom God has called to be at the hidden forefront of spiritual beachheads we are called to claim. We want a spirit of intercession to grip our entire church, a spirit of prayer – and particularly, prayer for others, selfless prayer, prayer for the lost, prayer for the nations, prayer for spiritual awakening!

5. We will ***engage in prayer evangelism, turning prayer outward*** onto the neighborhood, the city, state and nation, and we will adopt a mission field for prayer, one near and one far. We will pray for the harvest. We will seek to identify the people for whom God has made us most responsible, and we will begin



the process of evangelism in prayer, look for ways to care, and steward the opportunities to share the gospel. We will employ the strategy of the ‘three greats’ – we will pray, care and look for opportunities to share the good news.

6. We will ***offer regular training in the area of prayer*** – for our people, leaders, intercessors, prayer evangelism, our youth and children, our families.

7. We will ***work toward the creation of a prayer room or center***, a physical space dedicated to prayer at our church, and we will encourage the use of such a space by members and prayer groups. We will provide resources for prayer that run

through all our departments, until we have a praying church and not merely a prayer ministry.

- *The **goal** of a praying church is first to create a core group of people committed to prayer, with an initial goal to enroll 20% of its membership in some aspect of the prayer process.*
- *The **focus** is on changing the habits of the people.*
- *At-home prayer and at-church regular prayer meetings are the two big cogs that drive the prayer process.*
- *Eventually, the regular church-wide prayer event should spawn prayer groups (7 for each 100 members). These prayer groups (composed of 3-12 individuals each) operate around a specific focus for prayer! (Life-effectiveness is 6-18 months.)*
- *PIT crews (personal intercessory support teams for the ministry leaders and departments) should also be considered.*
- ***It takes 3-5 years to affect the culture of a church! Don't give up!***



DISCOVERY MOMENT: Watch the video “Reviewing the Seven Markers.”



ACTION STEP: Reread the Seven Markers, then complete the Seven Markers Rating Sheet. Have each member of your team do so.

Four Dimensions Inside the Seven Markers

Throughout this book, you will find the concept of the ‘four dimensions’ of prayer ministry – they are four of the seven markers. Inside the four dimensions are the two big cogs that drive the entire

process – at-home daily prayer and pervasive prayer throughout church life, anchored by the church-wide prayer meeting. The two big cogs, along with the mobilization of intercessors and a prayer evangelism interface, constitute the four dimensions.

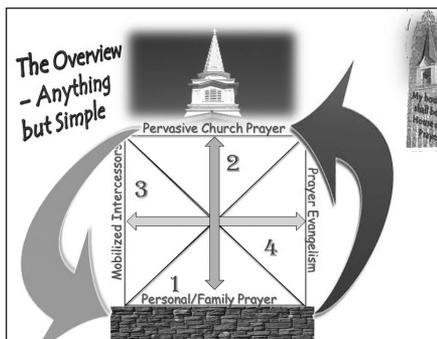
Each of these four dimensions is a world of prayer, a sphere of prayer. You want to integrate into your effort a balanced theology of prayer. In earlier books and seminars, I have emphasized Paul's theology of prayer (1 Tim. 2:1), where he delineates four aspects of prayer – supplications (prayer requests, petitions), prayer

(literally, worship, to turn one's face toward God. That is the heart of prayer, worshipful communion with God), intercession (to meet God, as king, on behalf of another), and thanksgiving.

Communion with God is at the heart of prayer. The *relationship* grants the *right* of petition and the *responsibility* of intercession. All of these – communion, petition and intercession – are to be unwrapped in an attitude of gratitude. Develop these, in balance, and you will have a healthy, vital and powerful prayer effort and a vibrant congregation.

At-home prayer focuses on the *face* of God, our relationship with the Father, in Christ, out of His finished work of the cross, possible by the enabling Spirit, over an open Bible. It is about being personally transformed, about knowing God.

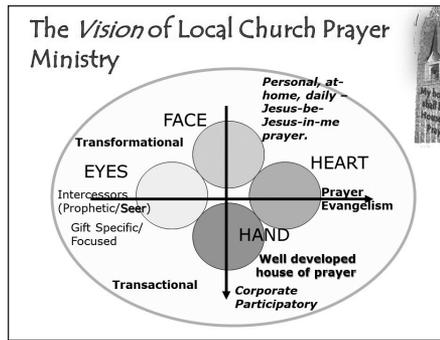
At-church prayer implores His *hand* on all we do, His anointing on the ministries of the church, and does so without omitting our corporate need to seek the *face* of God. The church prayer meeting is, as is our daily time with God, a declaration of church-wide dependence. It is prayer from the 'office' of the church, plural prayer,



prayers of agreement. Nothing will promote harmony and invite God's power and blessing more than humility and unity – *“Without Him, we can do nothing.”* It is humility before His holiness that creates a climate of repentance and brokenness before God. Then, prayer brings us to faith and obedience. To unity and agreement. To discernment and unified, collaborative engagement. It sensitizes us to the energizing power of the Spirit at work in our midst and our need to consider the incomplete mission before us and ongoing character development within us.

Intercessory prayer allows us to see with the *eyes* of God. It involves insight we could know in no other way. Here, spiritual perception is heightened. We see as God sees. Disclosures come forth. Clarity emerges. God's secrets are unwrapped. Intercession has both a priestly and prophetic dimension. It involves hearing and seeing. It is, at times, a believer – indeed, a congregation – before God on behalf of another, perhaps even a city or a nation. At other times, it is the intercessor praying into and over some need – a person, a place or an issue – and pleading for the will of God to be done, the Word of God to be perceived and believed. Indeed, it is prayer for God to enforce His will.

Prayer evangelism is the *heart* of God, a heart for the lost, for those disconnected from a relationship with Him. These four dimensions are key to balance and breadth. Without prayer evangelism, your prayer focus is internal. You are failing to adequately connect prayer and mission. Without at-home prayer, you lack integrity in your prayer effort. Secret, closet prayer is a fundamental partner to public prayer. Without corporate prayer, the church itself lacks power.



Without intercessors, your prayer effort lacks a certain intensity and depth. Shallow praying yields little results. Four dimensions in two pairs – at-home and at-church prayer; intercession and prayer evangelism.



DISCOVERY MOMENT: Read the “Four Dimensions of a Congregational Prayer Ministry” and watch the video “The Four-Dimension Model.”

From Seven Markers to Three Simple Practices

Prayer tends to shrink to the boundaries of our own self-interests and preferences. And when it does, it dries up. God desires to expand us, stretch us and grow us, and that happens most profoundly in our prayer encounters with Him. To support a broad prayer effort, you need a means by which you can consistently, graciously expose believers to a world of prayer and needs beyond their comfort zone.

So, eventually, a prayer room or center, a prayer corner in the sanctuary, or even a sign-up counter in the foyer, will serve as visible space dedicated to keeping your prayer effort before the people.

Ongoing training aims to expose the people of the congregation systematically to the various aspects of all four dimensions. You might consider a study or leading a series on prayer, but primarily focus your training on developing a prayer leadership team.

The leadership team is necessary to guide the prayer process. They cannot be apart from it or above it. They cannot merely direct it. They must be immersed in the prayer effort – praying *at home* and *at church*, embracing the call to *intercession* and *prayer evangelism*.

These are the four critical dimensions:

1. Personal-family prayer;
2. The church at prayer;

3. Mobilized intercessors;
4. Prayer evangelism.

Together, with prayer leaders, on-going training and a prayer room/center, they constitute the Seven Markers of a Praying Church.

In this *Praying Church Made Simple* model, you will focus primarily on the first three of the seven markers – developing prayer leaders; encouraging personal, daily, at-home prayer; and the congregational prayer meeting.

THE TWO BIG COGS INSIDE THE SEVEN MARKERS

Of the seven markers of the praying church, the two most critical components are...

at-home, daily praying and...

...the church-wide prayer effort...

...which gives impetus to the church as a house of prayer.

At-home and at-church, back and forth. These two feed each other. It is difficult to say which of these is the more critical. At-church, corporate praying cannot take the place of personal prayer; and personal prayer cannot fulfill the function of corporate prayer. In the gospels, we find Jesus in private prayer headed for the cross; in Acts, the Church is constituted out



of a corporate prayer gathering in the Upper Room, in which the Spirit baptizes and energizes. Compelled, both together and personally,

they publically give witness to the resurrection, the ascension and the enthronement of Christ. The book of Acts is the story of a praying Church – from Jerusalem to Rome. And yet, the emphasis on the corporate is not without glimpses of personal prayer. Here, we find a balance – the corporate and the personal.

The Gospels – In the gospels, we find the personal prayer life of Jesus. He prayed early in the morning. While it was still dark, he left the house and went to a solitary place, where he prayed (Mk. 1:35). In Matthew 14:23, he chose solitude again, and went on a mountainside to pray at the close of the day. In Luke 6:12, he spent the night alone in prayer. In the garden of Gethsemane, he removed himself for the sake of privacy, and knelt down, and prayed (Luke 22:41-44). He prayed alone often (Luke 5:16), and he prayed fervently “*with loud cries and tears*” (Heb. 5:7).

In Matthew, the prayer life of Jesus is noted twenty-one times, thirteen in Mark, twenty-five in Luke and six in John’s gospel. Some of these, given the nature of the synoptic gospels, are different accounts of the same prayer experience. In the book of Acts, prayer is mentioned twenty-eight times. The gospels focus on Jesus in prayer (twenty-six times in the four gospels, Jesus is found praying), or teaching on or talking about prayer (teaching: twenty-four times; talking about prayer: nine times).

In the book of Acts, corporate prayer scenes emerge. Thirteen times, the church is seen gathered for prayer, and on four additional occasions, a two-some or more is found praying. Private prayer doesn’t go away, it is seen at least nine times. Again, we find this dialectic – corporate prayer and personal/private prayer. The book of Acts begins with the church gathered for prayer. Pentecost comes into a prayer meeting (Acts 2:1-4). Converts are urged to continue in prayer (2:42).

Acts – Let’s review the book of Acts. In chapter one, we find the followers of Christ in a prayer meeting (1:14). The Holy Spirit, on the

day of Pentecost, breaks in on a corporate prayer meeting, one that has lasted for at least a week. This is persistent, prevailing corporate prayer. It is prayer determined to receive an answer from heaven. It is prayer that refuses to go anywhere or do anything without the attendant power of God. In prayer, prior to the coming of the Spirit, the group considers a replacement for Judas (1:23-25); thus, leaders are chosen prayerfully, as was the model of Jesus. Those converted are invited into a prayer fellowship (2:41-43). When the Spirit comes, personally and corporately, they are compelled to mission. Then – thousands are converted.

In Acts 3:1, Peter and John go together to the temple at the hour of prayer for a corporate prayer meeting. The result is again – witness and mission. When resistance comes and persecution is raging, and, indeed, threats are intensifying, the answer is another prayer meeting (4:31). Imagine that! And when they had prayed, the place “*was shaken where they were assembled.*” This is not merely the exotic, but a practical empowering given to “*spread the word of God with boldness.*”

In Acts 6:4, when the number of disciples were multiplied and administrative duties tugged at the apostles, they recognized the need to prioritize prayer, “*We will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.*” This is not merely a decision to persist in personal devotions, but a commitment to pray together as a leadership team – corporate prayer (6:3-5). Even the table waiters, the deacons, were chosen prayerfully, and then consecrated by public, corporate prayer (6:6).

In Samaria, they prayed corporately, as they had in Acts 2, and that resulted in the Samaritans being filled with the Holy Spirit (8:15). In Acts 12, the church gathered to pray for Peter who was in prison, facing a death sentence, and an angel set him free. In Acts 13, as the church prayed, the apostolic ministry of Barnabas and Saul was born. In Acts 16:13, a group of women gathered for corporate prayer each Sabbath, and those women became the seed-bed for a

movement of God in the city of Ephesus.

Later, as Paul passed by Ephesus to reconnect with the elders, there is a poignant corporate prayer moment, *“And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all”* (36-37). The Scripture says, *“They all wept!”* At Tyre, Paul stayed only seven days. Finding disciples there, they walked with him as he departed – whole families with wives and children accompanied him, and just outside the city, together, as a group, they *“kneeled down on the shore, and prayed”* (21:4-6). The early church prayed together.

Personal Prayer in Acts – Of course, Acts also contains moments of personal and intercessory prayer. Peter prayed (3:1; 10:9; 11:5), as did Paul (22:17). Simon, the sorcerer, asked Peter to pray for him, that he would not suffer judgment from the Lord (8:23-25). The Holy Spirit directed Ananias to Straight Street as an answer to the personal prayer of Paul (9:11). And there, Ananias prayed for Paul. In Acts 9:40, Peter knelt alone and prayed for Tabitha, and she opened her eyes and sat up – the girl came back to life, a resurrection.

In Acts 10, Cornelius was praying (10:2, 4, 30-31) and as a result, God directed Peter to minister to the Gentile and his household. The prayers of Cornelius were a memorial, a reminder before God, to which He responded (10:4). The private prayer of Cornelius is connected to the private prayer time of Peter, who was on the roof in another city, praying at noon (10:9; 11:4-6). We often see this triangle of prayer, by which God connects us to others through prayer.

In Acts 14:23, the apostolic leaders, Barnabas and Paul, prayed before selecting elders and commending them to the Lord. There we find prayer with fasting. When Paul and Silas were in jail at Philippi, their response was to unite in prayer (16:25). The result was a liberating earthquake, the conversion of the jailer, and an affirmation of God’s hand on them. In Acts 22:17, Paul was in the temple in Jerusalem, and as he prayed, he was suddenly in a trance. In Acts 28:8, the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and was hemorrhaging. Paul

“entered in and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him.”

God was speaking mysteries. Obviously, personal prayer does not go away in the book of Acts.

Corporate Prayer in Acts – Yet, while personal intercessory prayer continued after the descent of the Spirit and the constitution of the Church, along with prayer for individuals – it is corporate prayer that leads. It sets the tone in Acts without leaving out glimpses into private prayer moments. When the church gathered, they prayed for a variety of things – decisions about leadership (1:24; 6:6; 14:23); for the Holy Spirit’s manifestation (8:15); for repentance to manifest among sinners (8:24; 26:29); for healing (9:40; 28:8); for the work of missions (13:3); the release of Peter (12:5); for protection and safety (27:29). They gathered for prayer in times of crisis (7:59; 12:5, 12; 16:25); and to repent (8:22; 9:11). Even their good-byes were moments of prayer (20:36; 21:5). They habitually prayed – the whole church gathered (2:42), and the apostles and leaders also gathered for prayer (1:14; 6:4; 13:3).



DISCOVERY MOMENT: Read a “Glimpse of Prayer in Acts.”

Personal prayer and corporate prayer – the two need one another. You cannot sustain a personal, intimate relationship with the Lord in a group, and yet, because faith is never to be privatized, because He has loved us that we might love one another and has called us into fellowship with others, you cannot satisfy your obligation to God with a purely private prayer and devotional life. And conversely, you cannot satisfy your relationship with God on the back of public, at-church corporate prayer. At-home, daily, let-Jesus-be-Jesus-in-me praying is critical. This is personal prayer. Private prayer. Intimacy

with God, through Christ, by the enabling Spirit, guided by the Scriptures. It is prayer that connects husbands and wives to God's throne – and creates the great triangle of love that secures the marriage and the family. It extends naturally into family prayer, family devotions, the family altar, church in the home. It engages the entire family, making prayer and the Presence of God something that is not strange and foreign to daily life.

At congregational prayer meetings, we catch prayer. We borrow prayer fire from others. We learn the language of prayer. We are mentored by praying with others, sometimes formally, sometimes informally. What we are praying about is important, but the fact that we are praying, and thereby learning to pray, is even more important. The paradigm shifts when our personal prayer times take on a spiritual life of their own. Sustained by daily time with God, we move from chronic and debilitating dependence on church-life to vital dependence on Christ-life by the indwelling Spirit. That does not mean independence.

In the early days, following our conversion, the church serves as a spiritual parent, guiding us toward maturity and dependence on God, the Father, in Christ, by the enabling Holy Spirit. The maturity of our prayer life and, as a consequence, a more vital spiritual life, does not constitute a break from the church. Indeed, it accelerates the connection. We now go to the prayer meeting with prayer-fire in our hearts. Corporate worship and prayer times continue to enrich us; we dare not privatize our relationship with God. We need the corporate experiences of prayer and worship. They stretch us. They move us into areas of prayer into which we might not venture alone. They expose us to the prayer burdens of others. Back and forth, personal prayer and corporate prayer. These are the two big wheels of prayer ministry. Out of these flow the other dimensions – mobilization of intercessors; prayer evangelism; prayer teaching/training; the leadership team; and the prayer room/center.



DISCOVERY MOMENT: Watch the video “The Two Critical Dimensions (At-Home and At-Church Praying).”

Eighty percent of churches have plateaued or are in decline.³ Ninety-five percent are congregations less than 100.⁴ Churches plateau in the 15th year. Churches that are 35 years and older tend to have difficulty replacing the members they lose.⁵

One major USA denomination had 34,892 churches at the end of 2003. Of that number, 24,795 had fewer than 100 in weekly attendance — 71 percent of the total. Congregations with less than 500 in attendance numbered 15,770 — 45 percent of the total congregations. Seventeen percent had less than 35 attendees, and 13 percent, one in eight, were barely keeping their doors open with some 20 attendees.⁶

The typical church, of all denominations, has 75 in their worship service. We are a nation of small churches, many of whom are dying.

TWO SIDES OF THE BRAIN

The prayer effort moves forward on two legs — *learning* and *doing*. It also engages both sides of the brain. Teaching (left-brain) is not enough. Testing and experience (right-brain sensing, feeling, affect) is also necessary. The testing is in the doing. *Teach* (left-brain) and *do* (experience, which includes helping people past their fears of prayer, fear of praying aloud, of hearing and obeying the Spirit). Offer the *precept*, then *practice* it. And then graciously, gently, but bravely, teach into the learning gaps, and then repeat the doing.

Only 25 percent of the people who attend your church each Sunday are *Christ-centered*, spiritually vital people.¹ Another 23

percent feel, at times, *close* to Christ, but they have not crossed the threshold into the spiritual vitality that characterizes the Christ-centered group. There are two other groups that constitute half of your congregation. About 10 percent are exploring Christ, surprisingly they have not yet made a saving commitment to Christ. Another 37 percent consider themselves Christians, and they are growing in Christ, but are often 'stuck' and do not yet feel 'close' to Christ. Almost half of your congregation is either

Prayer tends to shrink to the boundaries of our own self-interests and preferences. And when it does, it dries up. God desires to expand us, stretch us and grow us, and that happens most profoundly in our prayer encounters with Him. To support a broad prayer effort, you need a means by which you can consistently, graciously expose believers to a world of prayer and needs beyond their comfort zone.

unsaved or feels somewhat distant from God. The difference between those in the other half, those who feel *close* to Christ, and those who are *Christ-centered*, is found in large part in their personal daily prayer practices.²

So many people attend church, hear songs about God, listen to talks about God, but never encounter God. The only prayers they pray are fleeting, 'God, help me!' crisis prayers. If you teach or preach about prayer, but you do not offer prayer experiences in which you practice those principles, your effort will fail. Teach on prayer walking, then prayer-walk. Teach on praying Scripture, and then practice it. Create prayer learning experiences: "Tuesday night, we will have a special prayer experience on praying Scripture." Do not expect all those who attend your teaching session to show up for the training experience. Our learning model is often passive, non-engaging and non-threatening. Doing is active, engaging and intimidating. At first, be happy with twenty percent or more in your prayer engage-

ment effort. They will infect others. Teach and then practice. It is in the *obedience*, the application of the principle, that faith grows and that transformation takes place.



DISCOVERY MOMENT: Watch the video “Three Kinds of Churches.”

THE THREE-LEGGED STOOL

After years of considering these principles and working with thousands of pastors and prayer leaders, I have found these three, out of the seven markers of a praying church, are benchmark starting points:

1. A church-wide prayer meeting;
2. The development of a prayer leadership-learning team;
3. The encouragement of daily, personal prayer.

We are not casting aside the other markers of the praying church – mobilizing intercessors, prayer evangelism, on-going congregational teaching-training and the creation of a prayer room/center. In the attempt to simplify the process, we are, in the initial stages, synergizing three components of our effort – by intentionally training leaders, by congregational prayer engagement (learning by doing), and personal-family prayer. You are, in fact, mobilizing intercessors at the church-wide prayer meeting. And you should make prayer evangelism a regular, though not the dominant component, of that church-wide prayer gathering. In this scenario, the sanctuary, where the church-wide prayer meeting takes place, becomes the prayer room.

In the beginning, it is important that prayer training is primarily focused on the developing leader-learners. You might be tempted to offer this leader-training to the whole church. That would be a

mistake. Your intent with this group is not merely training, but teaming. The important goal is to develop a prayer leadership team and allow the Holy Spirit an opportunity to create a bond of unity between them out of which develops a culture of prayer and humility, worship and service in the congregation. You are training those who come to the congregational prayer meeting, incidentally, by ‘doing’ prayer. You are also mobilizing intercessors, since they are often the first responders to a call to pray, even though you are not yet treating them as a specialized component of your effort. While intercession and prayer evangelism are critical elements in your congregational prayer effort, don’t make your prayer meeting an ‘intercessory prayer meeting.’ It must be bigger, broader than intercession. Intercession is a dimension in your prayer effort, but certainly not the whole. You want to balance your emphasis between transformational, congregational prayer and transactional praying.

I have seen pastors and prayer leaders create elaborate prayer rooms only to have them inadequately used. The members do not yet know ‘why’ they are important, nor yet, ‘how’ to use them or ‘what’ to either do or pray about once in the prayer room. They rationalize that they can pray at home as well as at a prayer room/center. They do not yet understand the power of corporate agreement in prayer, or prayer and place.

As you launch your church-wide prayer effort then identify developing leaders who will commit to personal, daily prayer, you will incidentally engage the additional ‘markers’. For example, *you are training* the congregation to meet God by means of the church-wide prayer gathering – you learn to pray by praying. While that training is *incidental*, you are *intentionally* training a small group of developing leaders. You are also defining intercession, identifying intercessors, and directing intercession out of your church-wide prayer

gathering – incidentally. You are keeping your prayer effort centered in worshipful, transformational praying out of which you do the transactional – petition and intercession. That re-centers prayer in healthier theology.

At some point, you will *intentionally* begin the task of identifying intercessors at-large, training and teaming, directing and debriefing. Intercessors do need to be acknowledged as valued contributors to the vision and mission of the church. Intercession is not a side-bar task completed by somewhat eccentric and overly-spiritual Christians.

Yet, for a season, concentrate on establishing your prayer meeting, growing leaders and encouraging daily, personal prayer – the essence of the *Praying Church Made Simple*. When you arrive at the point that the culture of the church is characterized by worshipful, transformational prayer and by crying out for the lost, so that prayer is creating both a new passion for Christ and a fervor about lostness with increasing evangelism activities by members, you are now approaching health! The prayer center, should you create one, would then be a valuable tool, a place at which intercessors might gather, the place prayer groups connect during the week to pray, in a church that is fully alive. The



The Three Supporting Rungs

■ What binds your 3-Legged Stool together and keeps it from stagnating is:

1. On-going training and teaching
2. Mobilizing Intercessors
3. Prayer Evangelism

church is the only family that restricts new baby births to one day of the week. Normally, babies come any day and every day.

Let's review. The three legs are:

- The church-wide prayer meeting
- The development of prayer leaders
- The practice of personal, daily prayer.

These three legs are bound together by the rungs of the stool –

1. Training, incidental and intentional.
2. The development and the identification of intercessors and the movement of the entire church to become a missional intercessory community
3. Out of an intercessory culture, prayer evangelism bubbles forth, and from that evangelism activities flow naturally.

The crown of the legs and rungs is the seventh marker, the prayer room/center.

Look at the Idea in Reverse

The prayer center exists, at least in part, beyond the idea of mobilizing prayer and creating a visible intersection for the prayer effort, as a means to open the church seven days a week!

However, that is premature in a church that is not consistently praying fervently for the lost, not regularly engaged in prayer evangelism.

And that will not happen until intercessors are mobilized and the congregation sees itself as an intercessory community.

And that will happen only with on-going training and teaching.

3 FIRST STEPS *And that will happen only with leaders who understand the process, who are praying and seeking God daily, and calling the church to pray together regularly.*

Thus, the seven markers of a praying church, the three-legged stool and its supporting rungs!

Building the Three Legged Stool

Seven markers, the four dimensions, the two big cogs, the three “praying church made simple” starting points, the three supporting

rungs – sounds like new math! Anything but simple. This is a concept and, like a diamond, has many facets. It certainly is not a single dimensional approach to transforming the church into a house of prayer! It is complex, but it is the same diamond, the same house, the same construct, the same ideological matrix!

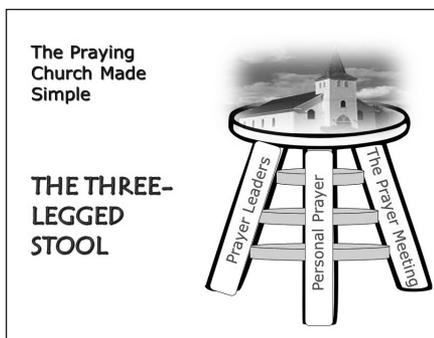
The Praying Church Made Simple is an attempt to help a pastor not be overwhelmed by the big picture and overall process! It is not

an attempt to encourage a superficial approach, but to point out the primary arteries that get the blood and oxygen to the body. The three-legged stool of the prayer meeting (first step toward a praying church), developing

leaders (leadership team), and daily personal prayer (first step toward recovery of prayer in the home); these three are vital, irreplaceable and the point of the greatest early leverage.

Your church-wide prayer meeting is a public commitment, a congregational appeal – “We must be a house of prayer for the nations.” If you treat prayer as ancillary, as a support for your Sunday preaching service, like choir practice except, in this case, prayer practice for intercessors, it will fail. It must be seen as an essential. Yet, the appeal to participate must be grace-based, not guilt-driven. The ideal is weekly. Less than monthly, and you are not taking prayer seriously.

Milestone Two: Out of your church-wide prayer gathering, your prayer leadership team will emerge. Don't appoint prayer leaders who do not show up for this church-wide prayer meeting. This is a lead-by-example effort. Ask God to show you prayer leaders. Ask them to join you monthly, informally, in another venue, to consider how you might move the process forward. Let the group



expand and contract. Gauge their faithfulness to the learning process. Develop a trusted relationship with them. That is critical for your own circle of prayer support as a pastoral leader. They must develop trusting relationships with one another. Watch them learn, learn together, learn from you and one another. Watch them grow in their own prayer life.

Milestone Three: Your goal is a praying people, a church full of believers who are vitally alive, and that means daily prayer over an open Bible. At the core will be a group of people with white-hot hearts. Don't move too quickly. Vet your prayer leadership team – learners first, then leaders; not leaders, then learners. Humility is critical to effective prayer, and no leader who is unwilling to learn can effectively serve the church.

By committing to the public prayer meeting and a monthly meeting with leaders, you and these leaders now have a greater motivation to develop a consistent daily time with God. If you attempt to nurture your developing leaders on the strength of your corporate prayer effort alone, you will fail. In, around and out of daily times of prayer, God will give you vision and strategy, prayer insights and guidance for both corporate prayer gatherings and for your developing leaders. You cannot lead a prayer effort without being a person of prayer. In a sense, this is the first of the three. And your prayer leaders cannot emerge as prayer leaders without cultivating a strong discipline of daily time with God.

Ready to begin? Call the church to prayer – have a regular church-wide prayer meeting. Do so not less than monthly. Weekly is preferable. Ask God to help you identify, out of that prayer meeting, teachable leaders, and begin to meet with them at least monthly. Then, daily, determine to meet with God.



DISCOVERY MOMENT: Watch the videos “The Praying Church Made Simple” and “First Year Steps.”

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- ¹ Greg L. Hawkins and Cally Parkinson, *Move* (Zondervan, 2011), 90, 118.
 - ² *Ibid*, 181.
 - ³ Quote by Tom Cheney and Terry Rials, *Nuts and Bolts of Church Revitalization* (Orlando, FL: Renovate Publishing Group, 2015), 1. See www.newchurchinitiatives.org/more_churches/index.htm.
 - ⁴ *Ibid*, 12.
 - ⁵ *Ibid*, 13. Quoted from “Churches Die with Dignity,” (Christianity Today, January, 1991), Volume 36.
 - ⁶ Royal Speidel, *Evangelism in the Small Membership Church* (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 2007), xii.



GROUP TALK

1. Review the Ten Values of a Praying Church. After each of you has completed the rating sheet share your scores. Average them. Where are the areas in which you evidence the greatest need?
2. Review the Seven Markers of a Praying Church. After you have completed the rating sheet, discuss your scores together. Average them. Review the other rating tools in the Resource Guide. What areas need the most encouragement?
3. What are the “two big cogs” inside the Seven Markers? Why are they so important? Talk about it in your group.
4. Consider for a moment the personal prayer life of Jesus. Now, consider the role of prayer in the book of Acts. What can we learn from these profiles? What are your application points? First steps?
5. Identify the ‘Four Dimensions’ of prayer – make sure everyone can articulate them. Consider how they relate to one another. Did you notice they are two pairs? All related and yet distinct?
6. In the Seven Markers, beyond the Four Dimensions, are three critical supporting elements in the prayer effort. They are not merely ancillary or subordinate in value. Discuss these – prayer training, leadership development and the prayer center/room.
7. The starting place for *The Praying Church Made Simple* are the first three of the Seven Markers. Identify them. Discuss their relationship to each other and the whole effort.



ACTION STEPS

1. Review other rating sheets in *The Praying Church Resource Guide* available at www.alivepublications.org. At the very beginning of your experience, you may want to review all of the rating sheets and do the exercises as a matter of drill. You will then establish a benchmark of your current status and later your progress. See Resource Disc for additional Rating Sheets.
2. Consider the prayer life of Jesus. Review that section in the chapter.
3. Make sure everyone understands the ‘four dimensions’ of prayer ministry and how they relate together.
4. Differentiate the three simple starting points.



MILESTONE ONE

*Things you should
have in place now!*

Launch a Church-Wide **PRAYER MEETING**

Prayer meetings abound in the book of Acts. The church itself was born out of a prayer meeting. Launch a weekly corporate prayer gathering or reinvigorate your Church-Wide Prayer Meeting.

Don't worry about numbers – at first. Have a prayer meeting if it is only you and God! Persist.

Remember, some folks will come out of guilt! Not until they come into grace-based praying will the stream of prayer clear up!

Some will come, responding to the old paradigm of prayer meetings – a 'request-driven' model. When they discover that the prayer focus is not about them or a needs-based approach, they may withdraw. And you may find yourself under fire.

Persist. Keep pursuing a worshipful corporate prayer gathering! Don't give up!



DISCOVERY MOMENT: Watch the video
“Models for the Church-wide Prayer Meeting.”