

The Voice of Experience

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By Jonathan Graf



Prayer Connect asked seven national-level prayer leaders—individuals who regularly mentor and equip local prayer leaders—to answer this question:

What is one thing you would like to say to local church prayer leaders to help them be more successful in their ministries?

Several leaders encourage prayer leaders not to give up or worry about small numbers. “Don’t get discouraged over low numbers,” said Doug Small, liaison to the overseer for prayer for the Church of God (Cleveland, TN). “Go after a core of people.”

Tom Swank, pastor and prayer leader in the Missionary Church, agrees. “Never give up! The stakes are incredibly high. There are too many lost people for us to abandon our prayer stations or cease to recruit others to join in praying the Lord of the harvest to send workers. . . . When it seems you are the only one praying, never give up. . . . When others don’t understand your persistence in prayer, don’t give up.”

Check Your Own Heart

Phil Miglioratti and Alvin VanderGriend both emphasize that

prayer is essential to the prayer leader's ministry. "Pray much and pray often for yourself," says VanderGriend, chairman of the Denominational Prayer Leaders Network. "[Ask] for the spiritual riches that God has for you in Christ—all the things He is eager to give to those who ask in accordance with his will (1 Jn. 5:14-15)."

Miglioratti of the National Pastors Prayer Network emphasizes the vital importance of the Holy Spirit. "[There is] no better partner than the Holy Spirit to ensure a strong and successful ministry of prayer," he says. "The Spirit knows how to lead us, individually and corporately, in the what, why, and how of praying. So, next time you are praying or preparing or planning, or anything, invite the Spirit of the Lord to fill you (assume control, Eph. 5:18), to grant you the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16), and to enable you to pray [as though seated] in the heavenly realms (Eph. 2:6)."

Expanding on the thought of praying for yourself as a prayer leader, Dennis Conner of Called to Serve, adds the idea of praying regularly "for the 'spirit of prayer' to fall upon the pastor, staff, and church leaders." This regular prayer pattern can change the spiritual dynamics of a church as God brings a vision for prayer to its leadership.

Recruit, Train, and Assist

Several other prayer leaders offer ideas to help recruit. "Ask God to call out a prayer team, with representation from the various areas of the church, to help draw members to participate in prayer opportunities," says Elaine Helms, the former national prayer director of the Southern Baptist Convention, now with Church Prayer Ministries. "When a member offers an idea for an avenue of prayer, ask how you may assist in getting that started. As you meet with the staff member regularly to encourage and equip him or her to lead that area of the ministry, you grow your prayer team naturally while mentoring a new leader."

Conner and David Chotka, a national prayer leader and pastor with the Christian and Missionary Alliance of Canada, both talked about the importance of teaching and training others. "Add a 4- or 6- to 8-week prayer training course that provides people the opportunity to do exactly what Jesus' first-century disciples wanted to do: learn to pray," comments Conner.

"This practical step has made a huge difference in the churches that have done this. Their people become much more confident of how to pray more effectively. This course should be offered on a continual basis, so all the people have a chance to go through it."

Chotka, too, believes in the power of training, but he adds that you should start by using Jesus' plan—training those who can then train in others. Jesus got alone with God; then He chose 12 to mentor, three of whom were especially close to Him. Encourage those you train to train others.

Prayer, Perseverance, and People

The bottom line: You simply cannot lead a prayer ministry if you are not convinced of the importance and power of prayer. Let your own prayer life demonstrate that you believe God's promise to hear the prayers of those who seek Him with humble hearts.

Then determine that you will not give up, regardless of the response to your invitations to pray. Persevere with the belief that one day God will demonstrate His answers to your heart cries.

And finally, always be thinking about bringing others along with you in this exciting prayer journey. Look for those you can mentor in prayer. Trust that the Lord will awaken His people to greater prayer if you are faithful as a leader.

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