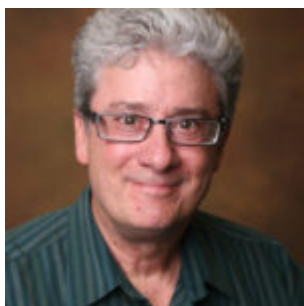


Living up to a Core Value



I don't know any church or ministry that would not mention prayer either as a core value or as the foundation that undergirds its mission. In fact, many put it front and center in a list of core values. But the question is, how many truly live up to that core value, or at least make an attempt to.

A friend of mine used to work for a parachurch ministry that listed one core value as "Pray First." She was oddly amused when that same ministry would not let employees hold a regular prayer meeting to pray for its clients. They were told that had to be done on their own time. My question: what did this core value mean to that ministry?

I was recently at a denominational gathering for a group that I know values prayer tremendously. In one of its core values it states: "Prayer is the primary work of God's people." I have no doubt that this group believes that. But when I look at what is emphasized in the group's magazine, website, and materials that come out of its national office to churches, prayer is not placed in a position to make one think it was as important as other things—certainly not enough emphasis to show they believed it was the primary work of God's people.

One of the primary reasons prayer is so weak in churches and in believers lives these days has to do with this "lip service" given to the importance of prayer. It seems enough for a church to say "we believe in prayer," or "we want to be a praying church." Our actions don't seem to matter as much as simply saying that. The Apostle James (who was affectionately

known as “Camel Knees” because of the callouses on his knees from kneeling in prayer) says, “faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead” (Jas. 2:17). If we apply that truth to prayer, he is saying, if you say you believe in prayer, but that belief is not accompanied by activity and actions that prove that, then you don’t really believe it!

My point? We need the power of the Holy Spirit flowing in western churches again. Prayer is the absolute key to see that fresh wind and power. We need to encourage churches, pastors and leaders to place enough visible emphasis on prayer in our churches that shows we truly believe it is important.

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