

PRAYER MEETING PLAYBOOK FOR PASTORS

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DISCLAIMER

I fashioned our weekly prayer meeting after Jim Cymbala's prayer meeting at Brooklyn Tabernacle. I read his book, "Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire". I also met with two pastors who have personally both attended Cymbala's prayer meeting and then met with Cymbala to discuss the science behind his prayer meeting. Additionally, I sought the counsel of other national prayer leaders and gleaned much from them; in particular, Kie Bowman and Malachi O'Brien.

Also, I share the below information as a fellow student trying to figure out how to lead prayer meetings, rather than as an expert. I have only personally led 15 weekly prayer meetings and our congregation has only had 17 weekly prayer meetings. I have also only led one three hour prayer meeting on a Friday night and one twelve hour prayer meeting on a Friday night. All this to say, I'm still learning how to lead a prayer meeting.

CORE VALUES OF A SPIRIT-FILLED PRAYER MEETING

Building a culture of corporate prayer in the church requires principled conviction by the Senior Pastor

- Prayer meeting cannot be delegated to another leader. If the Senior Pastor is not "all in", a culture of corporate prayer will never sprout.
- I believe this is what the apostles meant in Acts 6:4 — "we will devote ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word." The Senior Pastor must be as zealous about prayer meeting as his Sunday sermon.
- The Senior Pastor must be the biggest advocate of corporate prayer out of the entire congregation. The Senior Pastor must lead almost all of the prayer meetings.
- I give almost a full day's attention to planning and preparing to lead weekly prayer meeting.

Advanced personal preparation by the senior leader of the prayer meeting

- The one leading the prayer meeting must show up at prayer meeting already personally in tune with the Lord.
- I find I am at my best leading prayer meeting if I have personally spent the day in an attitude of prayer and fasting.

Public humility by the senior leader of the prayer meeting

- In our humiliation is Christ's exaltation. He must become more, I must become less.
- I have learned that the more I'm willing to publicly acknowledge from the stage that I do not fully understand how to lead a prayer meeting, the more the Lord manifests his presence. And the more I publicly say from the stage that if the Lord manifests his presence it will be in spite of me, the more the Lord manifests his presence.
- Say the name of Jesus Christ a lot and publicly give 100% of credit to him for every good thing in the life of our church – make sure it is coming from my heart and not simply my lips. There cannot be one ounce of pride or boasting in me; I must publicly from the stage give all credit to Jesus Christ for any good thing happening in our church. Christ alone.

Plan out prayer meeting very well, then be ready to abandon the plan and follow the Spirit's leading the moment prayer meeting starts

- "In his heart man plans his ways, but God directs his steps."
- It seems that a willingness to seek and follow the Spirit's leading in the moment is important to the Spirit's willingness to manifest the presence of Christ.
- I rarely, if ever, end up following the pre-conceived plan for a prayer meeting. There are lots of "on the fly changes".

Radical obedience to the Spirit is essential

- The senior leader of prayer meeting must be willing to do and say whatever the Spirit prompts in the moment: pray, read a Scripture, lead a song, give a biblical exhortation, call on someone to pray, sit in silence, address any subject.

Constant change throughout prayer meeting is essential to building and maintaining energy in the room

- The people are tired and distracted from a long day's work. They are doing well just to be physically present at the prayer meeting. The senior leader of the prayer meeting must drive the energy level.
- At all times pay attention to the energy level in the room, the moment I sense it dipping, I change things up:
 - Change with whom they are praying: alone vs. in small groups
 - Change the volume with which they are praying: silently or out loud
 - Change the posture with which they are praying: sitting, standing, kneeling
 - Change the subject about which they are praying: give them a different subject to pray about than the one they are currently praying through
 - Change the segment: if they are praying and energy is dipping, lead them in a song or read a Scripture passage or launch into a brief biblical exhortation from a specific passage of Scripture or share a praise report
 - Don't hesitate to exhort them to pray harder: "I don't sense we are fully engaged in what we are praying through here, I need you to focus your mind, body, and heart on this matter of prayer"; "I feel like our minds are wandering, we need to

concentrate”; “prayer is work, come on, push yourself to pray through this matter”.

Do not accept audible prayer requests from the worshippers — it really kills the mood.

We provide the prayer requests from the stage to the worshippers. If someone wants prayer for a personal matter, they can pray for it during the appointed segment in prayer meeting, or they can get in the 1-on-1 line.

PRAYER MEETING COMPONENTS

- Singing (only sing songs they know well from Sunday mornings; do not introduce new songs in prayer meeting)
- Scripture readings
- Brief (3-4 minute) bible exhortations
- 1-on-1 prayer line, including anointing oil
- Specific reports of answered prayer
- Videos – a people group receiving the Bible in their language for the first time; a missions video; a testimony from a church member
- Lord’s Supper

PRAYER MEETING STRATEGY

Two key steps of every prayer meeting:

1. Find God (seek God until he manifests his presence)
2. Once you find him, stay in his presence and don’t lose him by saying, thinking, or doing anything that grieves him. Rather, be ultra-sensitive to his leading.

Finding God: I generally follow this pattern:

- **Start prayer meeting by exalting Jesus Christ through reading a passage of Scripture about him** (ie: Hebrews 1, Col 1:15ff, Phil 2:5-11, John 1:1ff, Rev. 9:9-11)
- **We’ll sing two songs they know very well.** One lively and energetic (ie: We Are Here For You) and one slower and reflective (ie: Be Thou My Vision). These two songs are led by our worship leader. I step off the stage for these songs and stand on the front row and am “all in” worshipping.
- **Share a brief report of specific answered prayers.** I’ll choose 3-4, specific really big things God has done in the vein of, “God is doing these things in our church family and homes in response to prayer meeting. Prayer meeting is working. We must keep praying together. These things are just the first drops of a thawing icecap that when fully thawed will be a rushing river of miracles of God in our church family.” This segment fires them up if the praise report is of very specific actions of God (not general) and short. A long praise report actually kills the mood.

- “Specific actions of God, not general”: Say, “since we started prayer meeting, _____ people have been baptized”. Do not say, “since we started prayer meeting, I’m sensing a greater hunger for the bible in our church.” Say, “last week we prayed that 3 people would be baptized this past Sunday and 5 people were baptized!”. Do not say, “last week we prayed a lady’s daughter would be saved and the daughter seems more open to Christ.”
- Make sure you give all glory to Christ; zero glory to the Senior Pastor. Christ alone.
- **I lead my people through a bible paradigm of “finding intimacy with God” – ie:**
 - I will ask them to turn to Matt. 5:3-6 and lead my people through the first four Beatitudes: humility, repentance, surrender, seeking first the Kingdom of God.
 - I will ask them to turn to the Lord’s Prayer and show them that before we can even get to “hallowed be your name”, we have to first pray our way into the deep personal intimacy of “our Father who art in heaven” – it is only through the Spirit filling us and at work within us that we can cry, “Abba, Father” (Gal. 6:4), so we must find renewed filling of the Spirit before we can begin a conversation with God about our needs. Then I’ll lead them through the cycle of humility-repentance-surrender-Christ above all.
 - How long do I stay on each step of the cycle through the Beatitudes? As long as it takes for me to “feel the room” and sense they are ready to progress to the next step. Sometimes this whole cycle takes 5 minutes and sometimes 20 minutes.
 - Sometimes I lead them in prayer through one of the 4 steps in the cycle, and sometimes I just prompt them in each of the 4 steps.
 - Sometimes I’ll throw out specific prayer items for them to think about during one or more of the steps: ie: under repentance: “are you holding a grudge? Are you bitter at someone? Is there someone you are refusing to forgive?”
- **Once I sense God’s presence manifesting in the room, I’ll either:**
 - Announce him with a really big smile: “ok, y’all, he is here, we have found him, I can sense him with us, now let’s be really sensitive to his leading and not lose him.”
 - Or I’ll say, “y’all, he is here, let’s pray this prayer together” and launch into leading song such as “I Love You, Lord” or The Doxology or “Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus” or “Father, We Love You, We Worship and Adore You”, etc

Stay In His Presence: I Follow This Pattern Laid Out In The Lord’s Prayer:

- **Talk to God about the things he wants to talk about first**
 - Ie: “Hallowed be your name” —> “as it is in heaven” comes before “give us this day our daily bread”
 - A sample of the things God wants us to talk to him about:
 - “Hallowed be your name....on earth as it is in heaven”: death to self that we might live for his name, for his name to become known in all the earth, etc
 - “Your Kingdom come”: I have them turn to the Great Commission in Matt. 28:18-20 and pray through the three components: evangelism,

bible, prayer (“and lo I am with you always...”). We pray for our evangelism and missions ministries, we pray for our preaching and teaching, we pray for our praying and fasting; we’ll pray about biblical values in our city and nation – for example, one night we might pray about abortion or racial reconciliation or orphan care

- “Your will be done”: that our church may have a heart of submission to Christ and the Scriptures; that our church would pursue Christ’s specific vision for our church family; that we would each pursue his will for our lives; etc
- “As we forgive those who sin against us”: we pray about our bitterness, our grudges, forgiveness, our willingness to live with injustice, love of neighbor, love of enemy, unity in our congregation, humility in our members.

- **Then talk to God about our needs**

- This is where I open the 1-on-1 line: I announce the 1-on-1 prayer line is open, I call our pre-designated prayer leaders to stand across the altar area facing the congregation, I exhort people to get in line for 1-on-1 prayer. I remind them anointing with oil in accordance with James 5 is available in the 1-on-1 line.
 - “Do you need someone to pray with you for a miracle? Maybe physical healing from a disease, maybe healing from a mental health disorder, do you need a demon cast out, do you need a job, do you need a house to sell, do you need your marriage healed, do you need your infertile womb opened, do you need the hard heart of an adult child softened, do you need freedom from a pornography addiction, do you need to be purged of PTSD from an abortion or an abusive relationship or divorce, do you want deliverance from same-sex attraction, then you come.”
- Simultaneously, while the 1-on-1 line is going, I lead the main group.
 - “Those of you still in the main group, this is your chance to ask Christ for what you need. What miracle do you need from him? Ask him, he is here. You can pray out loud, you can pray silently, but call out to him with desperation and urgency. He loves you.”
 - I’ll throw out miracles to pray for as the Spirit lays them on my mind.
- Oftentimes during this segment I’ll also get a song going such as “Something Beautiful, Something Good” and my worship leader will lead it with only his guitar playing very softly and sing it 5-8 times in a row while people are praying for miracles.
- So at this point, it’s a flea market scenario in my worship center: people are in the 1-on-1 line and those prayer leaders are all praying out loud, the main group is in their seats calling out to God, my worship leader and some people in the room are singing a song.
- I keep exhorting people to get in the 1-on-1 line as needed. The 1-on-1 line is open the entire rest of prayer meeting.
- When I sense the energy dipping from people praying for personal miracles, then I start them into praying for other things we need. At this point I either leave the

main group praying individually and I start calling out prayer requests or I tell them to get in groups of 5-7 people and bunch up tight and I start calling out prayer requests and tell the groups, “someone in the group just start praying for whatever prayer request I call out”. In either case, I only allow 45-70 seconds per prayer request before throwing out the next request. The 45-70 seconds is dependent on energy level in the room. Sample prayer requests in this segment:

- Glenn Miller, our oldest member is in hospice now, he just wants to go home to heaven. He loves the Lord so much. Pray he dies tonight.
- Pray for the king of our land, President-Elect Joe Biden and his running mate, Vice President-Elect Kamala Harris. Pray for their salvation. Pray for them to “kiss the ring” of the King of kings (Psalm 2). Pray for God’s blessing on their families. Pray for them to look with favor on the Christian community. Pray for God to put Joseph’s in Pharaoh’s palace, Esther’s in Xerxes’ palace, Daniel in Neb’s palace.
- We have a couple in our church getting a divorce, pray for the restoration of their marriage.
- Pray that 3 people will be saved and 2 people baptized this coming Sunday in our services.
- Pray for our members still sheltering in place at home and worshipping online. It is very hard to follow Christ while physically separated from the flock. Pray for God to give these members of our church a special grace.
- Pray for Kirk Vaughn, our church member running for Huffman ISD school board. Pray he gets elected. Pray he has thick skin. Pray he has wisdom and courage and love.
- Our missionaries in Mozambique have sent in a prayer request: [share prayer request]

Close out prayer meeting

- First of all, the prayer meeting will go by MUCH MUCH MUCH faster than you anticipated.
- Try to end it before your people want it to in order that they leave with positive vibes and not negative vibes. Leave them wanting more, not less.
- When we first started prayer meeting, I had a hard 7-8pm time frame, but as my people have grown into it, we now go 7-8:20pm and at 8:20pm they are not ready for me to shut it down, but I do anyway.
- I have a 6 minute closing segment:
 - 2 mins: me thanking them for coming, me exhorting them to come back next time, me leading a brief closing prayer.
 - 4 mins: we sing a big closing song led by the worship leader. Again, this is a song our congregation knows very well. Do not introduce new big songs at prayer meeting.

HOW WE LAUNCHED PRAYER MEETING

I preached a Sunday morning sermon (Isaiah 32) to share what I believe is Christ's calling for our congregation to fast and pray for a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

- Show them Christ in the text (vs. 1-5)
- Show them the call to fast and pray until we receive a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit(vs. 9-15a)
 - "tie sackcloth around your waist" — fasting/prayer — Is. 58:5ff
 - "Until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high"
- Show them the benefits of a fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit (vs. 15b-18)

I was bold and prophetic in calling them to start praying and fasting together on Tuesdays and as many as possible to end the day in our worship center in a prayer meeting that I would lead. Do not be subtle. I stopped short of demanding they come. But I used phrases like, "this is a matter of life and death", "we desperately need a miracle from God if our church family and nuclear families are going to live the abundant life in this new Covid, protest-filled, economically unstable world", "I am all in on prayer meeting as your pastor, I am staking our church on it, I am as zealous for prayer meeting as I am Sunday morning worship, we need both."

At our second prayer meeting, **I handed out free copies of "Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire"** to every teenager and adult who showed up. This was in an effort to give them a vision for what prayer meeting could become.

I bring up prayer meeting every single Sunday morning from the stage.

On the 9th Sunday after launching prayer meeting, **we did prayer meeting in our Sunday morning worship services in place of our regular service format** in order to expose our entire church to prayer meeting and sell the vision.

(At our first prayer meeting, attendance was 7% of Sunday morning inperson attendance. At our second prayer meeting, 13% of our church showed up. At our third prayer meeting, 40% of our church showed up. At our 7th prayer meeting, 63% of our church showed up.)

We pray all this for the Glory of Your Name, Father, and Your Son, Jesus Christ.

- “For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.” (Rom. 11:36)
- “To you be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever. Amen.” (Eph. 3:21)
- “May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us that his way may be known on earth, his saving power among all nations. Let the people’s praise you, O God, let all the peoples praise you.” (Ps. 67:1-3)

ANSWERED PRAYERS:

1. On Tuesday, 9.1, we prayed for a couple to step up and lead college ministry. Zero advertising in our church of the need. The next day an outstanding couple in our church called the church to say God was calling them to lead our college ministry and to inquire of the application process!
2. On Tuesday, 9.1, we prayed for a Men’s Ministry Director. Zero advertising of the open role. Two days later an outstanding man in our church John Frazier contacted us to say he feels called by God to be our men’s ministry director.
3. At our first prayer meeting, attendance was 7% of the church. We prayed it would grow to 10% of our church gathering every Tuesday night to pray. At our second prayer meeting, 13% of our church showed up. At our third prayer meeting, 40% of our church showed up!
4. On Tues, 9.8, a family got in the 1-on-1 prayer line to request prayer for God to show them what local church to join. They left their church of 20 years some months ago and have been looking for a new church and asking God to show them which one. They have had no response from God. Someone invited them to our prayer meeting. After receiving prayer in the 1-on-1 line, they returned to their seats in the main group...as soon as she sat down in her seat, the wife received a text message from a lady at their former church strongly recommending a sermon to them and attaching the sermon link: one of my sermons! How much more clear could Christ have been in calling the Sarans to join NEHBC.
5. On Sept 1, we had 2 people registered for baptism. We prayed that by December of 2020 we’d be baptizing at a rate that would annually equal 1 baptism for every 10 people in our church. Within three weeks we had already baptized the number of people that would annually equal 1 baptism for every 3 people in our church!

6. On Sept 15, a family got in the 1-on-1 line. They had plans to spend the upcoming weekend with extended family with whom there had been years of tension and conflict. No strategies for creating peace in the family had been successful. The family in the 1-on-1 line requested prayer for God to bring peace to their extended family. During the weekend visit, there was a big discussion that led to repentance, reconciliation, and the restoration of the extended family after years of conflict!

PRAYER REQUESTS:

[During the prayer time, I'm on stage with the below info. I am in real time asking the HS what items He wants us to pray for, and whether I should direct the people to pray by themselves silently, pray by themselves out loud at the same time, circle up in groups of 4-5, or I should lead a prayer segment, or I should call on someone in the audience to lead a prayer segment. I keep changing it up through the prayer time to keep things interesting and their blood flowing and their concentration level up. While they are praying, I exhort them to pray with more desperation/urgency, or I quote/read applicable verses to them, or pray on top of them while telling them to also keep praying. It can sound like a flea market in the room as we are crying out to God.]

This Coming Sunday:

- _____ salvations (pray for a specific number of salvations this coming Sunday)
- _____ baptisms (pray for a specific number of baptisms this coming Sunday)

Evangelism:

- _____ salvations b/w Sept 1 – Dec 31
- _____ baptisms b/w Sept 1 – Dec 31

Prayer:

- _____ people to fast every Tuesday this fall
- _____ people to attend prayer meetings on Tuesday nights this fall
- For God to give us his grace to pray together this fall.

Discipleship:

- For God to give the members of our church a fresh hunger and thirst for righteousness
 - "Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things will be added unto you." Matt. 6:33
 - "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be satisfied." (Matt. 5:6)
- For God to deliver our members from conspiracy theories, false doctrines, and human wisdom.
 - "Have nothing to do with irreverent, silly myths. Rather, train yourself for godliness." (1 Tim. 4:7)

- “¹⁴ that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ” (Ephesians 4:14-15)
- Sunday morning in person attendance to reach 100% of pre-pandemic by December
- _____ member units to complete the membership process b/w 9.1 – 12.31
- Avg _____ 7-12th graders on Sunday mornings during fall

NEHBC Vision:

- Say: we want to see every single man woman and child in NE Houston being disciplined in a healthy local church.
 - Show them the vision for creating a net of churches for fishing for men in NE Houston: NE Quadrant → plant 10 anchor churches (1000+) → recruit as many churches <400 in NE Houston into our coaching program.
 - Hence our name: NEHBC!
 - To birth next ch plt in 2021
 - Influence in unhealthy NE churches running <400

Missions:

Goal for our annual big missions offering in December: \$_____

Morocco:

- (Carl) to have 40 hours of sharing time in Sept on top of running the lang ctr.
- 2-3 female university students to start meeting with Laura (Beth) for bstudy.

EBC:

- Sr Pastor search
- Longterm location (New Caney HS not reopening to them)
- Interim Sr Pastor couple – David and Barbara Lino

CFC:

- Sr Pastor couple - Tim and Sharon Wheelless
- Harvest Sun: 9.13 (this Sun!): 12 lost people to attend; 5 lost people to be saved

FM:

- 50 salvations before Dec. 31
- Reopening pre-pandemic food pantry and clothing closet

Kingdom Leaders:

- ³⁷ Then Jesus said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few;³⁸ therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” (Mark 9:37-38)
 - 5 new volunteers in music and AV ministry

- ¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds^[c] and teachers,^[d] ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,
 - Nowhere near enough men in our nation are surrendering to be sr pastors and going to seminary to get trained. We are 10 years being a nation without enough pastors.
 - I am praying that in the next 5 years, 10 men surrender to a call from God to become a Sr Pastor and start seminary.
 - Pray that by Dec 31, 1 new man in our church surrenders to a call from God to become a Sr Pastor.
 - I am praying that in the next 5 years, 5 family units surrender to a call to overseas missions and move overseas to a UPG.
 - NE Houston church planter #3
 - EBC Sr Pastor

Miscellaneous

- Kirk Vaughn (church member) will be elected to Huffman ISD school board
- 1 NEHBCer to run in May 2020 Humble ISD school board elections
- Daphne Jones — Navy boot camp
 - Mandatory Covid quarantine: 9.10 – 9.24. Then 10 weeks basic training.

Our Nation

Songs: (9.1)

- Man Of Sorrows
- How Deep The Father's Love
- It Is Well
- In Christ Alone

Songs: (9.8)

- How Great Thou Art
- He Will Hold Me Fast or His Mercy Is More (Shane and Shane)
- Is He Worthy? (Shane and Shane or Andrew Peterson)
- All I Have Is Christ (I know the Sovereign Grace version, but I'm not married to it.)

Songs: (9.15)

- Come Thou Fount
- In Christ Alone
- To God Be The Glory (Hymn led in a lively manner)
- Even So Come

Songs: (9.22)

- Grace On Top Of Grace
- Nothing But The Blood
- On Christ The Solid Rock I Stand
- To God Be The Glory