

The Vital Role of the Prayer Meeting

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In this essay, I will provide seven reasons why every biblical church should place high priority on prayer — not just individuals praying but *corporate* prayer. Here are seven reasons that undergird the vital role of the prayer meeting.

I. A Church must place priority on the prayer meeting because *apart from fervent and frequent prayer every ministry in the local church is void.*

Every part of the local church ministry should be regularly, fervently, and specifically offered up to the Lord in prayer. To neglect prayer is to neglect the engine by which the organism of the Church moves. Apart from prayer, every ministry in the local church is void. To neglect prayer is to increase pride. To ignore prayer is to ignite independence. To attempt to worship God in an independent and self-autonomous way is prideful, selfish, haughty, and worthless. Every ministry in every Church should be fervently and frequently brought to God in prayer. Apart from prayer, every church is void and every ministry is in vain.

II. A Church must place priority on the prayer meeting because *it teaches the flock how to biblically pray: taking hold of God and His promises, praying through Scripture, worshiping God & His character & works, & praying for both spiritual & physical needs.*

In a day where the quick pace of life blazes our way and every gadget and technological advance tornadoes our way, we need to be reminded of how to quiet ourselves before God for a length of time and meet with God in prayer. How hard it is to have five minutes without distractions — from the computer, cell phone, email, or meetings. Yet how crucial it is to learn how to still our souls before God and pray biblically. It may not be hard to start praying but it is incredibly hard to remain praying for any length of time. We must strive to ‘take hold of God’ and His promises in His Word. We must pray through Scripture and teach Christians in the Church *how* to pray. Many pray as if God was a genie waiting to hear our request and eager to serve *us* at *our* bidding. No! How prayer ought to magnify God and His supreme character! How prayer should remember God’s mighty works, ways, and deeds as revealed in Scripture! How prayer can present to God the spiritual requests and needs of a flock as well as the physical, temporal needs. Many Christians alive today need training on how to pray and they need someone to model how to pray for them. When the pastors and elders meet with the flock what an opportunity to teach the flock together.

III. A Church must place priority on the prayer meeting because *Jesus said that His House must be a “house of prayer” (Matthew 21:13).*

No other place in the Bible reveals the House of God is anything other than primarily a house of prayer. God's house is a house of prayer. God's Temple is a temple where His people seek Him. The house of prayer should be a place of joyful worship (Isa 56:7). God's house, indeed, is a house of prayer for all peoples — all who come to Him in faith and in truth. In Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the Lord Jesus Christ notes that the Temple worship had become defiled and they made a market out of what is a 'house of prayer' (Matt 21:13; Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46). Other elements are essential for the life, health, and growth of Christ's Church — reading Scripture, preaching Scripture, fellowship together, baptisms, communion — but one element cannot ever be ignored and that is corporate prayer in God's house of prayer.

IV. A Church must place priority on the prayer meeting because the example of church history shows that Christianity spreads & revival comes when God's people corporately and consistently pray together.

When Jesus Christ ascended to the Father after his resurrection and subsequent forty-days on earth, the disciples all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer (Acts 1:14). The early Church was continually devoting itself to prayer (Acts 2:42). The infant stages of the Church as revealed in the book of Acts models that when God's people gather to pray, the Spirit moves, persecution encroaches, and conversions happen. Prayer is the fuel for revival. Prayer is the fuel for the Spirit's great working in the life and ministry of a local assembly. Without the wood of prayer, the fire of a Church will quickly dwindle out and the flame of its light will soon go out.

V. A Church must place priority on the prayer meeting because a church where many worshipers pray is a mighty force that shatters Satan's teeth and breaks hell's sting.

The book of Acts recounts an occasion where Peter sat imprisoned between guards and meanwhile the church was fervently praying for him (Acts 12:5). On that very night, as the church was praying, Peter was miraculously released by an angel and came to where the assembly had gathered to pray (Acts 12:16-17). A praying church is a scourge to Satan. Satan trembles when the weakest saint bends to his knees to pray; how much more when the entire Church gathers to beseech Almighty God! Satan deceptively tells Christians that programs are important and the business that can come in keeping them working well might prevent believers from praying. If this is the case, the programs have kept God's people from prayer. But if God's people focus on prayer and focus on intercession and focus on worship, then hell's sting is broken and Satan's teeth are shattered.

VI. A Church must place priority on the prayer meeting because it gives opportunity for "the many" to give thanks and worship God for how He specifically answered the prayers offered previously.

Paul says that the Church should join in helping him through their prayers so that thanks may be given by many persons for the favor of God which they received (2 Cor 1:11).

The abounding of thanks results in the greater glory of God (2 Cor 4:15). The more Christians that gather to beseech God, to praise God's character, to intercede for weak Christians, to beg for God's grace in a particular situation allows for *all of those Christians* to gather again to thank God for how He answered those prayers specifically, providentially, and perfectly. The more people that gather to pray allows for the more people to gather to praise when in fact God does hear and answer the prayers of His people.

VII. A Church must place priority on the prayer meeting because this regularly reminds the people to trust in God for everything & to remember: “*apart from Me, you can do nothing*” (John 15:5).

To pray is to affirm helplessness. To pray is to bow to God's sovereignty. To pray is to believe. To pray is to humbly ask for God's powerful help. To pray is to tell God, “we cannot do this on our own and we humbly ask for Your help.” Without prayer, no person can accomplish anything of any substance that can profit spiritually. Prayer is the life of the Church. Prayer is the barometer of the health of a Church. Prayer is the gauge by which a Church's health can be determined. How many Christians, how many pastors, how many leaders, how many churches engage in life, ministry, activities, programs, and even sermons without begging fervently, specifically, and frequently for God's help! O the self-autonomous, pridefully independent traps we can fall into if we do not remember to engage in heartfelt prayer. A true Christian prays. A genuine Church prays. To pray is to tell your own soul (or church) that we trust in God entirely for this matter. Indeed, as Jesus Himself said: “*apart from Me, you can do nothing*” (John 15:5).