

Planting and Cultivating a Culture of Prayer (At Sovereign Christ Bible Fellowship for the generations)

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18: "Be joyful always; pray continually; given thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

Most Christians pray from time to time. Some pray more and some pray less than others. Many Christians say they admire Christians that have a deep prayer life; many often can recite a few names of people they know who are prayer warriors. But sadly many of those same Christians report that they have a very dismal prayer life. They easily get bored with the prayers of others, and they get bored with their own prayers.

Have you ever felt that way? Bored. Uninterested.

An old preacher named Leonard Ravenhill was greatly concerned with the dramatic decline in the prayer life of churches in which he would visit and preach. He was equally grieved over the decline of consistent prayer in the lives of individual believers. In fact, he made a stinging observation:

If you want to know how popular a church is, go Sunday morning.

If you want to know how popular a preacher is, go Sunday night.

If you want to know how popular God is, go to the prayer meeting.

It is reported that Charles H Spurgeon's church had over 700 people gathered together on Sunday mornings in the basement praying for God to move through the preaching of the Word during the worship service. They actually prayed during the service. Pastor Spurgeon called the prayer meeting the "powerhouse of the church".

Fruitful prayer meetings and a fruitful prayer life just don't spring up wild. They have to be planted and cultivated.

I. The Essential beginnings for effective planting and cultivating a culture of prayer.

A. Know God.

1. "...No one comes to the Father except through Me (Jesus)." John 14:6c
2. Love Him for who He is. Learn Him.
 - a) Be in awe of Him: Romans 11:33-36; Hebrews 12
 - b) Praise the Father the Son and the Holy Spirit: 1 Peter 1:1-2

B. Know Scripture

1. Good doctrine informs our thinking and directs our prayers.
 - a) Daniel 9:1-10; 9:17-19

b) Learn the multitude of teaching concerning the doctrines of grace in order to grow in confidence in His all-sufficiency and power.

(1) God loved us even when we were ruined in every aspect of our humanity

(2) That God chose to save some people as an outcome of His set purpose and according to His good pleasure

(3) That Christ's atoning sacrifice can't fail to save those he came to save.

(4) God's grace is perfectly persuasive. Irresistible

(5) Those He saves He will preserve

c) Love the Word of God

(1) David's love for God's word is seen in Psalm 119

C. Know yourself. That is to say, remember that you are created to be dependent.

1. Genesis 1:27a: "So God created man in His own image..."

2. The more you know Him through reading a studying Scripture the less self-sufficient, self-satisfied and self-righteous you will be.

a) Ravenhill: The self-sufficient do not want to pray. The self-satisfied do not want to pray. And the self-righteous won't pray.

b) Psalm 20:7: "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; But we will remember the name of the Lord our God.

D. Know the condition of your fellow man

1. Both believers and unbelievers

a) Knowing the truth about man from Scripture will sharpen the focus of your prayers

(1) Romans 3:10-18; 3:23; Ephesians 4:17-24, etc

E. Follow Biblical Examples:

1. Jesus: Notice what Jesus teaches about how, what and why to pray

a) Matthew 6:5:-15

(1) The right spirit/ attitude (6:1-8)

(2) The right mind/ desires (6:9-15)

b) John 17

2. The Apostles and Church (Example and content)

a) Acts 4:23-31

b) Ephesians 1:16-23; 3:20-21

3. God teaching Israel how, what and why:

a) Jeremiah 29:10-15

b) Daniel 9: Prayers of confession

F. Application:

1. How will you better prepare yourself to pray this week?
2. How will you determine what to pray for someone else? (How will you allow the Scriptures to inform your prayers?)
3. What will you do to encourage others to pray?

II. **The Laboring to plant and cultivate a culture of prayer for personal, productive Praying**

A. Think about what your going to pray

1. Plan your prayer time and content of prayer
 - a) Avoid flying by the seat of your pants if possible.
2. Weed the soil of your heart before you pray. Confess your sins
 - a) Psalm 139:23-24
 - b) Psalm 66:18: "If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened;

(1) The assurance: Psalm 66:19: "but God has surely listened and heard my voice in prayer.

3. Distinguish between "wishes" and "petitions".

B. Get to work. Prayer can be tiring and rewarding.

1. Hannah: Samuel 1:6-16 (she wept, was misunderstood; was in anguish, etc)
 - a) Reward: 1 Samuel 1:20
2. Hezekiah: 2 Kings 19:14-19
 - a) Israel was delivered! 2 Kings 19:35-36
3. Nehemiah: Nehemiah 1:2-11 (distress, weeping, anguish)
 - a) Answer: Go! Nehemiah 2:8-9

C. Application:

1. How can studying the examples of people in the bible help you develop in your prayer life?
2. What words from the examples above could you use in your prayers the next time you pray for yourself, your family, your church, your neighbors?
3. How will you better plan for your prayers?
 - a) Suggestions: How will you keep track of what you prayed? How will you keep track of answered prayers? What attribute of God will you focus on in directing your prayers?
4. How well do you persevere in prayer? How easy is it for you to give up? What will you do to build up some “prayer muscle” for endurance?
 - a) Suggestion: Start slow and steady. Definitely plan (Pick a Scripture verse to help direct your prayers and pray for “needs” of others with a goal of God helping them know Him better.)

III. Planting and Cultivating a culture of prayer in the church for the generations.

A. The Prayer Meeting: Practical Preparation and Practice

1. Prepare your own heart for prayer before coming.
2. Concentrate on actually praying all kinds of prayers and petitions with supplication (Ephesians 6:18-20).
 - a) Visit before or after the prayer meeting but not during the prayer time.

3. Prepare your “list” ahead of time. Flying by the seat of your pants may work when you are in your own prayer closet but it can hinder “potent” praying.
4. As you prepare, think about what you really are asking. For example, if someone is sick, what is the greatest need? Of course you can ask for God’s mercy and relief to be given them in their sickness, but what spiritual help is needed?

B. The Prayer Meeting: Spiritual Prayers

1. What are ‘spiritual prayers’? Prayers that are God-centered (biblical) and often expressive of the grace, love and mercy of God toward the person(s) we are praying. But, even in the imprecatory prayers of David in the Psalms they were spiritual prayers because of his desire for God’s glory!
 - a) Spiritual prayers are full of praise to God: Ephesians 1:3-14
 - b) Spiritual prayers are full of thanksgiving: Ephesians 1:15-16
 - c) Spiritual prayers are full of spiritual requests: Ephesians 1:17-23

C. The Prayer Meeting should incorporate God’s Word for inspiration, for hope, for direction, and for informing our prayers.

1. 2 Timothy 3:16: “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,”
2. Romans 15:4: “For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.”

D. Ultimately, the prayer meeting should EXEMPLIFY a HIGH VIEW OF GOD.

1. So often our prayers are so very man-centered. We have a very high view of man and a low view of God.
 - a) Our prayers reflect our true “world view”: God or man centered?
 - (1) Would you say that our church prayer gatherings orbit around God, or do they orbit around man with God being called upon only to “help” us in our little world?

(a) If you think that they do not orbit around God what will you do to influence the culture of prayer at Sovereign Christ?

(b) How will you encourage your pastor, and others?

(2) Would you say that God's glory is *eclipsed* by the needs of people? Or, would you say that the needs of the church and people are eclipsed by God's Glory?

(a) In other words, has God become smaller than the needs we concern ourselves with? Or is He big?

(3) How do you want your children to remember prayer meetings? Vibrant, worshipful? Or dull and boring?

E. Proposal for Prayer Meetings

1. Come prepared and focused.
2. Come Expecting God to act.
3. The leader of the prayer time should lead the group with a suggested attribute of God to aid in praising God, a reminder to offer thanksgiving to God, and a Scripture to help direct our prayer requests for others.
 - a) Praise
 - b) Thanksgiving
 - c) Requests