

4 Prayer Services Most People Won't Attend

Please excuse the length of this while I go on a little rant. One of my most popular posts is 10 reasons that people don't want to go to your prayer meeting.

Part of the reason is that leaders realize that although the prayer service is important it is "the least attended service in the church." Pastors will come up to me and say something like, "People would rather go to a potluck than a prayer service."

However, one of the reasons that people won't come to the prayer service of the church is that they may fall into one of these categories:

1. The national flag Prayer Service. I am not sure if this is a common type of prayer service in other places in the world but some form of these shows up in various places in the United States. These are the prayer services where the main emphasis is praying for the country. From there it moves into some type of prayer for leadership in the government, and from there it becomes a political "prayer" discussion. I am all for praying for the country, but these types of prayer services can easily turn into a political gripe session that is not attractive to new people.

2. The end-time chartmakers prayer service. The end-time charts may not be as popular as they used to be, but the heart of those charts live on in prayer services in churches around the world. They start in a very admirable place of calling for urgency in prayer because the time is short. Any teaching or discussion time in the prayer service becomes a place for people to think about the significance of the latest blue moon. This prayer service is a kissing cousin of the National

Flag prayer service and may become one service in the right occasion.

3. The “Grandma’s got a hangnail so add it to the list” prayer service. This is actually one of the most common types of prayer services. The leader starts the service by quoting the verse, “Where two or three are gathered in my name there am I with them.” From there they go around the room and each person will share a need for prayer. Sometimes someone is assigned to take down notes and will assign them later. One person will push through and share a deeper need, like the fight she had with her husband shortly before the prayer service. This produces empathy from some of the group who counsel and advice the lady. Of course this takes awhile. This means at a point in the service someone says, “Oh we should pray, look at the time.” Prayers are assigned and prayed as people hurry to the close.

4. The gift of intercession expert roundup prayer service. I have written elsewhere about my ideas on the expression the “gift of intercession,” but at this point. I will at least say I am not a fan. This prayer service may be specially designated for “the intercessors” or the format only lends itself to “the super Christians.” Their mantra will be something like, “We are not here to talk, we are here to pray (or storm the gates of heaven or insert your favorite militant prayer phrase).” This prayer meeting may not have a lot of structure. An “open microphone” allows some to get up and pray some impressive prayers. Not any prayer that a new Christian would feel comfortable praying but lengthy and powerful. There is no encouragement to remember Charles Finney’s warning that those who are leading in prayer should pray short prayers.

Now let me be clear, I am not against praying for your country. I believe that we are living in the end times and that does create urgency to our prayer. One of the great benefits of a prayer service is that we can pray for people’s needs. I personally love a prayer service that has a lot of

open time.

That said, my title for this article is prayer services that, “most people don’t want to go to.” Since most prayer services average 5-10 percent of the Sunday a.m. population and the average church in the USA runs about 75 that means the average prayer service has 4-10 people in it. The main four people may love the service because they like that format or are drawn to that cause. They are the ones that ask, “Why don’t more people come to the prayer service?”

Maybe it is time to think a little harder about how we format or structure our prayer service. This will be stretching for those who are used to a certain format. This will also require some passion and teaching so that new people become comfortable with it as they grow in prayer. But the effort can be worth it. I have seen a church go from 5-10 percent of the Sunday morning attendance in the prayer service to 10-20 percent. That simple change transforms the whole spiritual climate of the church!

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