Three Formats for a Special Night or Day of Prayer

(Drawn from Dynamic Church and Area-Wide Prayer Meetings by Gregory Frizzell)

This practical tool is a descriptive guide for conducting a variety of powerful corporate prayer events. While I have included considerable prayer, worship and transition materials, these are guides not verbatim formulas. Each leader should study the patterns carefully and allow God to guide the details and flow for his own church setting.

Every church and setting has at least some uniqueness. The patterns in this web post are from the upcoming book. The upcoming book, Dynamic Church and Area-Wide Prayer Meetings fully describes twenty-one different types of prayer meetings. Since New Testament and Great Awakenings churches were filled with corporate prayer, why would we consider doing less? No doubt, the Lord’s desire is for corporate prayer to become our ongoing church practices long after special times of prayer. May God help us return to the ongoing pattern for Christ’s church.

Before I describe optional formats for special prayer meetings, it is important to understand some guiding biblical principles for any corporate prayer gathering. Though prayer meetings are not complicated or rigid, there are some spiritual principles to remember. Because a corporate prayer meeting is a direct encounter with God, it is worth careful preparation! (Acts 6:4) Prayerfully consider ten guiding principles for all corporate prayer meetings.

Ten Guiding Principles for Powerful Prayer Meetings
(From Dynamic Church and Area-Wide Prayer Meetings)

(1) Approach the prayer meeting with great confidence in God’s grace and power. The Lord wants very much to help churches become houses of prayer! (Matthew 21:13; Mark 10:17; Acts 2:1) Though there are some important biblical guidelines for conducting powerful prayer meetings, they are not complicated or difficult. Leaders can be fully confident in God’s promise for direction and power. Do not be hesitant or intimidated about leading churches into corporate prayer!

(2) Approach prayer meetings as a relational encounter with God, not an orchestrated script. We embrace prayer with a holy sense of coming into His awesome presence. Powerful prayer meetings are Christ-centered, kingdom-focused and Spirit-guided. In coming before His throne, we are to gaze upon His awesome glory, holiness and power.

(3) It is generally important to center prayer meetings around a key Scripture, Scriptures or emphasis. Powerful prayer and Scripture best flow one from the other.

(4) Seek close sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. Leaders should seek the Lord concerning the focus and subjects for prayer. We must also be open to adjusting the focus in the meeting itself. Resolve to let prayer times and confession flow by Christ’s promptings. If we sense people need to pray or confess further, we should never shut down prayer “to stay on schedule.” The Holy Spirit should direct our meetings.

(5) As general rule, the speaking and singing elements of prayer meetings should be fairly brief. Remember, the primary purpose of the event is actual prayer, not sermonizing or singing about it. However, give careful thought to introducing the prayer meeting and key focal points. Though prayer is the main focus, the speaking and worship elements are quite important for providing focus, flow and urgency.
(6) It is crucial for the event leader and worship directors to coordinate and pray beforehand. We should never approach major prayer gatherings haphazardly. Above all, leaders must prepare their own hearts to be empowered and guided by God’s Spirit. Be sensitive to the Holy Spirit and do not be overly bound to a schedule. On a related note, spontaneous prayer times are also powerful and do not involve prior planning. We should remain ever-sensitive to times the Lord calls us into spontaneous prayer.

(7) I suggest bringing congregations out of corporate or small group prayer seasons smoothly. Leaders can do this by asking instrumentalists to play softly and gradually increasing volume as a smooth transition into corporate prayer or songs of worship.

(8) Remind people to sit silently if they stop praying before other groups finish. Little more grieves the Spirit than people talking or moving around while others are trying to pray.

(9) Do not fear some periods of silence. Unfortunately many in today’s Church, are uncomfortable if someone isn’t always talking or “something is happening.” Help believers understand periodic moments of silence are powerful times for personal prayer and reflection. Silent prayer is still prayer.

(10) Be sensitive to the fact some may need to continue praying after the main prayer time ends. Encourage people to be sensitive to whether there is spiritual business yet unfinished. If the people are still praying, ask the congregation to refrain from talking and visiting until they are in the foyer. Another option is to encourage those needing continued prayer to shift to adjoining rooms. (Have rooms and/or places prepared for extended prayer.)
Format One — A Night of Prayer
(Approximately ninety minutes)

A Sample Prayer Meeting Outline
(Times are only approximations. Let the Holy Spirit guide.)

5:45 – 6:00 pm — Prelude Instrumental Worship (Optional)
6:00 – 6:10 pm — Welcome, Statement of Purpose and Opening Prayer
6:10 – 6:20 pm — Prayer Season One — Worship and Praise
6:20 – 6:40 pm — Prayer Season Two — Confession and Repentance
6:40 – 6:55 pm — Prayer Season Three — Revival in Churches and Pastors
6:55 – 7:15 pm — Prayer Season Four — Passion and Power in Evangelism and Mission
7:15 – 7:30 pm — Prayer Season Five — Spiritual Awakening and Evangelistic Harvest

A Practical Description for Leading a Night of Prayer

5:45 – 6:00 pm — Instrumental Prelude (optional)
6:00 – 6:10 pm — Welcome and Statement of Purpose — The pastor or leader welcomes the congregation to the special meeting of fervent prayer and worship. He shares the purpose for the gathering, the urgency and the hope of God’s grace. Since a Sunday morning prayer meeting may be somewhat unique, stress the importance of the special prayer focus.

The focus points can be anything from repentance, restored unity and guidance to revival, evangelism and spiritual awakening. Many prayer meetings will likely have some combination of these focal points. It is generally important to center prayer and repentance gatherings around key Scriptures. Five strong Scripture options are 2 Chronicles 7:14; Matthew 6:9-10; Joel 2:12-14, 17 and Acts 2:1-2, 4:29-32.

Optional Scriptures for Focus

“If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.” (2 Chronicles 7:14)

“In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven.” (Matthew 6:9-10)
"Now, therefore," says the LORD, "Turn to Me with all your heart, With fasting, with weeping, and with mourning." So rend your heart, and not your garments; Return to the LORD your God, For He is gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, and of great kindness; And He relents from doing harm. Who knows if He will turn and relent, And leave a blessing behind Him....Let the priests, who minister to the LORD, Weep between the porch and the altar; Let them say, "Spare Your people, O LORD, And do not give Your heritage to reproach, That the nations should rule over them. Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'" (Joel 2:12-14, 17)

“When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting.” (Acts 2:1-2)

“And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness. Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common.” (Acts 4:30-32)

Begin by Highlighting the Prayer Meeting’s Purpose

The pastor or leader briefly emphasizes why the prayer meeting was called. Though the introductory explanations are not lengthy, the points are important and should be made with urgency. Listed below are some key purposes for the meeting.

- We gather to humble ourselves because of widespread sin, apathy, lukewarmness and lack of full New Testament power in evangelism. (Nehemiah 1:5-8; Daniel 9:15; James 4:8-10)
- We humble ourselves in prayer because we can do nothing apart from God’s grace and power. (John 15:5)
- We gather because God commands believers to unite and seek His face. (2 Chronicles 7:14)
- On this day, we join with many other churches in special focused prayer. (Acts 2:1, 4:29-31)
- We unite because God promises to forgive sin and hear from heaven. (James 4:8-10)
- We gather to pray for the furtherance of Christ’s kingdom in evangelism. (Matthew 6:10; Acts 1:8)
- We unite to hallow God’s name in praise. (Psalm 100:4-5; Matthew 6:9)
Share a Word about the Meeting’s Flow

(Because many modern believers are not accustomed to prayer meetings, giving a brief preview of the flow may be helpful. This can be especially important for Sunday morning prayer meetings as many present are not accustomed to corporate prayer.)

- Together we will experience various seasons of focused prayer and repentance.
- We will experience times of individual, small group and corporate prayer. (Assure the group no one should feel pressured to pray aloud.)
- Remind believers that our prayers are not about fancy words, but rather a heartfelt cry to God. Encourage openness and honesty in prayers from the heart.
- Voice a corporate prayer for God’s direction and power on the prayer meeting.

6:10 – 6:20 pm — Prayer Season One — Worship and Praise

The leader emphasizes the fact we enter God’s presence with praise and thanksgiving. We come before God to hallow His holy name. (Psalm 100:4-5; Matthew 6:9) Some optional songs are: Majesty, The Great I Am, How Great Thou Art, etc.

There are various ways to transition into worship in song and prayer. Two are generally effective. (1) Corporate prayers of praise by one or a few leaders. (2) Utilize a combination of corporate and small group prayers of praise interspersed with songs. When a meeting is ninety minutes or longer, a combination is usually best. Yet keep the focus mostly prayer, not songs or speaking. For a season of praise, consider the options below.

Various Options for Prayers of Praise

- The pastor, leader and/or congregation may voice corporate prayers of praise. For sake of time, just a corporate prayer of praise will often suffice (without songs or small group prayers.)
- The worship leader may guide into choruses and/or hymns of praise.
- The event leader may ask the congregation to turn in small groups for prayers of praise and worship. (When the event leader senses it is time to transition out of group prayer, he or she gives a nod to the instrumentalist or worship leader to begin playing softly.)
- The worship leader brings the congregation out of small group prayer by transitioning into a song of worship.
- The pastor or leader closes this time with a corporate prayer of praise and worship.
**6:20 – 6:40 pm — Prayer Season Two — Confession and Repentance**

The leader emphasizes the urgency of coming before God with deep confession and repentance. Ask the Lord for His power to communicate the urgency of deep confession and repentance. Optional Scriptures are: 2 Chronicles 7:14, Psalm 24:3, 66:18, 139:23-24; James 4:8-10; 1 John 1:9. Consider two options for guiding people in repentance:

**Confession Option One** — Ask everyone to bow their heads in personal reflection and repentance. With the congregation bowed in prayer, the leader asks a series of searching questions. There is a significant pause after each question for personal confession and repentance. (One to two minutes is generally appropriate.) During the pause, people silently confess sin and repent to the Lord. I suggest a few key questions, but not high numbers. (Six to eight is usually sufficient.) For examples of key reflective questions, the BGCO Office of Prayer website has a cleansing guide entitled, *Journey to Full Surrender.*

**Confession Option Two** — The pastor or leader brings a brief 6-8 minute message on the urgency of turning from specific sins. In his sharing, he highlights particular sins. After he shares the focus, the leader releases the congregation into small group prayer. In corporate repentance, the emphasis is confessing our own sins as well as asking forgiveness for the larger body of Christ. (Nehemiah 1:5-8; Daniel 9:15-20) In calling for confession and repentance, consider the key points below:

(a) Apathy and lukewarmness (Revelation 2:4, 3:15-17)
(b) The pride of relying on our own abilities and programs over fervent prayer and the power of God’s presence.
(c) Compromise with impurity, immorality, pornography, questionable movies, wrong relationships either personal or online, etc. (Psalm 101:2-3; Ephesians 5:11-12)
(d) Broken relationships, gossip, lack of love and disunity (Matthew 5:23-24, 6:14-15; John 13:34, 17:21)
(e) Shallow personal prayer, no church prayer meetings, lack of family prayer, etc. (Matthew 21:13; James 5:16)
(f) Lack of passion and power in evangelism (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8)

After the pastor or leader calls for points of repentance, he releases the congregation into small group prayer for confession and forgiveness. Give people the option to go to the altar for personal confession and/or to others and for reconciliation of broken fellowship. Stress the importance of resisting pride and obeying the voice of the Holy Spirit.

After several minutes of small group and/or personal prayer, the event leader gives the worship leader a nod when he or she senses it is time to transition out of prayer. The worship leader or instrumentalist begins playing softly to bring people out of the prayer time.
If several people are still engaged in prayer, let the instrumentalist keep playing softly until the group is ready to move from prayer. The worship leader then leads the congregation with a song like Lord, I Need You; Just As I Am; What Can Wash Away My Sin; Whiter Than Snow, Hallelujah What A Savior, How Deep the Father’s Love, etc.

6:40 – 6:55 pm — Prayer Season Three — Revival and Empowerment in Churches and Leaders

The pastor or leader reads Psalm 85:6 and Revelation 2:1-4. He emphasizes the fact God is much grieved by lukewarmness, lack of passion, shallow prayer and powerlessness in Christ’s churches. Emphasize the urgent need for restored unity, purity and power in today’s churches. Remind that fully empowered evangelism comes from revived churches. Also emphasize the need to pray against the unprecedented attacks that assail pastors and church leaders.

Ask the people to turn into small groups to pray for (1) boldness, passion, power and protection in pastors and leaders, (2) restored purity and unity in Christ’s Church, (3) a return to stronger church prayer patterns, and (4) deep repentance for heaven-sent revival in Christ’s Church. After several minutes of small group or altar prayer, the worship leader or instrumentalist guides into a song or chorus. (Sample songs are Revive Us O Lord, Return to Me, etc.)

6:55 – 7:10 pm — Prayer Season Four — Passion and Power in Evangelism, Missions and the State-wide Evangelism Conference

The pastor or leader stresses total recommitment to Christ’s Great Commission. (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8) He emphasizes repentance from evangelistic apathy and restoration of first love passion for souls. Stress the importance of praying for strategic kingdom issues. The leader releases congregation into small groups to pray for (1) specific lost people, (2) evangelistic passion, (3) new groups Sunday School emphasis, (4) missions/church planting, (5) persecuted believers and (6) the upcoming state evangelism conference.

After several minutes of small group or altar prayer, the event leader voices a corporate prayer for evangelistic passion and/or the worship leader transitions into choruses. (Sample song options are Mighty to Save, What a Savior, etc.)
7:10 – 7:30 pm — **Prayer Season Five — Spiritual Awakening and Evangelistic Harvest**

The pastor or leader emphasizes the desperate need for sweeping revival and spiritual awakening in the state, nation and world. Sweeping spiritual awakening is the one hope for increased evangelism, missions and greater glory to God. Remind believers that most past awakenings came at times that seemed impossible!

Emphasize the fact today’s prayer movement is growing and shows some signs of deepening repentance. Even if judgments, persecution and trials worsen, God can still “rend the heavens.” Stress that God can “heal the land” and “save millions.” Powerful passages to read are 2 Chronicles 7:14 and Isaiah 64:1-5.

To pray for revival and spiritual awakening, encourage prayers for a few key points. (1) For God to have mercy on a lukewarm Church and sinful nation, (2) That believers will humble themselves in deep brokenness, humility and repentance. (3) That God would send a spirit of conviction of sin and restored passion. (4) That God would unify His people in kingdom focus. (5) That God would send one last sweeping revival and evangelistic harvest.

**Options for the Final Prayer Season**

(1) A leader or a few leaders voice corporate prayers for revival, spiritual awakening and the evangelism conference.
(2) Turn the people in small groups to prayers for revival, spiritual awakening and the evangelism conference.
(3) Simply have congregation stand, join hands and a leader voices a final corporate prayer. Transition smoothly into a powerful final song of worship.

**Optional Final Worship Songs**

*(In Christ Alone, Our God Reigns or Days of Elijah)*
Format Two — Approximately 45-60 Minutes

In a shorter prayer meeting format, I recommend eliminating at least one of the prayer seasons and one or more of the small group prayer times. One option is to eliminate the season of praise and utilize a simple prayer of praise by the service leader.

Another option is to combine prayers for revival and spiritual awakening with the focus on evangelism and missions. By simply eliminating or combining specific prayer seasons, it shortens meeting length but maintains strong kingdom-focused prayers and repentance. As in the longer meetings, transitioning with songs of worship is generally powerful.

A Sample 60 Minute Prayer Meeting Outline

5:45 – 6:00 pm — Music Prelude (Optional)
6:00 – 6:10 pm — Welcome, Purpose and Opening Prayer
6:10 – 6:25 pm — Prayers for Corporate Confession and Repentance
6:25 – 6:40 pm — Prayers for Revival in Churches and Pastors
6:40 – 6:55 pm — Prayers for Spiritual Awakening and Evangelistic Harvest
6:55 – 7:00 pm — Prayers for the Evangelism Conference
Format Three — Sunday Morning Prayer Meetings

A powerful option is to dedicate an entire morning worship service or Sunday School to corporate prayer. *How glorious it would be if many local churches had a special Sunday morning prayer meeting and joined with many other Oklahoma churches in the state-wide evening service!* To do a 45-60 minute morning prayer meeting, simply condense and combine the larger format as the Spirit directs. God will give guidance to pastors and worship leaders for their own setting. Another option is to use the Sunday school hour for a joint church-wide prayer meeting.

Still another morning service option is simply to abbreviate the preaching and/or worship to infuse ten to twenty minutes of corporate prayer. Some may even incorporate twenty minutes of worship and preaching with twenty minutes of corporate repentance and twenty minutes for the Lord’s Supper. In this web post, I present various detailed formats for giving all or part of a morning worship service to corporate prayer.

Remember that all of these descriptive patterns are guides and helps, not rigid formulas. Each leader should spend time letting God guide and prepare for the uniqueness of their own setting. If we sincerely ask and seek, the Lord will guide every church to powerful prayer and repentance. Do not be overly bound to any rigid outline. On special prayer events and beyond, may God find churches united before His throne!