

Two Key Areas of Prayer to Grow a Kingdom-Minded Congregation

For a number of reasons, most churches focus prayer both in their services and on prayer lists on the needs of their people.

While it is important to care pastorally for a congregation, and one of the primary ways to care is to pray for what is on the heart of its people, a church that only focuses prayer there will not grow kingdom-minded people. At least not people who pray beyond their needs.

If you want to grow a congregation that has a heart to pray for God's kingdom purposes, that sees the world as its mission field, then you need to put those purposes in front of your people and encourage equip them to pray!

However, people will primarily only pray for what they care about. Wise leaders can use this to their advantage if they select two key areas for prayer—local lost and the community in which you live.

Local Lost

Whether they are active in sharing their faith or not, most believers love to see people come to faith in Christ. And most believers have people—usually family members—who they regularly pray for their salvation. But their prayers are usually general and not very targeted.

Encouraging them to add neighbors and friends whom they come in regular contact with to their salvation prayers, and putting a Scripture-based prayer guide in their hands can equip them to be more focused and successful with their

prayers.

A google search can probably locate some guide to use. The Church Prayer Leaders Network and PrayerShop Publishing offer a number of guides you can use.

Guides: *Paths of Gold*, Five Blessings, Prayers for the Lost, Praying for Your Unsaved Family and Friends

Prayer Initiatives that focus on Outreach: *Be Jesus in Your Neighborhood*, *Revolution on Our Knees*

Here is a simple three step way to motivate people to pray for the lost regularly.

1. Equip them with a guide.
2. Give them a visual reminder. Is there a way to put up a graphic or object somewhere in the church (sanctuary or foyer) where they would see it where they can somehow put the name of the person for whom they are praying? (Use sticky notes or have them write the names on the poster, etc.). If they do this, they will be reminded week after week to pray because they will remember what they did.
3. Prod them gently from the pulpit. A pastor or leader should regularly give a plug to continue praying. Perhaps using a testimony announcing someone who came to Christ who was being prayed for.

Encouraging your congregation regularly to pray for lost friends and family members will make it a habit in their lives.

Your Community

Most people are loyal to and love the city in which they live! They naturally want to see it thrive and are concerned about the areas where there are issues. The prophet Jeremiah challenged the Israelites in exile in Babylon to pray for

their city, because if it prospered, they would prosper (Jeremiah 29:7).

If you provide your people with prayer points, Scriptures, and prayers covering those issues, they will pray.

Guides to Use: Prayer for Schools; America Prays 7 Point Model

Prayer Initiatives that focus on cities: *Praying God's Word Over Your City*; *Seek God for the City*

Here are a few recommendations of some things to do to keep your people focused on praying for your community.

1. Give them the *Praying God's Word Over Your City* prayer guide. This can be used either as a 40-day all-church prayer initiative or people can use the prayer points and prayers over and over as a daily guide.
2. Use the America Prays One Day a Month model. Perhaps find other churches in your community who will join this effort and select other days for their congregations to pray. Many communities can eventually have your city covered every hour of every day of the month if enough churches participate.
3. Regularly include a time in your worship service where your community is prayed for. You can do this in any number of ways. But certainly, rally your people to pray any time there is an event of special concern in your community. (Kids are about to go back to school, a tragedy occurs, etc.).

With a little effort and planning, you can move your people into being more kingdom minded with their prayer topics. You will be amazed at what God does in your midst as this happens.

—Jonathan Graf is the president of the Church Prayer Leaders Network and the author of *Restored Power: Becoming a Praying Church One Tweak at a Time*.