

9 Ideas to Increase Attendance at Your Prayer Meetings!

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If you have a weekly/regular prayer meeting and it has dwindled down to the “faithful few,” it’s time to take stock. If you are the organizer(s) of the prayer meetings, it can get discouraging if people are not participating in arguably the most important spiritual act designed by God and so prolifically practiced in the Book of Acts and the rest of Scripture.

First, let’s look at the main reasons why people have either stopped coming or have never come to your prayer meeting:

- 1. They are afraid.** Most people feel very inadequate about their prayer lives. The last thing they want to do is to be in a situation where they might be asked to pray out loud, or in a group with others. Many of these people would rather focus only on their own prayer closet and devotions rather than step into corporate prayer experiences.

- 2. They are intimidated.** When people come to the prayer meeting and feel that there are some people who pray with an authority or eloquence they don’t have, they are less likely to feel comfortable praying in such an environment. Because prayer is so natural to the seasoned intercessors who (often

or usually) plan the meetings, they expect the rest of the church to be like them. Clearly this isn't the case, as many believers haven't been trained to pray in the home or by the church.

3. They are bored. Many people feel that prayer meetings are always predictable and have a mind-numbing sameness to them. Unfortunately, the default mode of prayer for most churches is to pray the "sick" list. Many of the people on "the list" aren't even known to most of the people who are praying for them – they are friends, relatives or acquaintances of people in the church. It is important to pray for those with health issues; however, when that is all we ever pray about, people rapidly disengage. If people don't have a sense of God's presence, and that Heaven is engaged with their prayers, they aren't motivated or excited about coming to a meeting where "nothing happens" and with a belief that their prayers don't matter.

4. They are frustrated. These people know they want something different...something more than the litany of illnesses and personal prayer requests. They feel that prayer should be more than what they have experienced but have no idea what to do to make it better. There are also those who DO know what could be done but don't have a voice in the planning or preparation.

5. They are ambivalent. Because many people are not being trained in prayer in their homes or at church, most don't see the point and view prayer as a religious exercise for the super-spiritual. Prayer has never been an important part of their Christian experience, or they perceive that it really has never "worked" for them. They have not yet learned to pay attention to the One who is on the other end of every prayer – the Sovereign One who sits on the throne!

6. They don't see church leadership actively involved. The engagement of church leadership is also a critical component

of the prayer meetings. If your pastor(s) and church leaders are not proponents and participants at some level in your process of planning and engaging others in the practice of a regular corporate prayer rhythm, it will be difficult to get more of the congregation to come to prayer meetings. If leadership is not very involved, begin praying at once for them! Don't whine, gripe or grumble – pray! Ask God to make your leaders people of prayer who will teach and encourage prayer so that the congregation will follow their lead.

Drawing People to the Prayer Meeting

God created prayer for the purpose of accomplishing His will on this planet through the prayers of His people. It's a divine mystery, but a compelling truth. Let's look at some ways to help people grow their passion for the Father and His plans and purposes for prayer that will translate to more people having greater participation in corporate prayer experiences:

- 1. Help people to encounter God.** Incorporate worship into your prayer meetings, helping people focus on the One Who sits on the throne in Heaven as the object of your love and devotion. It is important for God's people to realize that prayer is intimacy with Him and for His glory! Jesus taught the disciples to pray, "Our Father in Heaven, Holy is Your Name!" People's attention should always be directed towards God before coming to Him with a prayer list or agenda. Help people to move to a "Not my will but Yours be done" mindset. This will help them to remember that ultimately, His will is more important than our own wants, needs and desires. God still wants to hear us express these, because He loves us...but His purposes are so much bigger! Praying in agreement with

God through the power of the Holy Spirit and in the Name of our Lord, Jesus Christ, is ultimately to step into the throneroom of Heaven whenever we pray.

2. **Be welcoming and give people permission to pray at their own level of comfort** – whether out loud or quietly. Don't put anyone on the spot and don't have the unrealistic expectation that people are comfortable praying in groups, etc. It's important that people don't feel intimidated, but invited!
3. **Plan well!** There should be clear leadership and each person walking in should have a good experience with God in community with others. Consider inviting people to a Prayer "Experience" rather than a Prayer "Meeting." If no one takes the time to develop a focused prayer time but instead just asks what prayer requests people may have, the prayer meeting is doomed to stay small.
 - **Start and end on time!** If those attending are never sure when the meeting will end, and feel uncomfortable leaving when the stated ending time comes, they won't put this commitment on their calendar. If you feel the Spirit is keeping you longer than the hour or two you have stated, give those who need to leave permission to do so without guilt! For example, say, "Tonight we are sensing that God may want us to spend more time praying about... Those who need to leave, please feel free to do so. If anyone wants to stay longer, you are invited to."
 - **When people leave** a prayer meeting or experience, they should feel confident that God is already on the move responding to the prayers of His people. Knowing that our prayers are heard and that Heaven is stirred with activity by our kingdom-focused praying is important.
4. **Be intentional about training people in prayer.** People will not give themselves to something they feel inadequate or uncertain about. Consider offering some

training in prayer that will enhance your congregation's growth in communicating and communing with God so that those who feel deficient or poorly equipped to be a part of a corporate experience in prayer can begin to grow in their confidence. Sometimes training can be incorporated into your prayer meetings. A concept of prayer can be taught and then the group can practice the concept in real time.

5. **Talk to God, not one another.** Talking about prayer isn't prayer. Sometimes our prayer meetings involve a lot of offering of requests and very little actual prayer time. Unless some teaching/training is part of your prayer meetings or experiences, keep talking to one another at a minimum.
6. **Be sure to give brief, clear instructions when necessary.** It's very important that people always understand what they are supposed to do. For example, if you are breaking people into groups of 3 or 4 at some point during the prayer meeting, make sure they are clear about when and how that will take place. If you are using prayer stations, the instructions can be written down and placed at each station. If people come in late, make sure someone is there to welcome them and quickly fill them in so they don't feel left out when everyone else is moving around or getting into groups. Feeling uncomfortable is a recipe for not returning.
7. **Pray kingdom-focused prayers:** Try to move away from the "sick/hospital" list default model as your **only** focus and embrace what God is doing!
 - Take stock of what is happening around you...in the culture.
 - Pray what Scripture shows you is on the heart of God...things like unity in the Body of Christ, that we would love one another, praying for workers to be raised

up to spread the Gospel, for our leaders and nation, etc.

- **NOTE:** It is still very important to pray for those who are sick! We need to get better at it than we are. However, prayer meetings are a good way to start training people to pray for those who are sick...and add a kingdom component to their praye

8. **Mix it up!** Don't do the same thing continually! If what you are doing isn't working, try something new!

- **Change your theme/topic each meeting** because people are passionate about different things.
- **Variety and creativity** engages everyone as God has wired us all differently to meet with Him. Use different postures, different modalities (visual, auditory, tactile, etc.).
- **Prayer stations** are a very good way to engage people in prayer and is a great way to incorporate the variety and creativity mentioned above.
- **Pray Scripture!** People need to learn to pray what is on the heart of God. When we pray God's word we are always in His will!
- **Get out of the church building!** Prayerwalk or prayer-drive around schools, businesses, other churches, neighborhoods, etc. Set up a Drive-Through prayer booth in your church parking lot or another place in town where people can drive through and be prayed for!
- **Embrace Youth and Children!** From time to time it is important to bring the younger generations into your times of prayer to learn from and grow with one another in prayer. Make space for the kids and you will be blessed. Plan some prayer meetings that are welcoming for all ages. Prayer stations and prayerwalking are good ways to do this.

9. **Listening and obeying – spend time allowing God to speak to your hearts and DO what He is leading you to do.**

People need to learn that prayer isn't all one-sided. We often rush in with our requests and never spend time hearing from God through His Spirit. Perhaps a good way to spend time listening would be to ask at least one question of the Lord. Here are two examples:

- **Lord, thank You for hearing our prayers. Is there anything You want to say to me/us?** Perhaps you will hear God telling you how much He loves you and is pleased with the time you have spent in His throneroom. Maybe He will give you a word of encouragement for the whole group, or a picture of what He might be already doing in response to the prayers you have prayed as a community. Of course, you may not sense God saying anything at all...and that is perfectly okay. Taking time to listen ensures that you will not miss something He does want to tell you.
- **Father, would You help us to be the answer to the prayers we just prayed?** Then spend a few minutes listening together as a group. Before closing, the leader may ask, "Has anyone heard the Lord expressing anything to your heart?" Perhaps God will direct you to meet a need for those you have specifically been praying for. This could be directed to you individually or as a community. If you have a sense this is from the Lord, obey!

One last suggestion – don't be concerned about the number of people at the prayer meeting. If you worry about who isn't there, you won't be focused on those who are. The prayer movement will grow one person at a time until more start hearing what God is doing. When answers come and as people have good experiences with the Father in prayer and tell others, you will see growth.

As you pray through and incorporate some of these ideas, we fervently pray that your congregation will begin to be more receptive to giving the prayer meeting/prayer experience

another try, and that others will be drawn to be a part of what God is up to through the prayers of His people.

Suggested Resource: Here is a powerful resource handbook by David and Kim Butts to take you step by step into the nuts and bolts of becoming a house of prayer for all nations! It is for leaders and lay people alike!

[PRAYER MINISTRY VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK](#)

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