

7 Topics to Broaden the Prayers of Your Congregation



There is a principle that many Christian parents come to learn as they teach their kids to pray. Kids pray what they know. In other words, when children start learning to pray they will only focus on what they know about, what's in front of them. So they pray for a parent, a grandparent, their pet.

A wise parent will broaden the child's scope of intercession by suggesting something to add to the list: a friend they play with who does not know Jesus yet, a neighbor who is hurting, the missionary who was at church last Sunday, or even personal feelings of emotional pain. This grows both a child's kingdom heart and his or her understanding of what should be prayed about.

Adults are no different. We, too, pray what we know. If an adult believer has never been taught all the uses of prayer or heard someone praying for something different than a personal need in a public gathering, he or she may never have their prayer life broadened.

I grew up in a group that was strong on foreign missions. When I was 10, I remember seeing our congregation in the main worship service, switch gears from the norm, and spend a long time praying for some missionaries from our group who had just been taken captive by the Viet Cong. My prayer horizon was

broadened permanently to include global evangelism and missions.

What is your church doing to broaden the prayer horizons of its people? Is it providing the congregation with a variety of prayer targets in the morning worship service? Topics that will encourage your people to include more kingdom targets in their prayers?

Most churches focus on needs of the congregation if there is any prayer beyond invocation, offering prayer and benediction. While there is nothing biblically wrong with focusing on needs, if that is the only thing you pray about, the only thing your people know about prayer, their prayer growth can be stunted.

Why not provide a variety of prayer, rotating through a number of topics that will stretch your people. Here are some suggestions:

1. Pray for other churches in your community. Pick one each week or month. Besides the prayer statement, this teaches unity and broadens their awareness of the body of Christ.
2. Pray for your community—for God's blessing on it; pray over those issues that the community struggles with.
3. Pray for neighbors around the church. Pray for their salvation, that they would be blessed by the presence of your church.
4. Pray for church plants in your area, or in your district if you are a part of a denomination.
5. Pray for global mission subjects—missionaries your church supports, join prayer efforts for people groups, pray for teams going on short-term mission trips.
6. Pray for our nation! Anytime something has happened that shakes people in our nation, use that as an opportunity for prayer. Pray for government leaders. Pray for spiritual awakening in our nation!

7. Pray for the spiritual growth of your congregation. Use the prayers of Paul to guide you.

Each time one of these prayer subjects is woven into your worship service it broadens the “what they know” of your congregation. Many will add some of these topics to their own prayer lives as they see that they are important to the leadership of your church.

–Jonathan Graf is the president of the Church Prayer Leaders Network and a popular speaker on the topic of prayer.



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