

10 Hazards of the Prayerless Church

I have been a pastor almost 34 years and have been involved in initiating or participated in many local, citywide and national prayer gatherings. God has made it very clear that our first priority as leaders is to spend time with Him before we are sent out to minister (Mark 3:14). The apostle Paul also implores all believers to pray without ceasing (1 Thess. 5:17). In spite of all this, there are many denominational and nondenominational churches that do not have a regular prayer meeting. Consequently, in spite of the many good programs they may have, there is a huge gap in the church.

The following are 10 huge problems prayerless churches have:

1. A prayerless church demonstrates that the leaders are prayerless.

Churches reflect the priorities and lifestyle of the founder/visionary and it's support leadership. If seeking God's face is the top priority of the lead pastor, then corporate and private congregational prayer will be the top priority in the church. When you have a prayer-less lead pastor (I consider praying a few minutes a day prayer-less), then the church will be structured to operate with strategies that lack the aid and unction of the Holy Spirit. When faced with a choice between having a personal focus on meeting human needs or prayer, the apostle Peter chose prayer (Acts 6:4-6). Like Moses, he knew that his first call was "upward" and not horizontal (Ex. 18:19, 33:13, 18). Essentially, the question is, how can we be His witnesses (Acts 1:8) and make Him known if we don't have a deep personal knowledge of Him?

2. They don't hear what the Spirit is saying.

When a church is prayerless, they miss the day of their

visitation regarding *kairos* moments as Jesus said in Luke 19:44.

Churches and leaders who do not regularly wait upon the Lord miss what God has to say to them. If it wasn't for a corporate prayer meeting involving the leaders of the church of Antioch, they would have never heard the Spirit of God commission Paul and Barnabus to their apostolic mission (Acts 13:1-2).

3. There is a lack of true oneness.

The power of the early church was the fact that they experienced oneness among their core disciples (Acts 2:44, 4:32-33). How did this oneness occur? Acts 1 shows how the 120 disciples prayed and waited on God together for 10 days in the upper room. Consequently, the power of Pentecost could not take place without this protracted period of prayer that resulted in oneness (Luke 24:49). Jesus stated emphatically that the world would not believe He was sent without the church walking in oneness (John 17:20-23).

4. There is a lack of divine intervention from intercession.

The Word of God is replete with stories of God's intervention as a result of intercession. The prophet Ezekiel said that God had to destroy the land because there was no one standing in the gap (Ezek. 22:30-31). Aaron stood between the living and the dead with incense (a symbol and or type of prayer, Ps. 141:2) and the plague destroying the Jews was stopped. There are many other instances of divine intervention in the Old Testament too numerous to mention here.

In the book of Acts, we read many instances of divine intervention in response to prayer. In Acts 4:31, the assembly was filled with boldness to preach; God sent the gospel to the Italian centurion (10:4-5); Peter was released from prison (12:5-12); and God sent Paul and Barnabus out as apostles (13:1-2), to name several instances. Consequently, a church without fervent prayer will be a church that is lacking God's

intervention in their affairs.

5. There is a lack of the presence and power of God that sustains ministry.

The Word of God teaches us to be strong in the Lord and in His might (Eph. 6:10-13). Isaiah 40:31 says that they who wait upon the Lord will renew their strength. Without fervent private and corporate prayer, members of the congregation will burn out quickly and not be able to sustain the work of the kingdom.

6. The knowledge of God is superficial.

Hosea teaches us to press on to know the Lord (Hos. 6:3) and that His people are destroyed because of a lack of knowledge (Hos. 4:6). Without regularly meditating upon the Scriptures and communing with God, knowledge of His ways will be superficial and will result in many unnecessary problems in the church. Moses knew God's ways but the backsliding children of Israel only knew His acts (Ps. 103:7).

7. The members are not made into disciples.

I have never seen a person capable of sustaining true spiritual zeal for the Lord without a robust prayer life. Consequently, it is impossible to produce real disciples in the church without effective, consistent corporate prayer. Also, I have never seen a person fall away from the Lord while maintaining a life devoted to prayer. When new believers come into the church, they cannot learn how to pray merely with Bible studies on prayer; they have to participate in prayer gatherings since "the spirit of prayer is caught rather than taught."

8. They don't uncover the enemy's schemes.

Jesus said, "to watch and pray lest you fall into temptation because the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak" (Matt.

26:41). Unfortunately, Peter was sleeping while Jesus was praying in the garden, which left him unprepared for the temptation regarding his denial of Christ. I have found that many times while in corporate prayer, God gives us a burden of what to pray against regarding the schemes of the devil, and we have stopped many an attack. A prayerless church is a sitting duck for satanic deception and temptation.

9. The leaders are building in vain.

Jesus said that He would build His church (Matt. 16). When a church is prayerless, they do not give Jesus the opportunity to lead them, which leaves them depending upon their own ingenuity to build the church. However, unless the Lord builds the house, we labor in vain (Ps. 127).

10. There is a huge gap in the armor of God.

Finally, Paul the apostle said a key component of the armor of God is that the saints continually persevere in prayer for one another (Eph. 6:18). A prayerless church has a huge gap in their armor, making them unprotected during seasons of attack.