



Ministry Sphere 1 | Establishing a Prayer Shield

Any ministry established to help people know the healing power of God and to establish the kingdom of God may be opposed by dark and sinister forces. It is especially critical that ministry related to sexual brokenness be launched in prayer, sustained in prayer, and brought to completion through prayer.

Neither personal healing nor spiritual awakening can be brought about through human effort. We need divine intervention. Does this mean we shouldn't put effort and organization into our prayer efforts? By no means. It means, rather, that even as we organize prayer, we must call the pray-ers to depend solely and fully on God, and to plead before God's throne for a mighty outpouring of His Spirit.

Prayer Partners and Groups

Jesus said, "Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them" (Matthew 18:19–20).

There is great power in prayer, and there is even greater power in united prayer. Sometimes it is difficult to unite a large gathering of saints, but most any of us can find another person or two with whom to pray, or a small group in which to pray. Do you have a prayer partner or a prayer group?

A small prayer group can become the powerhouse behind a ministry of renewal for a church or for a whole town or city. Likewise, prayer focused on people seeking healing for issues of identity and sexuality can have great effect. Both Leanne Payne and Francis MacNutt, who have established healing ministries of prayer, have written books about the deep unmet needs of those who experience same-sex attraction and the power of God's love and Spirit to heal those needs through "soaking prayer." Such prayer is focused and on-going over time.

Prayer Events

The Scriptures describe the extraordinary power of God that is released when his people unite in focused prayer. Esther called the Israelites to fast and pray and the nation of Israel was set free from a seemingly irreversible calamity. The early church believers gathered to pray and Peter was set free from prison. When Christians today gather in unity and prayer around the brokenness that has devastated families and around the idol of sex that has crippled the witness of the church, we can only imagine how the captive will be set free!

Prayer Gatherings: When was the last time your church initiated a churchwide prayer event? Would not every church benefit from such prayer? Imagine the resultant move of God if every church included in their prayer meetings some bold intercession for those who struggle with issues of sexuality?

Prayer Retreats: Consider engaging in weekends of prayer and in whole weeks of prayer with other believers. Such experiences can be life-changing. An effective prayer retreat devotes more time to prayer itself than it does to talking about prayer.

Prayer Conferences: Encourage your congregation to host special speakers and seminars to help your congregants develop a deeper understanding about prayer and to strengthen their prayer lives.

The Prayer Watch | By W.P. Campbell

The idea of establishing a watch of continual prayer before the Lord has roots in Scripture and in church history. An incredible example of a prayer watch occurred in the early 1700s in Saxony when a rich nobleman, Count Zinzendorf, began sheltering oppressed Christians.

Over time, his estate sheltered a mixed and bickering crowd of nearly 300 Moravian, Lutheran, Separatist, Reformed, and Anabaptist Christians. In an effort to manage and guide this new community, Zinzendorf began to visit the believers in their homes. He set down rules and guidelines for the community and he organized the believers into a ministry of prayer. Inspired by the words of Isaiah, the Count guided the people to pray around the clock:

"I have posted watchmen on your walls, O Jerusalem; they will never be silent day or night. You who call on the Lord, give yourselves no rest, and give him no rest till he establishes Jerusalem and makes her the praise of the earth." — Isaiah 62:6-7

Zinzendorf had earlier named the community "Herrnhut," which means "The Lord's Watch." The Herrnhut prayer watch began in 1727, and was likely a major factor behind a wonderful spiritual renewal that swept the Herrnhut community. Individuals signed up for one hour time slots, and the prayer watch continued unabated for a hundred years! The impact was felt not only in the Herrnhut community, but in surrounding nations. Within 65 years after the start of the prayer watch, the small Herrnhut community had sent over 300 missionaries around the world.

The Model Works Today

A prayer watch can be an effective structure to help God's people unite in prayer. When I was a student at Princeton Seminary, for example, a few friends and I organized an around-the-clock prayer watch that also drew in students and Christian leaders from the seminary, Princeton University, and from a nearby choir college. New student missionary movements and conferences were launched under the power of that prayer watch which have, over time,

impacted many countries. Unfortunately, the leaders of the prayer watch graduated and the prayer watch dissipated.

I have seen larger churches successfully establish on-going prayer watches. Smaller congregations can join forces with other churches or ministries as well. Alternately, prayer watches can be established to run for only certain hours of the day, or on a short-term basis.

Suggestions for a Prayer Watch

The keys to a successful prayer watch are an organization structure and a unified vision. Some suggestions are:

- Decide the hours and duration of the watch, as well as how long will be the time slots for those who pray. I have found that 15-minute slots are quite manageable for most people (and those who are able can take two concurrent slots).
- Encourage couples to pray together and singles to find a prayer partner of the same gender, if possible.
- A prayer letter or bulletin that contains general, on-going prayer requests as well as specific updated prayer needs can keep the participants focused, united, and inspired.
- It is good, but not essential, to have a room (usually in the church) set aside for prayer, with prayer resources to support those who come. But unless your church is a commune as was Herrnhut, it is also important to be flexible and to allow people to pray in their homes or wherever it works best for them during their assigned time slot(s).
- Weekly or monthly prayer gatherings can be a good opportunity to encourage those who are on the watch. As the watch members pray together they will find renewed passion for on-going prayer.

Remember that the goal of the watch is not simply to keep people praying, but to keep them praying together with a united vision and with godly conviction.

How to Start a Prayer Watch

- Ask the pastor to preach a sermon series on prayer.
- Before or during the series, locate a leadership team to build and guide the prayer watch. A typical team might include:
 - a. The pastor or a person appointed by him to lead the watch,
 - b. A person to organize and update the prayer roster (the list of those on the watch), and,
 - c. A person to handle the newsletter, communications, and publicity.
- Plan the date to begin publicizing the watch:

- a. Develop a simple brochure or bulletin insert that outlines the vision, purpose, and procedure for the prayer watch.
- b. Find a central location for the roster and encourage people to sign up for time slots.
- c. Launch the watch.

How Long Should a Prayer Watch Continue?

A prayer watch should continue until the leadership is guided in prayer for it to end. From the inception of the idea to begin a prayer watch until it is ended, you should seek the face of God and trust him to show you how to organize it, and how long to keep it going.

A Personal Prayer Focus

Many prayer guides have a devotional focus. Some focus on special needs, ranging from unreached peoples to the persecuted church. Church Reflections offers this suggested weekly prayer pattern:

Sunday: Pray for ministries that help people who struggle with sexual brokenness, whether they experience heterosexual or homosexual attractions.

Monday: Pray for churches that are in the process of establishing the cutting-edge ministry program (or similar ministries).

Tuesday: Pray for people who have been abused physically, emotionally, or sexually.

Wednesday: Pray for leaders in the media and government to find salvation in Christ and to promote godly values.

Thursday: Pray for those who are trying to overcome addictions, whether chemical, sexual, or other.

Friday: Pray for the nation to turn back to God.

Saturday: Pray for spiritual awakening to flood God's church, and for the Gospel to reach every nation and people group.

Insights from Other Churches

This is where you come in! Send us stories and insights related to prayer ministry and we will review them for publication on this site. We are especially interested in God's healing power through prayer for issues of sexual and relational brokenness. Your stories and insights will remain anonymous unless you give us permission to mention your church and/or personal identity. Visit this site again to learn new ideas from other congregations!

Prayer Resources

The following prayer resources for recovery prayer groups and for prayer in general may be helpful for your prayer group or for your congregation's prayer ministry.

Resources for Recovery Prayer Groups

MacNutt, Francis. *Homosexuality: Can It Be Cured?* Jacksonville, Ill.: Christian Healing Ministries, 2001.

Payne, Leanne. *The Broken Image: Restoring Personal Wholeness through Healing Prayer.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2003.

Payne, Leanne. *Restoring the Christian Soul: Overcoming Barriers to Completion in Christ through Healing Prayer.* Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1996.

Kylstra, Chester and Kylstra, Betsy. *Biblical Healing and Deliverance: A Guide to Experiencing Freedom from Sins of the Past, Destructive Beliefs, Emotional and Spiritual Pain, Curses and Oppression.* Grand Rapids, MI: Chosen Books, 2005.

General Resources on Prayer

Bloesch, Donald. *The Struggle of Prayer.* Colorado Springs: Helmers & Howard Publishers, Inc., 1988.

Bounds, E. M. *The Complete Works of E.M Bounds.* Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990.

Casteel, John L. *Rediscovering Prayer.* New York: Association Press, 1955.

Chapell, Bryan. *Praying Backwards.* Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005.

Chase, Steven. *The Tree of Life: Models of Christian Prayer.* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic Books, 2005.

Chester, Tim & Derek Tidball. *The Message of Prayer.* Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003.

Constable, Thomas L. *Talking to God: What the Bible Teaches About Prayer.* Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1995.

Crosby, Michael H. *The Prayer that Jesus Taught Us.* New York: Orbis Books, 2002.

Crump, David. *Knocking on Heaven's Door: A New Testament Theology of Petitionary Prayer.* Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006.

Dodd, Brian J. *Praying Jesus' Way*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1997.

Foster, Richard. *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*. San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1992.

Grenz, Stanley. *Prayer: The Cry for the Kingdom*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1988.

Hallesby, (trans. Clarence Carlsen) *Prayer*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1931.

Hemphill, Ken. *The Prayer of Jesus*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001.

Heiler, Friedrich. (trans. Samuel McComb) *Prayer*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1958.

Hughes, R. Kent. *Abba Father: The Pattern of the Lord's Prayer*. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1986.

Hunt, T.W. *The Doctrine of Prayer*. Nashville: Convention Press, 1986.

Hunter, W. Bingham. *The God Who Hears*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1986.

Jeremias, Joachim. *The Prayers of Jesus*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984.

Karris, Robert J. *Prayer and the New Testament: Jesus and His Communities at Worship*. New York: Crossroad Publishing, 2000.

Koenig, John. *Rediscovering New Testament Prayer: Boldness and Blessing in the Name of Jesus*. Harrisburg, PA: Morehouse Publishing, 1998.

Lawrence, Brother. *The Practice of the Presence of God*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975.

Lockyer, Herbert. *All the Prayers of the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1959.

Longnecker, Richard N, ed. *Into God's Presence: Prayer in the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2001.

Migliore, Daniel. editor. *The Lord's Prayer*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993.

Miller, Patrick D. *They Cried to the Lord: The Form and Theology of Biblical Prayer*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994.

Old, Hughes Oliphant. *Leading in Prayer: A Workbook for Ministers*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995.

Packer, J. I. *Praying the Lord's Prayer*. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2007.

Pratt, Richard L. *Pray With Your Eyes Open: Looking at God, Ourselves, and Our Prayers*. Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, 1987.

Richards, Larry. *Every Prayer & Petition in the Bible*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998.

Ryken, Philip G. *The Prayer of Our Lord*. Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2002.

Spear, Wayne R. *Talking to God: The Theology of Prayer*. Pittsburg: Crown & Covenant Publications, 2002.

Spencer, William David and Aida Besancon Spencer. *The Prayer Life of Jesus*. New York: University Press of America, 1990.

Spurgeon, Charles H. *Only a Prayer Meeting*. Pasadena, Texas: Pilgrim Press, 1976.

Washington, James Melvin. *Conversations with God: Two Centuries of Prayers by African Americans*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1994.

White, Reginald E.O. White. *They Teach us to Pray: A Biographical ABC of the Prayer Life*. New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1957.

Whitney, Donald S. *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*. Colorado Springs: NavPress, 1991.

Willimon, William & Stanley Hauerwas. *Lord Teach Us*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996.