

Engage Your People with Prayer

By Jon Graf

I have shared a few times about what God is doing in the church my wife and I attend in Brazil, Indiana. A powerful move of God has been both reviving our regular people and bringing in new families, plus last week we saw three people come to Christ in our worship service. Our weekly average attendance is now up by about 40% as well since the beginning of this special movement, which started in March a year ago.

That move started as we upped the prayer emphasis of our church. How did we do that? Obviously, it was the Holy Spirit preparing us for what He was going to do in our midst, but we also did two things to encourage prayer.

First, we changed the format and the name of our weekly corporate prayer meeting. And then we started promoting it strongly and regularly (no guilting, however, we just talked regularly about its importance to seeing God work in our midst). We changed the name to Fresh Encounter, added worship, and made it leader-led, rather than people-led. In other words, a leader provided the topics we would focus prayer on, we did not take requests. The topics were usually related to Kingdom things—God pouring out His Spirit in our midst, praying for powerful worship and declaration of the Word, outreach, children and youth ministries, and direction.

Second, we engaged our congregation in a 31-day prayer initiative on spiritual hunger, using the devotional prayer guide *Thirsty*, by Jamie Morgan. As we prayed through that each week, I preached on its themes over 5 Sundays. Our people's hunger for God exploded!

Certainly, God had brought all the pieces together in our congregation for His purposes. But in my 28 years of consulting with churches that want to grow prayer, I have discovered that a prayer initiative is the best way to engage your people in prayer, and grow the prayer life of your church! Bar none!

I would challenge you pastor or prayer leader to consider doing one in 2024! Here are two suggestions for you to use.

Two Opportunities for Prayer

Like my congregation and *Thirsty*, while a prayer initiative will work anytime, if there is a sense of desperation regarding its topic, they work even better! In my church's case, we had just lost our senior pastor of 14 years, and our people were discouraged and things were uncertain. God used their desperation!

There are currently two themes that can more easily rally your people to prayer because they feel desperation or hopelessness regarding them: the elections and nation, and our children and schools.

You might want to consider a prayer initiative that focuses on one of these topics.

Nation and Elections: In partnership with Intercessors for America, we are soon releasing *We Declare: 31 Days of Intercession for America* (see sample content here) by Dave Kubal. While we are releasing this guide with the idea that individuals and churches would pray through it prior to the 2024 election, it can be used anytime before or after the elections. You can pre-order copies now, and they will be available by mid-April.

Children and Schools: Available now is an excellent and timely prayer guide, *Reclaim a Generation Volume 2: 21 Days of Prayer for Schools*, by Cheryl Sacks of Bridgebuilders Leadership

Network. It is loaded with up-to-date information about what kids today are facing in schools, and provides powerful prayer points on which to focus. Again, while you can pray it anytime, using it around when the kids in your church return to school is a great idea. We encourage churches to join together August 1-21, 2024 to rally a major prayer effort.

16 Additional Prayer Initiatives

PrayerShop Publishing and the CPLN have produced 16 additional prayer initiative guides on various topics. If you want to sample them to see what might work for your church, the Prayer Initiative Sampler Pack includes a copy of 13 different guides. The guides not included in the sampler pack are *Thirsty, Do It Again, Lord!* and *Pray the Word: 31 Prayers That Touch the Heart of God*.

One of the prayingist churches I know, Mountainview Community Church in Fresno, CA, does two prayer initiatives each year. Its pastor, Fred Leonard, sees the value in using initiatives as “on ramps” to get people into the prayer life of the church. Read his article “On Ramps to God’s Presence: How to Disciple Your Church Toward Prayer” [here](#).

Get your people praying with a prayer initiative!

Jonathan Graf is the president of Church Prayer Leaders Network and the publisher of *Prayer Connect* and PrayerShop Publishing.