

'MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER'...  
MATTHEW 21:13.

# ESTABLISHING PRAYER GROUPS

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Praying for transformation and revival in  
local churches, communities and the  
country.

## THE EFFECT OF PRAYER GROUPS IN CHURCHES, COMMUNITY TRANSFORMATION AND REVIVAL

Research shows that prayer groups are of great importance in churches, communities and the preparation for, as well as the progress of revival. It is perhaps the most important element of revival and spiritual progress of the gospel in communities. This type of praying is done in prayer groups, also sometimes called prayer cells or home prayer groups. It usually starts with one or two people who establish a prayer group and then these prayer groups start to multiply, sometimes growing to dozens and often to hundreds of small prayer groups. This happened in almost all the revivals in history, or at least in over 90% of all cases. Many churches testify about the great influence of prayer groups in their churches.

The multiplication of small prayer groups has proved to be the simplest and most effective strategy for saturating towns, cities and a nation with prayer, and mobilising prayer for renewal and revival in the church. Let us fill our communities, towns, cities and the nation with prayer groups. Prayer groups help to focus on the presence of God. Secondly, they encourage prayer for specific needs of people and lastly, they help us to persevere in prayer until there are specific breakthroughs and victory against the attacks of the evil one.

Many revivals, significant spiritual growth and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit are the result of groups of people coming together for times of prayer and supplication - where people begin to establish one or two, then dozens and often eventually hundreds of prayer groups. This is what happened in all the major awakenings around the world.

Revival never just happens. There is always a time of preparation preceding it, and the preparation always includes prayer. Dr James Edwin Orr, a renowned revival scholar, said that almost every revival can be traced back to anything from one to ten people who started to pray for revival. Throughout history, small prayer groups proved to be the best, simplest and most effective strategies to bring renewal and revival in the church.

## EXAMPLES FROM THE PAST 350 YEARS

The following are a few examples of the use of prayer groups during the past 350 years, that resulted in revivals.

*The Cambuslang revival in Scotland in 1742* was built on the concept of prayer societies (prayer groups). The testimonies of the power and effect of prayer groups in the Cambuslang revival, affected many other cities in Scotland and the rest of Britain, Europe and Scandinavia. The method of multiplying prayer groups was also effectively used in the Netherlands and Germany during that period. It resulted in remarkable revivals in 1748 and onwards.

*The Second Great Awakening, (1789-1806)* which was even more widespread than the First, started in England after a period of seven years of prayer, where local churches set aside Monday evenings to pray for revival and missions. This prayer “movement” eventually made its way to America. After seven years of prayer, revival came.

During the *Fourth Great Awakening (1857-1861)* prayer groups were established from country to country, city to city and from town to town. It happened in every nation, also in South Africa. In Ulster, Northern Ireland,

104 prayer groups were praying weekly for revival. Prayer groups sprang up everywhere. Many of them were among the young people. In Scotland in 1860, about 2 000 prayer groups were established and started to pray for revival. Within a few months Scotland was in the grip of a most extraordinary revival.

Before and during the extra-ordinary *revival in Dundee, Scotland (1835-1843)*, in the church where Robert Murray McCheyne was the pastor, it is said that there were 39 prayer meetings every week, five of them conducted by children for children.

*R. A. Torrey went to Australia in 1905* for a series of meetings. When he came to Melbourne, Australia, there were already 2 100 prayer cells with 20 000 people praying in home prayer meetings. The city was saturated with prayer. Those meetings had the atmosphere of revival and there was a remarkable harvest. But for eleven years leading up to 1905, a band of ministers and laymen came together on Saturday nights pleading with God for a “big revival”.

*The 1900-1910 decade of revival*, started in the late 1890s when prayer groups were established all over the world and simultaneously began to pray for revival: China, Korea, India, Australia, South Africa, as well as other countries in Africa and Europe. These prayer groups were not globally organised. It was just God moving spontaneously in every nation. In Wales it was reported that from 1897 there was a sudden increase in prayer, a hunger for revival and a deep concern about the state of the church. Especially since 1902, prayer intensified. More churches started to pray: more prayer meetings were established; more people attended the prayer meetings and the people started to pray with intensifying desperation. In the first months of 1903, four young men, eighteen years of age, started holding a prayer

meeting every night on a mountainside. They continued for two months and then dozens of people joined them, and it resulted in an awakening in their church.

In 1989 Brian Mills used the principle of “prayer triplets” (three people in a prayer group, each person praying for three unsaved people) to prepare for the *1989 Billy Graham Crusade in London*. More people were saved by means of the prayer triplets that were meeting for months before the crusade, than during the crusade itself.

## **24/7 PRAYER EMERGING**

Presently, there is a multiplication of prayer groups all over the world. Many of these prayer groups become part of, or develop into prayer networks. And through these prayer networks it is quite common that 24/7 prayer watches emerge. In South Africa prayer networks are being established in cities and town. Many prayer groups are involved in such networks – either independent prayer groups in a city or town, or prayer groups from local churches. There is a strong focus on connecting prayer groups and 24/7 prayer watches are often established. There is as strong focus on using the existing prayer groups and prayer networks, to establish 24/7 prayer watches all over the nation.

A prayer meeting started in the south of England in 1999 where a church united in prayer to pray non-stop for one month. They eventually continued to pray for 100 days and a 24/7 prayer movement was birthed. It is simply called 24-7 Prayer. Today this prayer movement is present in more than 120 nations.

Another example is a pastor in a township in South Africa who started to mobilise prayer groups all over South Africa. These prayer groups developed into 24/7 prayer watches and today (2019) there are already more than 10 000 such watches all over the country.

In China there is a church network that currently has 112 000 prayer watches (24/7). As in the other examples mentioned, these watches also often started as prayer groups and then developed into 24/7 prayer watches.

It is evident that the basic building block for mobilising prayer in local churches, building prayer networks or establishing 24/7 prayer watches, is prayer groups and the multiplication of such groups.

**Awaken the Watchmen**, a booklet with guidelines on how to establish 24/7 prayer watches, is available at Jericho Walls.

## HOW TO START A PRAYER GROUP

Individuals or prayer group leaders start by inviting other Christians to join them in prayer. Any Christian can join such a group and it is never exclusive to a few individuals with a special gift of intercession. It is important to organise a prayer meeting in such a way that all the members will feel comfortable to participate.

1. A typical prayer group can be made up of 3-10 people, but groups can be larger as well.
2. The focus is to saturate communities with prayer, starting several groups in every corner of that community!
3. It serves to be of great encouragement for all individual prayer groups in an area to occasionally gather corporately.
4. Groups can be led by one person acting as the leader or facilitator of the group. Such a person needs no special skills, but to have a heart for prayer and for God's presence in their community. The focus will be to facilitate prayer from Scripture and learning how to listen and pray God's heart every time they gather.
5. The leader/facilitator must take special care to remain in contact with prayer group members to ensure they receive prayer information when they are not gathering and to keep them motivated to pray continuously.

## WHERE TO START PRAYER GROUPS

Start with what you have. It is wonderful if a prayer group can be made up of individuals who represent or are involved in different spheres of society; every local church, neighbourhood, complex, street, office block, factory, school, police station, corporate business, bank, small business, university, college, nursing home, etc.

You can invite individuals from your local congregation to be part of a prayer group. Several prayer groups can operate within one congregation itself as well, e.g. supporting different ministries within the congregation.

## **TRAINING**

It is wise to equip a prayer group in terms of teaching and mentoring. It is important for prayer groups to learn more of the different facets of prayer. This will help to diminish the possibility of friction, disagreements and deception from creeping in. It facilitates a teachable spirit that is needed to counter error, false teaching and pride. It is important to create opportunities where prayer groups can be equipped and guided to also deepen their personal prayer lives. Individuals learn how to pray in specific situations, as well as broaden their understanding of the challenges and extent of the prayer responsibility of the church.

## **MULTIPLICATION**

Once a prayer group is well established, a process can be started towards the multiplication of prayer groups. One way to facilitate multiplication is to ask each member of an existing group to consider starting a separate group with people they know. Multiplication is not necessarily splitting any existing group into two or three new groups. An individual can remain part of a current prayer group, while simultaneously planting a next group. They do not have to leave the original group. Pray though, that God will work in and prepare the hearts of those individuals who do need to leave an existing group.

## WHAT TO PRAY

There are no limitations on the variety of things that can and must be prayed about. Every group will decide their prayer focus by following the leading of the Holy Spirit. The following list may serve as a guideline to help determine an initial prayer focus.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• A personal deeper walk with God</li><li>• The unsaved</li><li>• The unreached &amp; missionaries</li><li>• Abortion</li><li>• The economy of the country</li><li>• The local church</li><li>• Your own ministry in the church</li><li>• The government</li><li>• The youth</li><li>• The judicial system</li><li>• People struggling with emotional pain, bitterness, forgiveness</li><li>• Use newspapers, the radio and TV to help you understand the basic social needs of people and the challenges that society faces</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Muslims, Hindus and Buddhists</li><li>• Spiritual revival in the church</li><li>• Families and marriages</li><li>• Violence, corruption, murder</li><li>• People involved in the occult</li><li>• Your workplace</li><li>• Corruption</li><li>• The media</li><li>• Prisoners</li><li>• Revival in your church</li><li>• Discipline in schools and the education system</li><li>• Personal repentance, holiness, brokenness and surrender</li></ul>
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Sometimes individuals feel burdened to pray about specific issues such as human trafficking, abortion, domestic violence or substance abuse, or specifically for reaching the lost and the salvation of the unreached. Their prayer group can then cover those issues in prayer.

## **UNITED PRAYER**

There is something particularly powerful about existing prayer groups across denominational borders in a city or town, occasionally meeting for corporate prayer. They will share testimonies and encourage each other to hear what God is doing across denominations in their area. They may even consider joint prayer initiatives from time to time. Prayer groups reach their full potential when they not only function as individual groups, but when a corporate feel and focus for an area settles among them.

## **KEEP THE FOLLOWING IN MIND**

1. Look for at least one person with whom you can pray (i.e. people in your workplace or among your friends. Then ask others to join you in prayer, contacting them one by one.
2. Start by praying together once a week. Sometimes people want to meet more than once a week.
3. If you have established a prayer group in the marketplace, ensure that the prayer meeting is held either before work or during a tea break or lunchtime.

4. Please do not organise speakers for the prayer meetings; focus on prayer itself. Speakers often preach, which may discourage prayer and you may find after a while that nobody is attending any more.
5. During the meeting, you can focus on specific issues. Read some relevant Scripture verses. Make one or two short comments about that (do not spend more than 5 minutes on this).
6. Allow time if someone wants to share what he or she learned about prayer. It is often helpful to give time for 1-2 testimonies of answers to prayer, stressing that it should be a testimony and not a sermon.
7. Give opportunity to share prayer requests without praying ONLY for personal needs.
8. First complete the prayer time and then have times of fellowship afterwards.
9. Encourage each one in the group to pray for the salvation of at least 3-10 people (friends, family, colleagues, etc.)
10. Be focused. Decide beforehand on things that you want to pray about.
11. It is of great value to set aside time at the beginning of the prayer meeting to listen to the Lord and then pray about the matters that are shown by the Holy Spirit.
12. Encourage people to pray Scripture. There are a variety of books available on this topic that are very effective to provide guidelines on what to pray about. Several booklets are also available that list promises found in Scripture.

## Prayer initiatives to consider

**Jericho Walls Prayer App** – A free prayer app with short, daily prayer pointers, to help people to pray for the church, the nation and the world is available at Google Play Store as well as App Store.

**The Presidential Prayer Watch** – A weekly prayer watch for the presidency. On Whatsapp. +27-84-506-9853

**Jericho Walls Prayer Room** – A prayer initiative for upcoming issues of importance in South Africa and internationally. A weekly or bi-weekly Whatsapp with relevant info. +27-84-989-8000

**The Watch** – A weekly “Whatsapp prayer meeting” where we pray for revival and the transformation of our communities. Wednesdays between 18:00 and 22:00. During these 4 hours you can write your prayers on The Watch (through Whatsapp). Nobody can post anything for the rest of the 164 hours of the week on this group. The group opens at 18:00 and closes 22:00. You will receive a Whatsapp message every Wednesday at 18:00 to announce the start of the prayer meeting. You can join at a time (during the 4 hours) that is convenient for you and spend some time (5 or 10 or 15 minutes) and write some prayers for revival and the church. You can come and go as you like. *Send an email to [info@jwipn.com](mailto:info@jwipn.com) or call us at 012-365 3213 if you want to subscribe.*



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