

Growth Points

with Gary L. McIntosh, Ph.D.

Volume 24 Issue 12

PO Box 892589, Temecula, CA 92589-2589

December 2012

Healthy Churches Pray

How do you feel when someone prays for you, or prays for someone close to you? Most people feel honored...valued...grateful...loved. Every member and regular attender in your church should have that feeling...every month.

Healthy churches are constant in prayer. Consider the Apostle Paul's words to the Christians at Ephesus: "For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your

love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers..." (Eph. 1:15-16). Notice Paul's comment about *not ceasing* to pray for those in the Ephesian church. Or, consider Paul's words to the believers in the church at Rome: "Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer" (Ro. 12:12).

Sporadic prayer will not keep (or get) a church healthy. It must be an ongoing lifestyle. Yet few churches provide a systematic way for members to integrate regular prayer into their life, or into the life of their congregation. Usually prayer requests are shared in small groups, children's or adult classes, occasionally in larger church gatherings. But this hit-and-miss approach only includes those who take the initiative-or have the nerve-to make their prayer requests public. And once the event passes, the prayed-for, as well as the prayer requests, tend to be forgotten.

What if each member and

family in your church were prayed for-and knew they were being prayed for-specifically *each month*? What spiritual energy would be generated!

Here's an idea that could transform-and revitalize-your church.

Create a process in which every church member/attende is assured that someone will be praying for him/her, specifically, each month for the next year. The system should effectively: 1) obtain prayer requests, 2) present those prayer requests to God, and 3) track answers to prayer requests. Here are a few ideas as you develop a system that works best for your situation:

"Sporadic prayer will not keep (or get) a church healthy. It must be an ongoing lifestyle."

— Charles Arn

Check out Dr. McIntosh's new website for additional articles.

New website address:

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Healthy churches are constant in prayer.

Pray for every church attendee each month.

Consider appointing a *task force* to design and organize this process. The best way to design such a system is to make a brochure explaining the process to church constituents. This will help you envision and describe the idea, the process, and the benefits. Once you have described it in your brochure, you can more easily design the system on paper. Include answers to the traditional questions of: “What,” “Why,” “When,” “How,” “Who,” etc.

Brainstorm a name for the prayer ministry. One church used the phrase, “I Thought You'd Never Ask,” which was creative. But think of your own.

As you develop your prayer system, consider issues such as, do you want a team of intercessors to pray for all the requests, or do you want to involve a larger number of members/attendees as pray-ers? How do you handle confidential prayer requests? Do you want to track people's prayer requests over a period of months, as well as answers to prayers? Do you want to have one person praying for the same family over a period of months, or have a different person(s) praying each month? What is the best way to invite members to be a part of the process? How are participants contacted each month to obtain their prayer requests, and by whom? How do people “opt out” if they no longer wish to participate? How do newcomers “opt in” during the year?

Consider a month-long focus on “How to Pray” at the outset of the prayer emphasis. This could include a sermon series, adult Bible classes, children's classes, small groups, etc. Topics might include:

- Different kinds of prayer
- How to pray for others.

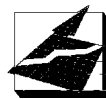
- Are prayers always answered?
- What do we pray for?

The task force should discuss how to manage the program from month to month. It may be helpful to try a 3-month “test run” with some people willing to be guinea pigs, and see what you learn.

Set a date that you hope to launch the program. Remember that things usually take longer than you expect.

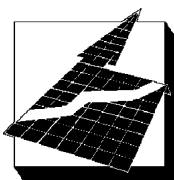
In II Corinthians 1:8-10, Paul describes his brush with death, and then in verse 11 says: “And you are helping us by praying for us. Then many people will give thanks because God has graciously answered so many prayers . . .”

Praying for others is a great way to enhance the spiritual maturity of your corporate body, and individual members.



Adapted from the forthcoming book *What Every Pastor Should Know: 101 Indispensable Rules of Thumb for Leading Your Church* (Baker Books March 2013) by Gary L. McIntosh and Charles Arn.

Growth Points is published twelve times a year. The subscription price is \$16 (Bank or World Money Order) per year. Permission is granted for use in a local church. For other reprint usage, advance permission must be obtained. Formerly published under the title *Church Growth Network*. Copyrighted 2012 ISSN 1520-5096



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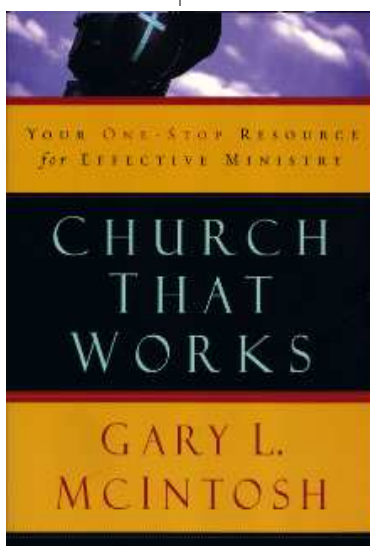
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