

## Praying on Purpose

Franklin Church of Christ  
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January 7, 2007  
AM Assembly

### Introduction:

**Acts 11:21** explains the Antioch church grew because the hand of the Lord was with them. From that we recognize if our congregation will have success, we have to seek the hand of the Lord. We can only do that through prayer. What success do you see happening for the Franklin church in 2007? Understand this, there will be no success without supplication. Our plans are pointless without prayer. Prayer has been very important to this congregation. We have made it part of everything we do. We have increased our number of prayers in every assembly. We have special assemblies for prayer. We make prayer a weekly part of our evangelism. Now it is time for us to take the next step in our congregational prayer lives. In **Luke 11:1**, Jesus' disciples said, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." There is an underlying principle regarding prayer taught by this request. The apostles understood proper prayer does not happen by accident. The apostles wanted to be *taught* to pray like Jesus. They knew if they were to pray meaningfully and deeply like Jesus, they had to pray on purpose. If we are going to take the next step of growth in our prayer lives, we must learn to pray on purpose. As we talk about this, please recognize I am not talking about our own individual prayer lives. I am talking about our lives as a praying part of this congregation. Learn with me how to pray on purpose and watch in 2007 how it impacts this congregation.

### Discussion:

- I. Purpose to pray.
  - A. **1 Thessalonians 5:17** says to pray without ceasing. We always intend to pray. But let's face it, prayer just isn't one of those pressing things we have to do right now. It is not as pressing as getting to work on time. Or getting the kids' homework done. Or having supper ready when your spouse gets home. Or having the house cleaned before the guests come on Friday. Or watching our favorite TV show. Thus, we always mean to get to prayer. Every once in a while we do get to it. But most of the time it gets put off for a more convenient time.
  - B. No one prays on accident. If we don't purpose to pray, we won't. We need to have times for prayer. Consider **Acts 3:1**. The apostles were going to the temple at the ninth hour (3 pm), called the hour of prayer. I have no doubt this refers to a Jewish custom. However, they knew what they were going to be doing at 3 pm. They were going to be praying. Consider Daniel. Three times a day, he knew exactly where he was going to be—facing Jerusalem, praying (**Daniel 6:10**). Interestingly, his co-workers also knew exactly what he was going to be doing. Think about our Muslim friends who have five scheduled prayers per day. Is it any surprise they think we are infidels?
  - C. Think about how many things we schedule and refuse to miss. We all schedule away at least 40 hours per week to work. We don't schedule anything during those times because we see making money as important. If we are involved in organized sports, scouts or clubs, those times are scheduled and we keep them protected. Anybody who ever asks me about my schedule, I say, "I'm pretty flexible, but I can't do anything on Wednesday at lunch time because I have Toastmasters." How many of us won't schedule anything on Monday night or Sunday afternoon because of football? How many of us have a favorite tv show we schedule around? Prayer is important enough to schedule and keep everything but dire emergencies from getting in the way. We need to have our "hours of prayer" that we just know are for prayer. If you need to, get an accountability partner. Peter and James were going together to pray. Perhaps it will help you find a partner with which you can pray on a regular basis. Whatever you do, make sure you purpose to pray or it just won't happen. Keep in mind, Satan doesn't want you praying. If you don't do it on purpose, he will make sure you don't do it on accident.
  - D. No doubt, there will be times when the crowds press in and schedules go awry. When that is the case, we need to be like our Savior and make time, stepping out of the hustle and bustle, get away from the crowds and slip off to pray (**Luke 5:15-16**). Finally, though we have scheduled times of prayer, we must not forget there are times when it is just right to pray right then and there. We need to quit being people who constantly promise to pray for others and become people who stop right then and there and pray. When someone tells you about some problem. Don't say, "I'll pray for you." Say, "Let's pray about that, right now."

- II. Pray our congregation's purpose.
- A. Now that you have purposed to pray. What should you pray? No doubt you have heard the acronym A-C-T-S—adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication. A friend of mine offers another great outline. You begin, "Dear God, you are..." and praise God for everything He is. Then, "Dear God, you..." and talk about what He has done. Then you say, "Dear God thank you, for..." Finally, you say, "Dear God, help ...," and offer your petitions. As an additional point, I think you should add a specific aspect of petition saying, "Dear God I have..." confessing your sins, followed with "Dear God forgive me for..." These are great outlines for your prayers. But what do we need to pray about as a praying member of this congregation?
- B. Remember, we are not just talking about your personal prayer life. We are talking about you as a praying member of this congregation. We need to pray this congregation's purpose. Our elders have summarized our purpose in the following statement:
- Our mission is to glorify God (Ephesians 3:20-21).*  
*We accomplish this mission by ...*
- 1)...providing a family atmosphere of love and unity (**Ephesians 4:1-3**).
  - 2)...nurturing and supporting each member (**Ephesians 4:12**).
  - 3)...growing to spiritual maturity (**Ephesians 4:13**)
  - 4)...living devout lives of godly influence (**Matthew 5:14-16**).
  - 5)...using our talents faithfully (**I Peter 4:10-11**).
  - 6)...bringing many souls to Jesus Christ (**Matthew 28:19-20**).
- C. We need to pray this purpose. How often do you pray that the Franklin church glorifies God? How often do you pray that you as an individual member glorify God and help this congregation glorify God? We need to pray for our mission and each of its subordinate goals.
1. We need to pray for the love and unity of the congregation, using **Ephesians 4:4-6** as a model. We should pray that we be one body, following the guidance of the one Spirit, resting on only one hope of our calling, submitting to the one Lord, upholding the one faith, proclaiming the one baptism, glorifying the one God and Father of all.
  2. If we are committed to nurturing and supporting each other, then we need to spend time praying for each other. Have you ever taken your directory and just worked through the list, praying for the special needs you know. If you don't know any specific needs pray for the general blessings we all need. We have already said we are committed to a family atmosphere. As we pray for each other, we should follow the principle of **I Timothy 5:1-2**. Praying for the older men as fathers, the older women as mothers, the younger men as brothers and the younger women as sisters.
  3. We need to pray for this congregation as a whole and each member that we grow to spiritual maturity. **Ephesians 4:15-16** demonstrates both aspects of this. We want the whole body to grow to maturity. But that happens as each member grows supplying more and more to help the body grow as a whole. How much time do we spend praying for individual members to grow and add to the strength of this congregation?
  4. Every one of our members in the world every day. We work, play, visit and associate with those who are of the world. Satan is looking to devour us and ruin our influence. Do we ever pray specifically for God to strengthen our influence? We need to pray that this congregation and each member has a godly influence of salt and light in our community. We need to pray that no one lives in order to be seen of men and glorified by them (**Matthew 6:1-18**). Rather, we want to be seen by men so they will glorify God.
  5. What talents do you have? What talents do the brethren around you have? We need to pray that each of us fill our roles, using our abilities to serve one another and glorify God. **Romans 12:4-8** can be a model for us as we pray for those who have these gifts and others. If you know of a member who has a gift that he or she is not using to glorify God, pray for them to grow and participate.
  6. We need to pray that God will help us plant and water the seed (**Luke 8:11**). We need to pray that God will send out workers into the harvest (**Matthew 9:37-38**). We need to pray that God will cause the growth (**I Corinthians 3:6**). We need to pray that those who come to Jesus continue steadfastly in the faith (**Colossians 1:23**).
- D. If we want the Lord's hand to be with us, we need to pray our congregation's purpose.

III. Pray purposefully.

- A. As you pray specifically for the congregation, don't let your prayers be hit or miss. We have already talked about planning your prayer times. Now plan your prayers themselves. Don't just pray whatever happens to come into your head that day. Pray purposefully. Why not schedule the aspects of the congregation and its work you are going to pray about each day.
- B. Consider the following possible schedule:
  - 1. *Sunday*: Praise and thanksgiving to God (Use the psalms to help accomplish this).
  - 2. *Monday*: Pray for our shepherds (Use the qualification lists in **I Timothy 3:1-7** and **Titus 1:5-9**. Another great passage is to contrast with the shepherds of Israel in **Ezekiel 34:1-10**).
  - 3. *Tuesday*: Pray for our deacons (Use the qualifications list from **I Timothy 3:8-13**, also **Acts 6:1-6** is helpful to me).
  - 4. *Wednesday*: Pray for evangelism (this includes our local evangelist, evangelists we support elsewhere, our guests and our guest evangelism program, dial-a-devotion, meetings, Fall Focus etc.)
  - 5. *Thursday*: Pray for our Bible classes (for the teachers, students, VBS, guests to class).
  - 6. *Friday*: Pray for the brethren (go through the directory)
  - 7. *Saturday*: Pray through the mission statement
- C. I am not suggesting these be the only things you pray on those days. Certainly you will have other aspects to your daily prayers. But this kind of plan will make sure you are a praying part of this congregation, not just praying for yourself as an individual, but praying for the congregation and your brethren as well on a regular basis.

**Conclusion:**

Imagine what will happen if we become a people who walk by faith and not by sight, praying constantly, asking the Lord to be with us. This is the fundamental key to having any success. Let's make sure we purpose to pray, we pray our purpose and we pray purposefully.