

THE LOCAL CHURCH BECOMING A HOUSE OF PRAYER

INTRODUCTION:

What would our church look like if the vast majority of our congregation became a company of thirsty hearts, each seeking an intimate love relationship with Jesus as their FIRST priority and the center of life? “Oh God...my soul thirsts for You...” Psalm 63:1. The major objective of this proposed local church prayer strategy is to invite every pastor, every lay-leader, and every member, to downshift to deeper intimacy in the secret place of the Almighty Heavenly Father. We will seek to understand how God desires our worship more than our busyness. We will seek to learn how to “be” before we “do.” We will learn to shift our motivation from being a worker for God, and our performance based mentality, to a rest and contentment to be loved and then serve out of that love. It will be our desire to better understand how the early church sparked the astonishing transformation of an unbelieving and corrupt civilization into a community of faith and love.

PART ONE: FROM A “PRAYER-LITE” CHURCH TO A HOUSE OF PRAYER CHURCH*

Prayer-lite church:

A church with polite prayers at the beginning of each meeting and service.

A church where prayer is request based, rather than presence based.

A church that has largely forgotten what it means to have a child-like reliance on hearing directly from the Father. Instead, it has slowly begun to rely more and more on human leadership and management skills.

A church that does its human planning and then asks God to bless this human planning.

A church that says it recognizes the importance of prayer but has not developed prayer in any strategic way. There are only a few people actually praying for the church and its ministries, and they have not been recognized as a strategic ministry of the church.

Prayer Ministry church:

A church that has truly recognized prayer as a strategic ministry of the church, and has provided a place for the passionate intercessors of the church to plug into ministry. The prayer ministry is similar to the youth or music ministry. The prayer ministry is simply one ministry among many. There is someone in charge of the prayer ministry. However, most of the burden to lead the church to prayer falls on the shoulders of a small group of dedicated intercessors. However, these intercessors not part of the mainstream of the church, and are marginalized from the congregation as a whole. In this type of church, most of the people seem content with the status quo, routine religious activities, excessive busyness and seem unaware of how the secular culture is invading the church, rather than the other way around. Most of the hindrances to attracting God's presence are still at work in this type of church.

The House of Prayer Church:

This type of church is dedicated to the belief that nothing of lasting Kingdom value will happen apart from communion with God. Leaders are praying people, with a measurable thirst of more of God Himself, and set the example of spending time in their "secret place" every day. These leaders believe – and practice – the conviction that in order for the people to be empowered for service by the Holy Spirit, they must spend time developing deepening intimacy with their Abba Father. These leaders are living a life that attracts the presence of God and are living and leading from the secret place. The people of this type of church desire that prayer permeate every aspect of church life. They have been trained, and have the resources available to spend a delightful hour each day with God. Every Ministry is prayed for, and prayer is a significant part of each and every ministry of the church. There is teaching on prayer from the pulpit and priority is placed on prayer by the Senior Pastor and staff. The pastoral staff comes along side of the prayer leaders to ensure that everyone in the congregation has the opportunity to get personally involved in prayer. There is a fresh flowing atmosphere of the Holy Spirit in the services, due to the whole church moving into deeper intimacy with the Father. This church has moved from request based prayer, to presence based prayer. God is "in the house."

*Adapted from "Analyze Your Church's Prayer Level" by Cheryl Sacks, *The Prayer Saturated Church*. Pp 77-78.

PART TWO: BUILDING THE PRAYER LEADERSHIP TEAM

In order to accomplish the objective of developing The House of Prayer Church, there will need to be a key group of passionate leaders appointed, who will take responsibility to assist the Senior Pastor and key ministerial staff. Each of these leaders will commit to downshift to deeper intimacy by spending time in the secret place and living a life that attracts the presence of God. What follows is a suggested Prayer Leadership Team for the local church:

- (1) Prayer Coordinator: This person has the primary responsibility to give direction to the Prayer Leadership Team. (S)he meets regularly with the Senior Pastor to receive ongoing direction as to the prayer needs of the congregation. In addition, the Prayer Coordinator will provide the liaison function with the various Citywide Prayer Movement activities taking place within the local community.
- (2) Prayer Leader: This person has the primary responsibility for the 24/7 prayer room, and the various 24/7 prayer emphasis which take place during the year. Specifically, this person is responsible for the organization of the Ten Days of Prayer leading up to Pentecost Sunday and the Global Day of Prayer.
- (3) Prayer Leader: This person has the primary responsibility for prayer coverage of each pastoral staff member. A prayer team is to be developed for each pastoral staff member, insuring that they are prayed for daily.
- (4) Prayer Leader: This person has the primary responsibility to insure that every ministry of local church is saturated in prayer. A prayer team is to be developed for each ministry, and every service.
- (5) Prayer Leader: This person has the primary responsibility for corporate prayer services. Specifically, Prayer Summits, Concerts of Prayer, Prayer Retreats, Wednesday night prayer meeting, and other corporate prayer meetings throughout the week.

Each of these five individuals will take seriously the discovery of these keys to a life of intimacy with God:

- Brokenness and humility are required to enter God's presence.
- Our inner spirit is designed to encounter the tangible presence of God as a NORMAL part of our Christian walk.
- Frequent exposure of our spirit to God's presence and His Word will lead to a life of holiness, obedience and a greater thirst for God.

- The extravagance of God's love is fully revealed ONLY in the secret place of quiet silent wonder and childlike receiving.

PART THREE: A MULTI-YEAR PLAN TO TRANSFORM THE LOCAL CHURCH INTO A HOUSE OF PRAYER

1. Phase one: Prayer and preparation.

- a. Asking God to provide the right people for the Prayer Leadership Team.
- b. Knitting the ministerial staff together in prayer and preparation.
- c. Conducting a Fresh Encounter Leadership Retreat for pastors and Prayer Leadership Team members.
- d. Implementation of the PSMC Leadership Team Checklist.

2. Phase two: Clarifying the vision.

- a. The vision is clarified and more easily communicated.
- b. Collaboration with as many people as possible.
- c. Finding the unique prayer ministry niche for our local church.
- d. Begin to communicate this prayer vision.

3. Phase three: Involvement of the entire core church congregation.

- a. Series of sermons on prayer.
- b. Conduct Prayer Saturated Missional Church Weekend.
- c. Six week follow up study on Desperate For His Presence.
- d. Every member receives training and resources to build a delightful hour alone with God on a daily basis.
- e. Every member carries a vision of the prayer saturated Missional church.

4. Phase four: Becoming the House of the Lord in our City.

- a. Senior Pastor is expanding the Kingdom through friendship and trust with other pastors. Participation in "Village Fire" prayer fellowship with other pastors.

- b. **Shepherding our community together with functional Biblical John 17 unity.**
- c. **Building partnerships in community restoration and compassion based projects. As much as possible with other congregations as full project partners.**

5. Phase five: Renewal strategies.

- a. **Guarding against cluttered programs and excessive activities.**
- b. **Times for resting and refocusing.**
- c. **The pursuit of the tangible presence of God has become the very center of the life of the local church, and heaven is affirming His sustained presence in our midst.**