

## Developing a Prayer Strategy for Your Church's Faith for Family Evangelism Initiative

"Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed (Mark 1:35)."

**Intro:** When God wants to do something in the world, He leads his people to pray. By praying strategically, we participate with God in making Christ known and worshipped by people in our communities. Throughout history, there is a direct connection between the prayers of God's people and the accomplishment of his purposes. Strategic prayer always brings about the growth of the kingdom. Prayer must be a central and vital part of the life of the church if we expect to witness great activity by God in our homes, church, and community.

**Strategy:** We must develop a prayer strategy to pray for the desires of the heart of God. When we listen, follow God's leadership, and pray the prayers He gives us, God releases His power, unlocks doors, and makes known his saving grace to the people for whom we are pray. Every member of the church can have a significant impact for Christ by praying strategically. When Christians pray for the salvation of men, women and children, God's voice is heard and obeyed, workers are sent and His work is set in motion.

Strategic prayer calls for time, energy, focus and discipline on the part of the church. Prayer is work, but it is a work that God calls us to.

**Developing a Prayer Strategy:** God partners with His children to accomplish His work in the world. As we draw near to God and quietly listen to Him, we will soon realize that the best prayers come from God himself. He will tell us what to pray for and in response to our prayers, He will release His power into the church and community. A strategy is designed to help us know how we will accomplish our mission. It answers the questions about who needs to be involved, what resources are available and how to use the resources to accomplish the mission. Following is the vision and mission that Faith for Family has for prayer in 2017.

**Vision:** To pray 500 new members into the church in Central Pennsylvania for the glory of God.

**Mission:** We will implement effective prayer strategies and engage every member of the church in systematic prayer for the salvation of lost people.

Your church will need to prayerfully determine what your local vision is. How many new members will you begin praying for?

### The "Who" of Your Prayer Strategy:

Who #1: A Prayer Warrior If your church is participating in Faith for Family your church board signed a contract to recruit a Prayer Warrior who will lead a team of effective pray-ers. The person filling this role is essential to establishing the importance of prayer in the Faith for Family initiative. He/she should be known as someone who prays. He/she will be responsible to communicate the prayer initiatives of the church, inspire involvement by members and organize members into an effective team of evangelistic prayers!

Who #2: A Prayer Team Depending on the size of the church, the Prayer Warrior should have a small team of members who will assist in the organization and implementation of the evangelistic prayer initiatives the church chooses to engage in. In a smaller church this may be one or two others. A large church may require several members to serve on the team.

Who #3 The Church The Pennsylvania Conference and Faith for Family are seeking Total Member Involvement in this year's evangelistic initiative. Many of your members may not be able to preach or teach, age or disabilities may not enable them to walk the streets, but there is not a single member who cannot pray. With the entire church praying for God to move lost, broken, and sinful hearts toward Christ and the church great things may be done for His glory.

### **The "What" of Your Prayer Strategy:**

Numerous resources are available to develop a systematic and effective prayer ministry for your church's Faith for Family evangelistic initiative this year. Here are three resources to get you started.

What #1: 10 Days in the Upper Room by Mark Finley This book will help your church discover how to live daily in the power of the Spirit and explore the preparation necessary to receive Holy Spirit power in all its fullness.

What #2: 40 Days of Prayer by Dennis Smith This book contains 40 days of devotional studies designed to strengthen your relationship with Christ and enable you to lead others to Him. God wants to do something significant in your life, too. Not only does He long to draw you into closer fellowship with Him, He also wants to minister to others through you. And as your church members spend 40 amazing days with God, He will prepare them for earth's final crisis and Christ's long-anticipated second coming.

What #3: Pray for Your Community: A 40 Day Prayer Walking Guide Pray for Your Community is a practical prayer guide designed to help you focus personal or corporate prayers around specific people and circumstances in your community/ Each day is broken into several components: an Old Testament passage and reading, a New Testament passage and reading, prayer points for the readings, a specific group of people or entities to pray for and a prayer walking suggestion. This resource is freely available on the Faith For Family website.

**The "How" of Your Prayer Strategy:** Once your prayer warrior leaders have been appointed and your resources have been acquired, you may proceed with implementation. Here are some important steps to consider:

How #1: A Sermon or Sermon Series The pastor should dedicate at least one Sabbath to educate and inspire the church to unite together in prayer for the advancement of the kingdom of God through prayer. During this time, he/she could introduce the Prayer Warrior team and encourage total member involvement in prayer. Periodically, throughout the upcoming year, prayer as a foundation for success in outreach and witnessing should be the focus of the Sabbath message.

How #2: Train Prayer Group Leaders Leaders must be familiarized with the resources above. Insure that they understand the goal of each resource and can comfortably facilitate leading a group through them. This training may be done by the pastor or prayer warrior team leader.

How #3: Organize Weekly Prayer Groups Members should be encouraged to join a weekly group who meet to read, learn and pray together. These groups may meet at the church, in homes, cafés, etc. They may even meet by telephone, Facetime or Skype. Meetings should be kept simple and stay focused on learning how to practice and apply the information contained in the resources.

How #4: Prayer Focus and Themes Provide specific a daily, weekly, or monthly prayer focus for people to pray focus on in prayer. The “Pray for Your Community” resource above can provide many ideas to assist individuals and groups to center their prayers around important themes. You may also choose to have overarching themes for each month between now and the start of the evangelistic meetings in late October.

How #5: Schedule Days or Weeks of Prayer Establish designated times for your members to pray together specifically and corporately for an outpouring of God’s Holy Spirit on the local church, its members, the community, bible workers, interests, the evangelist, etc.

How #6: Pray at Prayer Meeting Unfortunately, many prayer meetings do not prioritize prayer. They are Bible studies with a few minutes of prayer to close. A suggested schedule for a true prayer meeting might look like this:

- A hymn or worship song, and short “starter” bible verse to focus the group on prayer: 10-15 minutes. The need for the “starter” verse is that participants are not always and naturally in a mental and spiritual mood to pray. These starters are designed to stir our hearts and minds to prayer.
- Praying: 45-50 minutes

There are many models for prayer. Some use the ACTS Model; **A**doration, **C**onfession, **T**hanksgiving, **S**upplication as a guide. Always end with declarations of faith and confidence that God has heard and is answering your prayers.

Listening prayer is another option. Following the command of Psalms 46:10 to, “Be still and know that I am God,” set aside the first 5-10 minutes for silence before Him. Begin by asking God to grant each member the capacity to hear his voice and then be silent and listen. Participants may write down impressions, images they received, etc. These may be shared at the end, written on a flip chart for all to see and then prayed over.

These are only two of many possible options available. Just remember: Prayer meeting should be about prayer!

How #6: Participate in Conference Scheduled Prayer Initiatives. Throughout the course of the year, the PA Conference will be announcing at least two special days for statewide prayer for the success of the Faith for Family evangelistic initiative in central PA. The pastor and prayer warrior team should actively promote these days of prayer and seek to engage the whole church to participate.

How #7: Finally, Pray, Pray, Pray! The Faith For Family evangelism initiative cannot be successful with prayer. Preach about prayer, teach about prayer, encourage prayer, nurture prayer. Pray, pray, pray and God will hear and answer our hearts desire to add 500 new members to the churches this year!

“Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field (Matthew (35-38 NIV).”

“We are to come to God in faith, and pour out our supplications before Him, believing that He will work in our behalf, and in behalf of those we are seeking to save. We are to devote more time to earnest prayer (SDA Bible Commentary 3:146, 1147).”