



Getting Started in Prayer Ministry

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When people pray, things happen! With the exception of God's grace, prayer is the most abundant—and underused—resource available to the church. When a church emphasizes prayer, it grows.

“Ask, and it will be given you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and everyone who searches finds, and for everyone who knocks, the door will be opened” (Matthew 7:7, 8).

Prayer is a resource available to the church at all times. A prayer ministry will make use of this resource to provide strength, guidance, and blessings to the church staff and members, the community, and the world.

Begin with Prayer

Churches that want to start a prayer ministry need to begin with prayer. God is eager for us to ask for help. He wants

us to ask and keep on asking. The more time you spend in prayer at the beginning, the stronger your prayer ministry will become. God gives confirmation to people through a sense of peace about a decision and by leading the circumstances surrounding it.

We need to pray for God's timing. Waiting for Him to do things in His own time makes the job easier.

Seek God's Vision

A vision provides a sense of purpose, direction, and motivation for your prayer ministry. Creating a long-lasting vision for your church is just as important to God as it is to you. Spend much time in prayer to discern God's vision for prayer in your church.

In the Bible, when people received a literal vision from God, they often felt inadequate to carry it out. The greater the vision and the more it is needed, the easier it is to feel intimidated. But don't worry! God assured Paul, as He assures us today, that His grace is still sufficient for us and His power is still made perfect in our weakness (paraphrased from 2 Corinthians 12:9).

Communicate the vision for your prayer ministry to those working with you. You need to lift it up in order for others to grasp and follow it! It isn't enough to share God's vision once; we need to do it repeatedly. Ask God to give you clear direction. Just remember,

How to Start a Prayer Ministry

1. Wait on the Lord. *Luke 24:49*
2. Enlist others to pray with you. *Matthew 18:16-20*
3. Set aside a place to pray. *2 Chronicles 7:12-15, Luke 11:1*
4. Make time to pray. *Psalms 32:6*
5. Intercede for others. *Isaiah 59:16, Ezekiel 22:30*
6. Make a budget. *Romans 14:12, Luke 16:2*
7. Train others to pray. *Matthew 28:20*
8. Hold each other accountable. *Matthew 16:27, Romans 2:6*

seeking the heart of God and the guidance of the Holy Spirit can take some time. We don't need to be in a hurry. It is God's ministry, and He will provide all we need.

Explore Resources

What resources are available for starting a prayer ministry in your church? During the early stages, you may want to look especially for these resources:

- Review the resources here at www.ministerialassociation.org/prayer. You should also check with your local church leadership and conference to see if they have any materials they recommend. You can also search the Internet.
- A person with experience in prayer ministry and prayer ministry organization who is willing to mentor you and pray with you.
- At least one person who is willing to pray regularly for the planning, development, and implementation of your church's new prayer ministry. If possible, seek a

Attending a conference or seminar on prayer, especially one that deals with organizing prayer ministry, can also be helpful.

Planning a Prayer Ministry

The following suggestions are helpful for planning a full-featured prayer ministry. But remember that the most important thing is to follow God's leading and get started. Don't get bogged down in planning details and fail to start.

Remember the three S's for starting a ministry:

- 1. Start Simply**
- 2. Start Small**
- 3. Start Soon**

Schedule a time for planning. A plan is a flexible tool. Remember that a good ministry plan is dynamic, not static. Things change. A good plan grows out of a ministry's vision.

Decide on key values. A variety of possible values could be highlighted through prayer ministry. For example, a church might be more concerned about in-depth study and discipleship programs rather than reaching new prayer volunteers. Individual prayers, group Bible study with prayer, and ministry have become central values in many places.

Develop a strategy. Ask God what form your ministry needs to take. Be sure church leaders understand and approve of it. Better yet, ensure the ministry has enthusiastic leaders who will lead by example. Recognize that people have different backgrounds and levels of Christian maturity and varying schedules and commitments. Design your ministry to be suitable for people at several levels of maturity and a variety of prayer schedules. There are many creative ways that large and small churches can offer various prayer experiences to members.

A Workable Ministry Plan

A useful, workable ministry plan includes the following elements:



- A compelling mission statement
- Practical goals
- Clear objectives
- Specific action plans
- Adequate job descriptions for key roles
- A basic organizational chart showing who reports to whom
- A simple budget (if you plan on spending money)

Your mission statement will sound best as one clear sentence. Stating the mission this way helps the ministry to be focused and valuable to the church family. Here is an example mission statement:

The mission of the prayer ministry is to pray, to teach others to pray, to study the Scriptures as a church, to provide prayer and ministry opportunities to members, and to participate in the fulfillment of our church's vision and mission as we are inspired by the Holy Spirit.

Goals provide some details about the mission statement. For example (and in fulfillment of the above statement), some goals might be:

1. *To encourage people to pray more.*
2. *Teach church members and others to pray.*
3. *Develop opportunities for people to become more involved in prayer, Bible study, and ministry.*

Objectives will further define the ministry. They highlight the steps needed to carry out a goal. They also describe a cluster of activities that contribute to a goal. However, too many objectives can be challenging to monitor. Make sure to review them regularly. You may find that some objectives help you meet all of your goals. Objectives for goal #1 above ("To encourage people to pray more") might include:

1. *Develop a prayer and praise list for the church so that people can pray for each other intelligently and see how God is answering prayers.*
2. *Have a time during the church service for people to pray together.*

Action plans outline the specific steps needed to fulfill each objective. For example, An action plan for objective #2 above might be to:

1. *Discuss ideas with the church pastor/leadership team.*
2. *Develop a plan for the prayer time (see [Guidelines for Congregational Prayer](#) for ideas).*
3. *Schedule a time during the church service for expanded congregational prayer.*
4. *Develop a schedule of people to lead congregational prayer.*
5. *Start praying!*

Job descriptions let people know what is expected of them. As you create these for people working with you in prayer ministry, remember that people can often help develop their own job descriptions. You may also find it helpful to identify the key responsibilities of the positions you're describing and to keep those descriptions as brief and simple as possible.

Share the plan. Ask for suggestions for improvement or endorsement from others. Pray for God's wisdom and timing and for Him to prepare the hearts of both the presenters and the listeners to receive and embrace the prayer ministry.

- Begin with the people and groups who will give the greatest support. This will build both confidence and momentum.
- Next, share the plan with the church leaders. If the leaders do not endorse the plan, do not present it to the church. Return to prayer, revise the plan, and/or try a different approach for winning support.
- Finally, when the leaders have given their support, present the plan to the rest of the church so everyone can learn about and support it.

Present the plan. The actual presentation could incorporate the following:

- Lay out your plan, beginning with the vision.
- Ask for the group's input and listen to what they say.
- Assuming no strong objections have surfaced, ask for the group's support of the vision and plan.
- If people raise objections, try to clarify what needs to happen before they can accept the plan.
- Ask for the group's involvement in this new ministry.
- Finally, pray that every one this ministry touches will be receptive to it and ultimately transformed by it.

Avoiding Pitfalls

When we start thinking about implementing a prayer ministry, we will most likely face a number of challenges. Challenges are not all bad. They often bring us to our knees in prayer. There are, however, some things you can do to avoid the worst pitfalls when you begin.

Set an example. The examples church leaders set are crucial to starting a good prayer ministry. Pray for the leaders and enthusiastically support whatever ministry God is already doing in your church. Wait patiently for God's timing.

Start with the basics. The best way to begin learning about prayer is to pray. There are a number of simple ways to teach beginners to pray:

- Silent prayer
- Sentence completion prayers
- Short sentence prayers

Keep it short. Short prayers are often the most effective. When you pray, stick to everyday words and meaningful language.

Choose a focus. As in other groups, a prayer group needs a direction or purpose. This helps keep the group motivated and organized. Organize groups around demographics if a church has more than one prayer group. Even groups that already have a focus can benefit from selecting specific topics for prayer.

Report positive results. Both those who pray and those who ask for prayers need to hear about how God answers their prayers.

Help people grow. Start with something easy. Adapt ideas to fit your needs. Look for [ideas](#) from other places.