

Frequently pastors and church leaders express concern because no matter how much they call for increased prayer in their churches, nothing happens. In this pamphlet, we examine seven attitudes or behaviors that may prevent prayer from flourishing in your church

1. **The pastor has to do it!**
(Ephesians 4:11-13)

The main job of a pastor is to “equip the saints” to do the actual work of service. When a pastor leaves the impression that prayer can only take place with a member of the staff present, or even that ordained personnel have some kind of inside track with God, members of the church will be reluctant to pray.

The only way prayer can spread throughout the church and become a way of life is if all the members are participants all the time.

The pastor and staff need to spend their time in prayer and in teaching and empowering others to prayer and prayer ministry.

2. **“We'll pray for you.”** (Acts 3:1-10)

The time of prayer was about three o'clock in the afternoon, and Peter and John were going into the temple.

² *A man who had been born lame was*

I will answer their prayers before they finish praying. -- Isaiah 65:24

being carried to the temple door. Each day he was placed beside this door, known as the Beautiful Gate. He sat there and begged from the people who were going in.

³ *The man saw Peter and John entering the temple, and he asked them for money. ⁴ But they looked straight at him and said, “Look up at us!”*

⁵ *The man stared at them and thought he was going to get something. ⁶ But Peter said, “I don't have any silver or gold! But I will give you what I do have. In the name of Jesus Christ from Nazareth, get up and start walking.” ⁷ Peter then took him by the right hand and helped him up.*

At once the man's feet and ankles became strong, ⁸ and he jumped up and started walking. He went with Peter and John into the temple, walking and jumping and praising God. ⁹ Everyone saw him walking around and praising God. ¹⁰ They knew that he was the beggar who had been lying beside the Beautiful Gate, and they were completely surprised. They could not imagine what had happened to the man. -- Acts 3:1-10

Imagine if, instead of approaching the crippled man and saying, “Rise, pick up your bed, and walk!” they had said,

“We'll pray for you at our weekly prayer meeting?”

People don't need to be embarrassed to do the actual praying in church. When someone needs prayer, we should be prepared to stop right then and there and pray for them. This lets people know that they can pray. It is also a good opportunity for the pastor or the leader to call some folks from the congregation to pray with a person, and demonstrate that prayer is something in which everyone can be involved.

3. **God is a heavenly vending machine**
(Psalm 84:10)

The purpose of prayer is communicating with God. While we can be confident of God's love, attention, and action, we cannot treat God as a vending machine. People will become discouraged when they are made to expect God to get on their program. Focusing on the value of communication with God and of spending time in God's presence builds a relationship with God.

Think of this as similar to friendship. It's great when a friend does something special for you. But your friendship isn't about the gifts you give or the

things you do. Those grow out of friendship. The same thing should be true of your relationship with God.

Be sure to make time for public or written testimonies to the things that God has done.

4. **Failure to recognize gifts**
(1 Corinthians 12:12-30)

It may seem silly to many people, but God's main method of answering prayers is using you. We would like to see God do spectacular things, and we're not nearly so happy when God solves the problem through his own natural laws or by using his people who have committed themselves to service. But God's agenda is different from ours.

Service is an integral part of prayer. You can be part of answering your own prayers. Empowering people to participate in answering their prayers will help grow their prayer lives. Getting everyone involved and recognizing their gifts will help to involve them in prayer.

Prayer and service are not competitors. An active personal and church prayer life will help build our lives of service. An active life of service will encourage us to spend more time in prayer.

5. **Failure to recognize leaders/leaders don't stand up (Exodus 18:13-24)**

People other than the small leadership cadre of the pastor, staff, and a few specially picked people must be involved in leading, both in service and in prayer. If this leadership isn't recognized, or doesn't take its place when it is recognized, the prayer life of the church will be stunted.

6. **Excessive time consciousness (Ecclesiastes 3:1-8)**

There are two errors to avoid in dealing with time. Worship and prayer can take time. Avoiding having a deadline at the end of prayer meetings or times of worship will help people to treat prayer and worship time as more important. Do not force people to ignore the Holy Spirit because of schedule.

On the other hand, we can cause problems with a lack of time consciousness. If one worship service runs longer than planned, it can interfere with the next service, Sunday School, or other programs.

When planning prayer meetings and other worship services, consider the time and place. Sometimes you will need to give a general dismissal while leaving the option of remaining to pray open.

Be especially aware of families with small children. The mother with a small child who leaves early probably doesn't lack interest in worship. She may be hurting because she simply doesn't have the time, and the child is too tired to continue. Take such people into consideration in designing times to pray. Thoughtlessness is itself often a barrier to prayer.

7. **Busyness (Luke 10:38-42)**

Doing good things can often be a barrier to doing the best things. A church that wants to be a praying church needs to keep its focus. Simply creating ministries for the church because they sound good can prevent the church from carrying out its full mission.

In particular, this "busyness" can make the church members so tired doing various good works that they don't have time for communion with God. This doesn't mean that many of these things aren't good in themselves, but God has a mission and priorities for each church, and we need to follow his priorities..

Test all activities of the church against the mission of the church generally and against the specific mission of your church. Carry out those activities that fulfill that mission, and that can be accomplished with the gifts God has given to your particular church.

**This Pamphlet Provided
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**7 Barriers to Prayer in your
Church**

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¹⁶ Always be joyful ¹⁷ and never stop praying. ¹⁸ Whatever happens, keep thanking God because of Jesus Christ. This is what God wants you to do.
-- 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18