

4 Cures for a 'Boring' Prayer Meeting

One of the reasons people don't go to a prayer meeting is that they think it's going to be boring. Here are some ways you and your church can change that ugly perception:

Reason No. 1: Lack of expectation that God will meet with us.

From a biblical perspective, when we gather for prayer, we can be assured that God is in our midst (see Matt. 18:20). But often it is the leader's job to play the role of Elisha with his servant when he prayed, "Open his eyes" (2 Kin. 6:17b). When people expect to meet with God, their attitude will be very different. As George Muller used to say, "God has dealt with me according to my expectation."

Cure: There are ways to increase people's expectation of meeting with God. Here are three examples. Songs of worship can raise our awareness that we are meeting with God and not just going through religious activities. Drawing our attention to Bible passages of God's power with His people can have the same effect. Finally, along a similar line, stories of powerful prayer meetings from history can increase expectation in the room.

Reason No. 2: Lack of anticipation of the importance of the meeting. Many people in our day and age place a high value on time. Things considered a waste of time are considered boring. I think that's part of the reason people, especially men, often skip the prayer meeting for other activities. Overcoming this perception can increase attendance at the prayer meeting.

Cure: One of the ways to help people to see the importance of the prayer meeting is to line up the agenda of the prayer meeting with important items. When the early disciples met for prayer in Acts chapter 4 about the persecution they were

facing, no one would have questioned the importance of the meeting. And the room was shaken. You might make the agenda for your prayer service the Big Hairy Audacious Goals that God has put on your heart for the church. You may put signs around the room with pictures of lost people in need of God.

Reason No. 3: Leaders governed by obligation instead of desperation in calling the meeting. I was a senior pastor for about nine years before starting this ministry back in 2005. There always seemed as though there was more to do than I had time to do it. With that type of environment, it's easy to feel as though a prayer service is just another item on the to-do list. If this is how the leader feels, it will quickly be felt by everyone else and drain the energy in the room.

Cure: There are two steps to overcoming this challenge. Both are important. First, the leader needs to reconnect with their "why." This may be as simple as changing the agenda of the prayer meeting as we talked about in the last reason. The second part is to set up the time and structure of the prayer meeting as the leader so that you want to come. Don't feel obligated to have a morning prayer service if you're a night owl. Maybe to start with a 30-minute prayer service before Sunday morning is better than adding another night to your agenda when you are feeling overwhelmed.

Reason No. 4: No balance of spontaneity and predictability. There is nothing wrong with routine in your prayer service. Structure can provide security to people who are new to a prayer meeting. Knowing what's happening next can even help the veterans of the prayer service feel comfortable to focus on prayer. But structure can also create boredom if we're not careful.

Cure: Hopefully you will see that the first three reasons are foundational to fixing this challenge as well. Let me encourage you as leader to create a simple broad-stroke plan with predictable parts, but don't be afraid to change to

follow the moment. Let the components be like your playbook that gives you the comfort to call an audible with confidence.

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