

Seven Topics to Broaden the Prayers of Your Congregation

Here is a principle that many Christian parents learn as they teach their kids to pray: *Kids pray what they know.* In other

words, when children start learning to pray, they focus only on what they know about, what's in front of them. So they pray for a parent, a grandparent, or their pet.

PUBLISHER'SNOTE



A wise parent broadens the child's scope of intercession by suggesting additions to the list: a playmate 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 all the prayer possibilities.

Adults are no different. We, too, pray what we know. If an adult believer has never been taught various topics of prayer or heard someone praying for something different than a personal need in a public gathering, he or she may never experience a full prayer life.

When I was 10, I remember watching our congregation switch gears from the norm in a worship service, and instead spend a long time praying for missionaries who had just been taken captive by the Viet Cong. My prayer horizon broadened permanently to include global evangelism and missions.

Most churches—if there is any prayer beyond the invocation, offering, and benediction—focus on needs of the congregation. Why not provide a variety of prayer targets, rotating through a number of topics that will stretch your people? Here are some suggestions:

1. Pray for other churches in your community. This teaches

unity and broadens the congregation's awareness of the body of Christ.

2. Pray for your community and for God's blessing on it. Pray over those issues that the community struggles with.
3. Pray for neighbors living near the church. Pray for their salvation, that they will be blessed by your congregation's presence.
4. Pray for church plants in your area or in your denomination's district.
5. Pray for global mission subjects—for missionaries your church supports, people groups, or 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.
7. Pray for the spiritual growth of your congregation. Use the prayers of the Apostle Paul to guide you.

Each time one of these prayer subjects is woven into your worship service, it broadens the "what they know" prayers of your congregation. Let your people see what is important to your church leadership.

—Jonathan Graf