

They Will Pray Beyond Needs!

I recently did a prayer weekend in a small-town, fairly traditional church (though the praise band had drums, electric guitar, piano and pipe organ, which was very cool!). First Baptist Church of Jerseyville, IL was embarking on a new outreach adventure that was way beyond anything they had ever done before and their leaders knew they needed a lot of prayer.

So they invited me to come in to fire up their people to begin praying beyond just personal needs, but to pray for First Baptist to be used to spread the gospel through "Dinner Church." They were going to start having a free dinner each Wednesday night in a non-church location where they invite the community to a different kind of church. First Baptist had not tackled such an outreach likely before in its history.

To help fire up their people before I arrived, they had them participate in a 40 days of prayer initiative using *Love to Pray* by Alvin VanderGriend. This church of 125 or so saw 78 people purchase the book to use. The 40 days ended on the Saturday I arrived in town.

Needless to say, when I stepped up to preach Sunday morning the room was palpable with excitement. My message: "Get into the Battle," which challenges and encourages people as believers to start attacking the enemy through prayer in their spheres of influence.

I then taught a joint Sunday school class and a Sunday evening seminar that further pushed home practical ways they could become Kingdom pray-ers who wanted to see Jesus transform their lives, church, and community. Both were well attended and included a number of people who never normally came to Sunday school or an evening service.

The results of all this prayer? Dozens of people are

volunteering to help with Dinner Church—many more people than have ever volunteered to help with an event before.

When they launch the first dinner on September 7th, I know they will see God's hand at work!

Why do I share this?

Because it is an example of what can happen in any church, of any size, of any average age of congregation, if it makes a concerted effort to begin to pray outwardly—for outreach and its community and then begin to make plans for an outreach ministry or event.

Stuck in Personal Needs

When it comes to prayer, most churches are stuck in personal-needs praying. They only use prayer to bless the people of their congregation by lifting up the concerns on their hearts. While that is certainly an important part of the body life of a church, if a church does not teach its people to pray beyond that and provide them the tools to do so, it will likely stay pretty stagnant with no growth in numbers of people or depth of spirituality of its people. So what is the solution?

Give them something meaningful to pray, and equip them with the tools to do it!

If you want people to pray beyond personal needs, you need to engage them to do so. They need something close to them that is important to them—friends/neighborhoods, their church, their schools, their community. If you can encourage them with a church-wide ministry emphasis and provide a guide to help them pray, you will see a number of your congregation get excited about it . . . and will stay with outward praying even after the initiative is over.

Here are a few suggestions of initiatives to use:

Kids and Schools

Reclaim a Generation: 21 Days of Prayer for Schools. What people, whether parents or grandparents, are not concerned today about their kids and the schools they attend. Engage your congregation in an all-church initiative that focuses on kids and schools. While *Reclaim a Generation* can be used anytime, a great time is either before or just as kids in your community go back to school, or before or after See You at the Pole on September 28th.

Neighborhoods and Friends

Be Jesus in Your Neighborhood is a 30-day initiative that focuses on praying for neighbors and developing a prayer-care-share lifestyle (pray first for neighbors, then care for them with acts of kindness, and finally share Jesus with them).

Transformation of Community

Praying God's Word Over Your City is a 40-day devotional prayer guide that looks at 7 key areas for prayer in a community and then offers prayer points and prayers to pray over your city.

Praying for Your Church

Pray the Word for Your Church has 31 Scripture-based prayers to pray over your church, plus a journal for the user to write down the scriptures and thoughts God gives them to pray over the specific ministries of your church.

General Outreach and Intercession

Revolution on Our Knees is a 30-day prayer devotional that focuses on everything outreach—local, nation and world. It will give your people a heart for seeing God's Kingdom purposes released through them and your church.

Love to Pray is a 40-day prayer devotional that teaches people

about the importance of interceding for what is on God's heart. It will get your people excited about praying for more than the needs of people, moving them to pray for God's desires for people. If your church has never used *Love to Pray*, I highly recommend starting with this resource. Thousands of churches have seen it move the hearts of their people toward prayer.

If you want to see your people start to pray for more than personal needs, engage them to pray kingdom prayer toward outreach, and watch what happens!

–Jonathan Graf is the president of Church Prayer Leaders Network, and the author of 6 books on prayer including *The Power of Personal Prayer* and *Restored Power: Becoming a Praying Church One Tweak at a Time*.

If you liked this article, share it with your friends on social media.