



prayer

church leadership resources

sbtexas.com/healthsurvey

Based on the Church Health Assessment you completed, prayer may be one area of needed growth for your church and/or church leadership. A praying church is a powerful church. A prayerless church is a powerless church. In the **Explanation** section below, you will find several important biblical foundations for prayer as it relates to church health. Subsequent sections of this report will include **SBTC Resources/Tools, Other Recommended Resources** and **Contacts**. All of these are designed to help strengthen your church in the area of prayer. Please take time to read through this report and to share it with some key influential leaders in your church.



explanation

“When they had prayed, the place where they were assembled was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak God’s Word boldly.” Acts 4:31

Through the centuries, healthy churches have relied entirely on the Holy Spirit’s power, and the Holy Spirit’s power has come to them as an answer to prayerful desperation.

The healthy church is a desperate church.

The desperate church is a prayerful church.

The praying church is a powerful church.

When it comes to Christ’s church, there is a beautiful—albeit somewhat counterintuitive—balance between spiritual health and spiritual desperation. Churches that embrace their desperation before God pray with a heightened sense of fervency and expectation. When churches believe they are healthy enough to produce success on their own merit, relying on their systems, structures and programs, they become deathly ill. It is when they recognize their continual desperation before God, turning to him in fervent prayer, that they get back on the road to spiritual health.

Nothing of eternal value has ever been done by a church apart from prayerful desperation on God. Churches can have all the right systems, programs and personalities in place. But unless God breathes on it, nothing is going to happen. It’s like having all the right connections made on your junior high electronics class project but forgetting to attach the battery. The connections look good. You’ve followed all the rules. You’re set up for success. But without the power flowing through it, nothing is going to happen.

Of course, healthy churches intentionally set themselves up for success. But they recognize that without the power of God flowing through their systems, programs and personalities, nothing is going to happen.

Churches that have a healthy prayer life are those who express prayerful desperation before God on three levels: individual devotional practices, small group meetings and corporate worship settings.

Individual Devotional Practices.

A praying church is made up of praying people. When a church is exhibiting a healthy prayer life, individual members of it are engaging the heart of God through prayer on a regular basis. These church members pray not only for their own walk with the Lord and their families and friends, but also for the common prayers of the church in its season. They petition the Lord on behalf of fellow church members, church leadership and church initiatives. They understand that their effectiveness in the Great Commission is dependent on the effectiveness of their church family, and this drives them to regular, fervent prayer on its behalf.

Some churches are full of people who only pray as passive participants of a large group prayer. They have no personal

prayer life—only a corporate one. These Christians are not only missing the joy of daily communion with God; they are depriving their church of the power that the Holy Spirit gives in large group gatherings when members come already confessed-up, prayed-up and filled-up. Many churches want to say, “We are a praying church.” But not many are able to say that their church is made up of praying people.

A healthy church is a praying church.

And a praying church is made up of praying people.

Small Group Meetings.

The healthy church is made up of healthy small groups. Your church’s small groups may be formally structured into Sunday School, community groups or something similar. Or they may be more informally structured such as short-term Bible studies, weekly prayer breakfasts or neighborhood cell gatherings. I am a proponent of structured, formal small groups for many reasons, but how a church accomplishes its purposes outside of the weekly gathering is entirely up to the leadership God has given them.

Whatever the specifics of their organization, in some ways these groups are individual vertebrae that make up the backbone of church life. They are microcosms of the church’s values, mission and fellowship. And if they are truly healthy, they are regularly bending the ear of God on behalf of the church body.

A healthy church is a praying church.

And a praying church is made up of praying groups.

Corporate Worship Settings.

It is interesting to note that in the Book of Acts, every major breakthrough in the life of the church came as a result of intense, focused corporate prayer. But is that what most churches expect today? Or do we expect that breakthroughs in our churches will come through planning sessions, charismatic communication or technological advances?

Something supernatural happens when a church falls on their knees together in their weekly gathering to engage the heart of God in prayer. An inimitable spiritual power infuses and invigorates the Body when intense, focused corporate prayer is part of their regular gathering. The Holy Spirit fills the hearts of all who know Jesus through repentance and faith. But he fills the space between us as well when we express prayerful dependence on him as a gathered body. The manifest presence of God falls on a church when they prayerfully seek him together.

Sadly, in most weekly worship services today, prayer is more often a transition between elements on the order of service than it is an intentional focus for the gathering. Healthy churches do not use prayer to help their order of service progress rhythmically; rather, prayer has a prominent place on the agenda. Does your church need a breakthrough? Become a praying church.

A healthy church is a praying church.

And a praying church is marked by praying gatherings.

sbtc tools & resources

Evangelism Takes Heart

A nine-week devotional journey to cultivate a heart for evangelism in the local church.

SBTC Prayer webpage

Resources and event links to help you and your congregation cultivate a healthy desperation for God through prayer.

I Will Pray

There are five areas of intercession. This guide is designed to help a congregation focus prayer in five very crucial areas: my home, my pastor, my church, lost people and my nation. It is easily carried in a Bible or a women's purse. This guide can be helpful to you as a pastor in building towards a culture of prayer for your congregation.

We Will Pray Prayer Strategy

This resource is designed to get both large and small groups within your local church to pray with renewed passion and intentionality. It will call church members to their knees in repentance and faith. It will also help you walk through Scripture together, developing timely and practical prayer strategies for your congregation.

Praying for the Lost

This resource is designed to get individuals within your local church to pray with renewed passion for the lost. It breaks down how to be intentional in praying for the lost and makes suggestions regarding practical prayer strategies to implement personally, with small groups and corporately.

other recommended resources

Recommended Books:

Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life

by Donald S. Whitney

Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire

by Jim Cymbala

Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God

by Timothy Keller

The Battle Plan for Prayer

by Stephen and Alex Kendrick

Don't Just Stand There, Pray Something

by Ronald Dunn

Prayer Training/Methods:

Prayer Meeting Playbook for Pastors

by Nathan Lino and Northeast Houston Baptist Church

War Room

prayer movie, workbook, church leadership kit, and more by Lifeway Christian Resources

prayer contact

Please do not hesitate to reach out to one of the following contacts for encouragement, consultation or direction. It will be our joy to come alongside you as you lead your church to reach your community for Christ.

Keeney Dickinson – prayeridigm@gmail.com
SBTC Prayer Ministry Catalyst



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