

The Real Reason Many Christians Don't Go to Prayer Meetings

My most popular post of all time is 10 reasons that people don't go to your prayer meeting. When the average church in the United States has about 10 percent of the Sunday morning service involved in prayer ministry, I can see why there is an interest. One of the main assignments that I have when I speak at churches is to help engage and equip people to be a part of the prayer culture of the church.

But since I can only be at about 40 churches a year, let me give you a framework to think about improving your prayer meeting. I realize that what I am about to share may seem simplistic at points, but understand I am trying to give you a way of thinking about this important meeting that is clear. Most churches or ministry struggle between their prayer meeting being a prayer time and a prayer service. Let's see which side of the spectrum your prayer meeting falls.

Prayer time: Having learned the joy of prayer I have often said that you could give me a Bible and a notepad and stick me in a room for 4 hours and I would have a good time. A lot of people who love prayer and have been doing it for a while might say something similar. Throw into the room some other people that I can join in praying with and for as the Lord leads and it can be a great time. If you visit the prayer meetings of some churches, that is what it will look like.

The challenge of this type of prayer meeting is for the person who is not comfortable with prayer and gatherings of prayer. One of my mentors shares about being in a prayer meeting before learning to pray and, after 5 minutes, running out of things to pray for in the big block of prayer time. People who

“struggle” with prayer may show up to this once or visit periodically out of guilt but most will stay away.

Prayer service: Pastors talking to me about their prayer meeting will often express frustration because it becomes a gossip session with prayer requests about grandma’s hangnail. They, or the people who attend, will share with me that there is basically more talking than praying. Or they may talk about a long boring program that feels lifeless and dead.

If those are the two ends of the spectrum, there are three things to work on to allow the prayer meeting to come alive.

Structure – In the prayer time above there is not a lot of structure because the people in the room have built their own structures of prayer through lots of practice. But providing structure, even if it is periodic prayer points, allows new people to not feel alone and allows the group to go somewhere together with God. Determining the amount and type of structure needed is based on knowing the prayer strength of the group.

Passion – One of the challenges of the “boring” prayer service is that the structure has become routine and lacks passion. People comfortable in a prayer time alone have a passion that comes from a vision of God and the power that their prayer can make.

Charles Finney encourages you never have someone lead in prayer whom you know will not pray with passion. Inserting passion and vision into a prayer service engages new people into the life of prayer and keeps everyone’s heart moving towards God.

Move forward together – One of the main goals of a prayer meeting is to touch God together as a group. Going together means that sometimes it will feel slow for experienced people of prayer and it may feel fast for people who are new to your culture of prayer. The job of the leader is to understand this

and manage the pace. There are a lot of creative ways to do that, but I will leave that for another time. For now, just begin to think through the pacing of the meeting.

If you were to look at the prayer meetings you attend, which side of the spectrum do you see most? {eo}

Kevin Senapatiratne is head spiritual pyromaniac for Christ Connection. Kevin speaks around the United States, helping Christians find the fun of prayer. He is the author of Enjoying Prayer. You can learn more about his ministry at .

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