

BEGINNING AND GROWING A GREAT COMMISSION PRAYER MINISTRY

Events in North America have shown believers that it is time to pray. At least two things begin to happen as believers answer the divine call to prayer. First, God's people begin to return to Him in revival. Second, the church begins to be reclaimed as a house of prayer for all the nations (see Mark 11:17). A Great Commission Prayer Ministry will provide a way for churches to become houses of prayer with a passion for lost people everywhere.

What is a Great Commission Prayer Ministry?

A Great Commission Prayer Ministry is a comprehensive prayer plan to assist congregations in their quest to be on mission with Christ through local, national, and international prayer. The Great Commission will be acted upon and completed through the specific, fervent prayer of righteous men and women. Great Commission praying will help congregations develop and grow an overall plan of action in prayer. It will help churches to effectively pray for and share Jesus with every person in their sphere of influence.

Why a Great Commission Prayer Ministry?

It is very easy for a single prayer event to become the major prayer emphasis for the entire church. As that happens, prayer simply becomes another “thing” the church does and takes its place among all the other “ministries” of the church. Prayer then becomes peripheral instead of foundational. This pattern is not biblical. The biblical ideal is for prayer to be foundational to everything done in and through the church body (see Acts 1:14; 2:42; 4:31; 13:1-3)

A Great Commission Prayer Ministry helps churches create a comprehensive church prayer plan that is:

- **Bible based**—A Great Commission Prayer Ministry is built on biblical prayer principles. The current awakening in prayer has resulted in many unbiblical counterfeits. Many of these counterfeits are based on human opinion and personal experience. Each believer must be careful to participate and teach only biblical prayer and activities. Any believer can become an unintentional false prophet by teaching personal opinion and experience instead of biblical truth.
- **Contextually sensitive**—Every church field has diverse cultural, social, and spiritual needs. The three strategic objectives of a Great Commission Prayer Ministry offer a basic structure for churches to build their prayer plan. They are universally adaptable to any ministry context because they are biblical. The more prayer options you offer to people, the more people you will have praying.
- **Comprehensive in scope**—A Great Commission Prayer Ministry allows a church to experience “total prayer saturation.” It models balanced praying for believers, unbelievers, and personal needs. It also includes the personal, corporate, and kingdom components of prayer. Prayer begins to permeate the entire life and ministry of each believer, the church, and the community.
- **Evangelistic in focus**—A Great Commission Prayer Ministry focuses church members on prayer that relates to Christ's redemptive work throughout the world. Our relationship with Christ overflows in compassionate, intentional witness. Prayer leaders should be known as evangelists just as evangelists should be known as prayer warriors. Believers learn to pray for and share Jesus with every unbeliever in their sphere of influence.

What Is Empowering Kingdom Growth?

Empowering Kingdom Growth (EKG) is an initiative that inspires Southern Baptists to renew their passion for the Lord Jesus. It invites individuals to recognize the authority of His kingdom in their hearts, families, and churches, and to join God's work through holy living, sacrificial service, and global witness. EKG is not a denominational program. Rather, it is an appeal to individuals and churches to engage in spiritual renewal and kingdom consciousness. Just as a medical EKG measures the health of the human heart, we hope EKG will help Southern Baptists measure the health of their spiritual hearts.

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you"(Matt. 6:33, KJV).

Empowering Kingdom Growth and A Great Commission Prayer Ministry

In Matthew 6:9-10, Jesus commands His followers to pray for His kingdom to come and His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. Prayer is central to His teaching on how the kingdom of God advances through the ages. Thus, this passage demonstrates that if congregations are to be instruments of the kingdom to a lost and dying world, prayer must be foundational to the body and all of its activity. A Great Commission Prayer Ministry is a bible-based prayer strategy that assists churches as they seek to empower kingdom growth in their world.

Creating a Great Commission Prayer Ministry in Your Church

Use the three strategic components of the Great Commission Prayer Ministry to build a contextual prayer ministry in the church. Then plan training events, prayer emphases, and conferences that will help you accomplish each of the three components. Analyze and adapt your current events to focus them on completing the three components, too. A 16-step implementation plan is included to provide practical suggestions how to proceed.

A Three-Part Plan

A Great Commission Prayer Ministry includes three strategic components. Use these three purpose statements to provide direction for each prayer event and activity. Refer to the list of various prayer approaches to use in completing each component.

1. Personal Component

Renew a personal passion for Jesus through praying unceasingly (see Ps. 51:10; 1 Thess. 5:17). This portion of the prayer plan highlights the personal component to prayer. As believers begin to practice an unceasing prayer life, prayer assumes its primary and foundational place in the center of their lives. The following two components are much easier if you begin by helping individual's to pray unceasingly.

2. Corporate Component

Reclaim the church as a house of prayer with a passion for lost people (see Mark 11:17; Luke 19:10). When individuals begin to pray unceasingly they will create a house of prayer. As prayer becomes foundational in a congregation, the focus of ministry turns toward that of the Father's focus on the lost world.

3. Kingdom Component

Respond to God's call to unite believers in focused prayer for global evangelization and awakening (see 2 Chron. 7:14; John 17:20-21). As individuals and churches become houses of prayer with a passion for lost people they begin to see the need to look toward the worldwide harvest. Churches begin to consider ways to join other congregations in associational, state, national, and international prayer initiatives for evangelization and awakening (e.g., National Day of Prayer, See You at The Pole [SYATP], Campus Prayer Journey, IMB Day of Prayer and Fasting for World Evangelization, IMB focused prayer for Jews, Hindus, Muslims, and Buddhists, Week of Prayer for International Missions, Week of Prayer for North American Missions).

Prayer leaders that begin their strategy with the kingdom component often become frustrated because they involve the same mature believers over and over. Beginning a prayer strategy with the personal component leads believers into praying unceasingly. The corporate component reclaims the church as the house of prayer. Then you have a diverse and growing number of people who are interested in the kingdom component.

A Suggested Great Commission Prayer Ministry Plan

The following is how a comprehensive Great Commission Prayer Ministry might look and be structured. Adapt it to your needs and congregational context.

1. Personal Component

Renew a personal passion for Jesus through praying unceasingly (see Ps. 51:10; 1 Thess. 5:17).

- Encourage ministry staff and church leadership to model a life of prayer.
- Keep testimonies concerning answered prayer before the congregation.
- Lead the corporate body in concerts of prayer and solemn assemblies.
- Encourage personal prayer growth while providing devotional and inspirational reading materials for the congregation.
- Challenge the congregation to increase time spent in personal and corporate prayer.

2. Corporate Component

Reclaim the church as a house of prayer with a passion for lost people (see Mark 11:17; Luke 19:10).

- Develop a church prayer room ministry that focuses on evangelistic prayer needs.
- Challenge the congregation to make their homes lighthouses of prayer and outreach.
- Lead the church to be involved in regular prayer journey (walking) efforts.
- Participate in international prayer journey events.
- Participate in North American prayer journeys in Strategic Focus cities, associations, and yearly Crossover events in conjunction with the Southern Baptist Convention.
- Organize and participate in outreach prayer survey efforts.
- Begin a “prayer station” or “prayer booth” ministry in the inner-city, at yard sales, carnivals, craft shows, flea markets, and during county and state fairs.
- Begin a midweek service that focuses on prayer for unbelievers, believers, and evangelistic mission efforts
- Develop men’s, women’s, senior adults, youth, and children’s evangelistic prayer cell groups.
- Encourage “cottage” prayer meetings before revivals and evangelism efforts.

3. Kingdom Component

Respond to God’s call to unite believers in focused prayer for global evangelization and awakening (see 2 Chron. 7:14; John 17:20-21).

- Encourage congregational participation in the National Day of Prayer focus.
- Provide ways for youth to unite with other youth for the See You at The Pole prayer effort.
- Mobilize families to participate in a Campus Prayer Journey event (the night before SYATP).
- Participate in various Sunday worship prayer focuses, e.g., Prayer for the Persecuted Church, Prayer for World Evangelization Sunday, Day of Prayer for Revival and Spiritual Awakening, and soon.
- Lead churches to join Southern Baptist International mission prayer initiatives for specific people groups (presently there are four groups: Jews, Muslims, Hindu, and Buddhists).
- Sponsor interdenominational pastors’ prayer groups and concerts of prayer meetings.
- Encourage longer and more frequent times for corporate prayer that focuses on specific prayer needs.
- Participate in international prayer journeys.

How to Get Started

Use the suggested 16 steps to help you create a Great Commission Prayer Ministry in your church. Visit www.namb.net/prayer, www.lifewaystores.com, www.imb.org/pray, and www.wmu.org to identify resources to assist in training and in implementation of your ministry. Remember—all of this begins with prayer for God’s activity to be revealed.

1. Select through prayer a church prayer ministry coordinator.
2. Select through prayer a prayer council (which includes the prayer coordinator) that will work together with church leadership to create a Great Commission prayer plan that is unique to your church. They will also provide evangelism and prayer training.
3. Ask the pastor to take the lead in promoting, teaching, modeling, and reminding the congregation of the importance of prayer.
4. Encourage individual prayer. Use this opportunity to identify and recruit intercessors through prayer revivals, prayer retreats, special prayer commitment services, and conferences.

5. Launch new prayer groups at work places, through the Sunday school, in small groups, and Discipleship Training. Encourage prayer groups to meet before and during the worship services.
6. Provide a prayer room. Include resources to help people pray.
7. Refocus the Wednesday night prayer meeting into a time to pray for believers, unbelievers, and individual spiritual growth. Provide national and international prayer needs and opportunities through the International Mission Board (IMB) 1 800 395-PRAY, North American Mission Board (NAMB) 1 800 554-PRAY, and prayer lines. Subscribe to IMB's "Wednesday Window on the World" (e-mail toprayeroffice@imb.org). Download requests from www.namb.net/prayer and www.imb.org/pray (see *A House of Prayer*).⁸
8. Create prayer chains for affinity groups of people in your congregation and community. Affinity groups can be created by ethnic group, profession, or interest. Men, women, singles, youth, lawyers, construction workers, and so on can pray specifically and intentionally for others in their profession locally, nationally, and globally. Postal workers, police officers, and other service providers have found particular joy in praying for the homes on their routes.
9. Develop prayer lists of lost people and prospects in the community. Pray for the names in the telephone book.
10. Participate in the annual Week of Prayer for North American Missions and the annual Week of Prayer for International Missions (see www.imb.org/pray and www.namb.net/prayer).
11. Schedule a corporate prayer time during the worship service. Occasionally pray in groups, pray for missionaries, and make prayer a vital part of the worship service.
12. Create a Lighthouse of Prayer in every community or on every street.
13. Schedule prayer journeys for on-site prayer with as many groups as possible and as often as possible.
14. Plan a mission trip that includes a prayer journey.
15. Partner with associational, state, and other church prayer coordinators to calendar participation in community, associational, state, national, and international prayer initiatives for evangelization and awakening (such as the National Day of Prayer, Day of Prayer for Revival and Spiritual Awakening and International Day of Prayer and Fasting for World Evangelization and Awakening).
16. Adopt one of the lost people groups of the world. Pray for direct evangelistic involvement. Call the International Prayer Strategy office at 1 888 462-7729.