

# A Prayer Tweak that Will Cause Your Church to Grow

On Sunday, August 25, when I wrote this column, the church at which I am an elder in charge of prayer and outreach, Christ Community Church in Brazil, Indiana, baptized three people in the service. Not a big number for a lot of churches, but for our smaller church it was huge. It was our second baptism Sunday in less than 3 months. The previous baptism, which also saw three baptized, was the first baptism we had in more than 2 years. Easter 2022 was the last one before this summer.

Since the beginning of this year, we have grown by more than 40 percent, with new people coming virtually every Sunday and a majority of them becoming a part of our fellowship. We have seen 11 salvations, lives being transformed, and some healings and other miracles. Worship has been dynamic, people participate with energy, and we regularly sense the presence of God among us.

What changed that brought this new vitality and growth? It is absurdly simple. We sought God, asking for it to happen! And it began to happen, believe it or not, during a season with no senior pastor. (Our new pastor arrived Jan 21<sup>st</sup>.)

God blessed us first with a deeper hunger for Him, for Jesus, and then for the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives and church. Our mid-week prayer meeting grew to more than a third of our adults coming, including all elders and spouses.

We changed the primary focus of our midweek prayer meeting, adding worship, and almost completely eliminating prayer for the “make my life better” needs of the body. At the end of each mid-week gathering we do have teams of people gather around those who express a need for prayer. And on Sunday mornings, during the last songs, we have prayer teams at the

front who pray for any need a person who comes forward might have. And we also have a very active text prayer chain that is totally needs-oriented. But we guard our corporate prayer time. It now only focuses on God's kingdom agenda: His Spirit and power poured out among us, every aspect of ministry in the church, other churches in the community, transformation of our city and region, the lost.

Having worked with churches in the area of prayer for the past 28 years, I see this one change work over and over again. If a church can shift the focus of its main corporate prayer expression away from life's "little answerables" and begin focusing on God's purposes and power to grow His kingdom through the Church, Kingdom things start to happen! To use a phrase coined by Daniel Henderson, focus prayer "vertically rather than horizontally"—on Jesus rather than on those in the room.

While it is not wrong to pray for people's needs, Satan loves it if that is all a church does. His domain is not threatened in any way by someone's sore back improving. But when a church focuses prayers on growing Christ's Kingdom, the enemy is pushed back, and Kingdom things start to happen in the life of that church.

Try it! God will move. Guaranteed!

—Jonathan Graf is the president of Church Prayer Leaders Network and the publisher of PrayerShop Publishing. Learn more about growing prayer in a local church from his book *Restored Power: Becoming a Praying Church One Tweak at a Time*.