

There is a prayer revival occurring worldwide. Multitudes of believers are responding to God's call to prayer. One of the responses has been a call to prayerwalking.

Prayer Journeys expand the concept of prayerwalking to include the entire congregation. Prayer Journeys help every congregation develop a comprehensive plan to reclaim the church as a house of prayer.

I. Introduction to a Prayer Strategy

The biblical challenge is for each believer to have a vibrant relationship with Jesus. Prayer is foundational to our walk with Christ. Our fellowship with Christ helps prioritize our lives. It helps us to make time to communicate with our heavenly Father. Prayer, worship, and Bible study are very important disciplines for growing in Christ.

It is important that we do not confuse our relationship with Christ with our service for Christ. Doing things for Christ is not necessarily the same as walking intimately with Christ.

An overall prayer strategy helps a healthy church with the three-fold purpose of exalting the savior, equipping the saints, and evangelizing the sinner. The three parts of a comprehensive prayer strategy are to:

Reclaim a personal passion to pray unceasingly (1 Thess. 5:17), Reclaim the church as a house of prayer with a passion for the lost (Matt. 21:13 and Luke 19:10) Reclaim a passion to intercede for the third great awakening (2 Chr. 7:14).

Biblical prayer is contagious. Humans have an inborn desire to fellowship with their creator. They are not interested in religion but they want to know God. In John 14:27 Jesus talks about the peace that He gives us. The word peace comes from a Greek word meaning "to reunite that which is separated." Humans can only find peace by being reunited with the creator God through His son Jesus and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Pause for a brief prayer time allowing each participant to ask God to revitalize our personal passion for prayer, to make our church a house of prayer with a passion for the lost, and to send revival to our nation.

II. Jesus on Prayer

The gospel of Luke is an excellent guide to the priority of prayer in the life and ministry of Jesus. In Luke 10:1-2 (NASB) Jesus sent out 70 prayer journey teams. It was in this context that the Lord instructs believers to "beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest." In verses 17-19 the prayer teams reported back the divine encounters they had as they prepared the way for Christ's coming.

In Luke 11:1 the disciples responded to Jesus' praying by asking him to "teach us to pray." As Christians seek to become more Christlike, we become more faithful to pray unceasingly. Jesus answered their request with the model prayer and a lesson on persistent intercession. Christians seem to struggle with our self-sufficiency since we only pray, four to six minutes a day. We are taught from childhood that we can take care of ourselves. This is not true with spiritual needs. We need a humble brokenness with absolute dependence upon God through His Son Jesus, in the power of the Holy Spirit.

In Luke 18:1-8 (NASB) Jesus presented "a parable to show that all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart." Satan works hard to get believers to fail by relying on the flesh. If he cannot get that to work, he will let us succeed by relying on the flesh!

The Luke 22:14-23 picture of the Last Supper shows Christ modeling the need to give thanks for our food. Immediately thereafter in verses 39-46 (NASB) Jesus instructs His followers to "pray that you may not enter into temptation." Jesus, too, turns to prayer in preparation for the traumatic events that are about to occur.

Luke 23:33-34 describes the prayers of Jesus as He died on the cross for the sins of humankind. The book of Luke concludes with Christ praying a blessing on His followers as He ascends back into Heaven.

Prayer is essential for followers of Christ to be Christlike. Pause for a brief prayer time to ask the Holy Spirit to make us prayer warriors.

III. Defining Prayer Journeys

A Prayer Journey is the intentional coordinated effort to pray for and share Jesus with every person in a chosen geographical area. It includes prayer walking, biking, driving, flying, and every other conceivable form of transportation. It is flexible and adaptable so every believer can be involved.

Prayer Journeys help believers to balance the importance of prayer in preparation for witnessing and during outreach events. The entire geographic or cultural area must be saturated in prayer. Field Teams also must be sensitive to respond to the divine encounters that occur during the Prayer Journeys.

Those who cannot physically journey with the field teams will pray through church and home-based prayer support teams. The support teams will pray over maps of local and global areas. They will pray for each home on the streets where the field teams are walking and journeying. They will intercede on behalf of church prospects and lost people.

Prayer Pilgrimages take intentional prayer to support missionaries in international areas. Some of these areas do not have evangelical missionaries. Prayer Pilgrimages then become the primary means for the power of God to be released in that area.

Pause for a brief time of prayer for the church and the community around the church. Pray for the Holy Spirit to convict of sin and draw people into seeking the truth. Allow each person to pray for another country the Lord brings to mind. Pray for the missionaries and believers there. Pray for the lost to meet Jesus.

IV. Need and Purpose for Prayer Journeys

The United States is now the fourth largest unsaved nation on earth. Canada only has 122 Southern Baptist churches to reach a population of 2.9 million. Each believer needs to intercede for God to intervene in our communities, our nation, and our world. Prayer Journeys draw us closer to God and gives us a vision for the lost. This intentional prayer releases God's power and love as we agree with His plans for an area. God awaits our prayer to release His power so we are ready to follow through on what He does.

Pause for a brief time to pray for North America. Pray specifically for your state or province and neighboring states or provinces.

V. How to Create Prayer Journeys

Prayer Journeys need to begin in the heart of an individual. God is raising up people all around the world with a passion for personal prayer. These prayer movements have a common goal to reclaim the congregation as a house of prayer with a passion for the lost. Prayer movements have sprung up prior to every great awakening. There is growing anticipation that the twenty-first century will see the third great awakening.

Prayer Journeys are very simple. There is no real structure or formula. The Lord leads individuals and groups to go into communities to pray and witness.

The core group for the prayer journey can be the church staff, deacons, elders, a Sunday School class, a youth group, or senior adults. A prayer journey can be planned as a single event but is most effective when it includes a season of prayer.

Seasons of prayer may range from 40 days, 90 days, or years. There is nothing magical in the length of time. There is power in persistent, intentional, righteous prayer. Ask the Lord to reveal the length of time He wants you to pray for that geographical area.

Include the existing prayer ministries in the prayer journey. Reclaim your midweek prayer meeting to be a time of prayer. Focus the prayer room on praying for every person in the community and beyond.

The Lord is calling people to many different kinds of prayer.

Concerts of Prayer

Prayer revivals

Solemn assemblies

Pastor/staff prayer networks

Houses of Prayer

Outreach Prayer surveys

Pause for a brief prayer time to ask God to make your church a house of prayer. Pray for wisdom and commitment to begin or enhance prayer throughout the congregation.

VI. Preparing for Prayer Journeys

Train the church people in Experiencing God. Teach the "Seven Keys to Prayer" from *Praying Your Friends to Christ*. (See Appendix A).

Train the church in personal evangelism. Several excellent approaches are available through the North American Mission Board (NAMB) and LifeWay Christian Resources: *People Sharing Jesus*, *FAITH*, *Continuing Witness Training*, *Friends Forever*, or *One-Day Soul-Winning Workshops* (available in 15 languages).

Consider mailing a postcard to the target area telling them the date and time your church will be in the community praying for people. (see Appendix B) Encourage them to call or e-mail the church with prayer requests or stop a team member. Eventually there will be Prayer Journey caps, t-shirts, jackets, and car signs. A doorknob hanger and postcard with a tear off return card will also be available.

Prepare to reclaim an area in Christ's name for concentrated prayer.

Give brief, general demographic and cultural information for an area. Make three copies of a map of the area and mark the streets to be covered in the Prayer Journeys. Give a copy of the map to the field team and the support team. Post a copy of the map in the prayer room.

The length of time for the field teams depends on many factors. Usually assign the field teams to be out for one or two hours at a time. Vary that amount of time depending on weather, geography, and number of people.

Instruct the field teams how to respond to divine encounters during the Prayer Journey. Help the evangelists to pray and the pray-ers to evangelize! Provide the field teams with witnessing booklets. NAMB's *Eternal Life* booklet is available in 17 languages.

Provide the Field Teams with an information brochure about the church. Include information on the ministries and schedule. Write the brochure to provide information for people who may have never attended church and are not sure of its purpose or activities. Include the church address and a map to the church. Always include a brief plan of salvation.

Model for the field teams a sample prayer. Most field teams will want to keep moving as they pray. Probably the teams should not stop for more than 30 seconds or so, particularly for the field teams that are driving an area! A sample prayer might be "Lord we pray for this home and for Your spirit to draw them into seeking the truth. I see a boat there and pray that while this family is on the boat that your spirit will prompt them to seek You. I see the children's bicycles and pray that they will grow in the wisdom and stature of the Lord. We pray for the congregation to be able to follow-through with these people and they will be responsive."

As you pray, include Scripture and claim the promises of God (John 15:7). Enjoy the presence of the Lord as you are in His creation. Pray in intercession for each person, home, and business. Pray that each person will meet Jesus and be influenced by a local church. Pray for the believers in that area to be encouraged and strengthened. Pray for a bold witness to touch lives with caring and compassionate evangelism.

You may wish to coordinate your Prayer Journey with other churches in the county or association.

VII. Practice

Begin the time by helping each person prepare for prayer. Read James 5:16b (NASB) "The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much." Read Proverbs 15:29 "The Lord is far from the wicked, But he hears the prayer of the righteous (NASB)."

Explain the purpose of the Prayer Journey. Help each team to understand they are seeking insight from the Lord on how to pray for the homes and people they meet. The field teams walk or travel with eyes open and heads up.

Teach the teams to be sensitive for the divine encounters that God puts in your path while on the Prayer Journey. Take a moment to introduce yourself and your church and explain that you are praying for the community that day. Ask the person if they have a prayer request. If they will let you, pray with them there and follow through with a gospel presentation.

Briefly explain how to share a gospel booklet.

Send out teams of two to three people to pray walk. Send out teams of two to five to bicycle, drive, fly, or ride a train or subway.

Provide the home and church-based support teams with the maps and lists needed.

Assign one or more teams to prayer walk the church. Ask them to go to every room and pray for the teachers. Pray for the maturity and witness of the believers in the class. Pray for unbelievers to come and accept Christ. Pray for the staff, program leaders, and worship leaders. Pray for the Holy Spirit to empower the services and outreach. Pray for the members to reach the lost and introduce them to Jesus.

Pause for a brief prayer time asking God to prepare the community and the prayer journeyers.

VIII. Reporting from a Prayer Journey

Conclude the Prayer Journey with a brief reporting session. Ask each person to share what the Lord did through the Prayer Journey. Note the new spiritual sensitivity and burden for the area and people.

How was God's power released through the on-site prayer? What impressions did they receive about the neighborhoods? What did the contacts ask for prayer? How many converts did the team meet? What is the possible impact on the community and the church? What new evangelistic ministry became evident as needed?

Read Ephesians 3:20, "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think...."

IX. Follow-through

The follow-through for Prayer Journeys concludes with the Second Coming of the Lord Jesus. Follow through includes visiting the homes in the target area. Follow-through with any prayer requests and new converts from the Prayer Journey. Every target area for a Prayer Journey will result in conversions, rededications, and new congregations. Each church needs to be sure that every contact and every conversion from the Prayer Journey is nurtured into a relationship with a Sunday School class/Bible study and prayer group..

Take advantage of the experiences of the prayer journeyers to expand or create a comprehensive prayer plan in your church.

1. An excellent follow-through booklet for new believers is *Beginning Steps: A Seven-day Growth Guide for New Believers* from NAMB
2. Prepare a sermon series on prayer to remind the congregation of the importance of biblical prayer.
3. Encourage individual prayer through any of the resources available.

Consider using *Experiencing God*, *Praying Your Friends to Christ* or "Reclaiming a Personal Passion for Prayer" from NAMB.

4. Launch new prayer emphases through the Sunday School, small groups and Discipleship training.
5. Refocus the Wednesday night prayer meeting into a prayer time for believers, unbelievers and individual spiritual growth.
6. Create praying affinity groups for people in your congregation and community. Affinity groups can be created by ethnic group, profession, or interest. Hispanics,

lawyers, construction workers, letter carriers, etc. can pray specifically and intentionally for others in their affinity group.

7. Develop prayer lists of prospects in the community.

Close in prayer for the communities that were covered. Pray for the new converts, the contacts made and the follow through time.

X. Prayer Journey Seminar

A Prayer Journey Seminar can be held in one day. The training time can begin at 8:00 a.m. and end with lunch. After lunch, the Prayer Journey teams can receive their assignments and return to the church by 3:00 p.m. for the reporting time. The follow-through and intentional prayer will continue for months and years.

A weekend retreat is another option. Begin at Dinner on Friday evening.

Introduce session I

XI. Bibliography and Resources

WWW.NAMB.NET/prayer. The online resource for Prayer strategy and Prayerline. Includes prayer requests, copies of resources, and information on developing personal, church, associational and state prayer strategies. Download a free copy of a NAMB missionary prayer calendar screensaver.

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Scripture quotations marked NASB are from the New American Standard Bible, ©The Lockman Foundation 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977. Used by permission.

Appendix A

Seven Keys to Effective Prayer

Appendix B

Sample Prayer Request Post Card

This sample post card has a return card attached. You can download a free copy of this form from namb.net/prayer/pstrategy, make the needed changes and print it. Please use the person's name when possible. One source is the Mapping Center for Evangelism.

Church name prayer ministry

Address

Phone number

Web page address

Name

Address

Jesus said, "Stay joined to me and let my teachings become part of you. Then you can pray for whatever you want, and your prayer will be answered (John 15:7, CEV)."

(Back of card one)

Dear neighbor, (personalize when possible)

The people of (insert church name here) wish to serve our community by praying for you. There is no subsequent obligation to our church on your part.

Please send us your prayer requests on the attached card, by calling our prayer line at 000-000-0000 or on our online prayer page at Prayer@address. Please let us know if we can serve your family as you seek to know the Creator God through His Son Jesus Christ. We meet for Bible study and worship at 9:30 and 11:00 am and 6pm. on Sundays. We would also like to give you a New Testament and other literature if you would like more information.

We are praying for you!

Pastor John Doe and the church family

(Front of attached card two)

James 5:16b "The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much."