



# Pray on Purpose

Brownsburg Church of Christ

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AM Assembly



## Introduction:

**Acts 11:21** explains the Antioch church grew because the hand of the Lord was with them. From that we recognize if our congregation will have success, we have to seek the hand of the Lord. We can only do that through prayer. What success do you see happening for the Brownsburg church in this year? Understand this: there will be no success without supplication. Our plans are pointless without prayer. That is why our elders have asked us today to start praying in earnest about our upcoming evangelistic work. If God is not involved, our plans will amount to nothing. This should lead us to think about prayer. In **Luke 11:1**, Jesus' disciples said, "Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples." There is an underlying principle regarding prayer taught by this request. The apostles understood proper prayer does not happen by accident. They knew if they were to pray meaningfully and deeply like Jesus, they had to pray on purpose. Therefore, the apostles wanted to be *taught* to pray like Jesus. If we are going to take the next step of growth in our prayer lives, we must learn to pray on purpose. As we talk about this, please recognize I am not talking about our own individual prayer lives. I am talking about our lives as a praying part of this congregation. Learn with me how to pray on purpose and watch how it impacts this congregation.

## Discussion:

### I. Purpose to pray.

- A. **I Thessalonians 5:17** says to pray without ceasing. We always intend to pray. But let's face it; prayer just isn't one of those pressing things we have to do right now. It is not as pressing as getting to work on time. Or getting the kids' homework done. Or having supper ready when your spouse gets home. Or having the house cleaned before the guests come on Friday. Or watching our favorite TV show. Thus, we always mean to get to prayer. Every once in a while we do get to it. But most of the time it gets put off for a more convenient time.
- B. No one prays on accident. If we don't purpose to pray, we won't. We need to have times for prayer. Consider **Acts 3:1**. The apostles were going to the temple at the ninth hour (3 pm), called the hour of prayer. I have no doubt this refers to a Jewish custom. However, they knew what they were going to be doing at 3 pm. They were going to be praying. Consider Daniel. Three times a day, he knew exactly where he was going to be—facing Jerusalem, praying (**Daniel 6:10**). Interestingly, his co-workers also knew what he was going to be doing. Think about our Muslim friends who have five scheduled prayers per day. Is it any surprise they think we are infidels?
- C. Think about how many things we schedule and refuse to miss. We all schedule away at least 40 hours per week to work. We don't schedule anything during those times because we see making money as important. If we are involved in organized sports, scouts, or clubs, those times are scheduled and we keep them protected. How many of us won't schedule anything on Monday night or Sunday afternoon because of football? How many of us have a favorite TV show we schedule around? Prayer is important enough to schedule and keep everything but dire emergencies from getting in the way. We need to have our "hours of prayer" that we just know are for prayer. If you need to, get an accountability partner. Peter and James were going together to pray. Perhaps it will help you find a partner with which you can pray on a regular basis. Whatever you do, make sure you purpose to pray or it just won't happen. Keep in mind, Satan doesn't want you praying. If you don't do it on purpose, he will make sure you don't do it on accident.
- D. No doubt, there will be times when the crowds press in and schedules go awry. When that is the case, we need to be like our Savior and make time, stepping out of the hustle and bustle, get away from the crowds and slip off to pray (**Luke 5:15-16**). Finally, though we have scheduled times of prayer, we must not forget there are times when it is just right to pray right then and there. We must not be people who only promise to pray for others and instead be people who stop right then and there and pray. When someone tells you about some problem. Don't say, "I'll pray for you." Say, "Let's pray about that, right now."

### II. Pray our congregation's purpose.

- A. Now that you have purposed to pray, what should you pray? No doubt you have heard the acronym A-C-T-S—adoration, confession, thanksgiving and supplication. A friend of mine offers another great outline. You begin, "Dear God, you are..." and praise God for everything He is. Then, "Dear God, you..." and talk about what He has done. Then you say, "Dear God thank you, for..." Finally, you say, "Dear God, help ..." and offer your peti-

tions. As an additional point, I think you should add “Dear God forgive me for...” These are great outlines for your prayers. But what do we need to pray about as a praying member of this congregation?

- B. Remember, we are not just talking about your personal prayer life. We are talking about you as a praying member of this congregation. We need to pray this congregation’s purpose. Our elders have summarized our purpose in the following statement:

*Our vision: An expanding membership growing and sharing in faith, love, and talents; confident in our salvation.*

- C. I see five specific things in this statement that we need to pray on purpose.

1. *An expanding membership:* We started by reading **Acts 11:21**. Further, consider **I Corinthians 3:5-7**. If we are going to grow, God is going to cause it. We need to pray that God’s hand will be with us and that He will cause the growth. While we plan well and work hard, we need to understand **Proverbs 16:9**. We may plan many things in our hearts and minds, but it is only the power of God that can establish and make those plans come true. We need to pray for growth. We need to pray for contacts and prospects. We need to pray for courage. We need to pray for wisdom. We need to pray that God will give us wisdom toward outsiders that we may redeem our time with them and speak to them in ways that will motivate them to come to Jesus (**Colossians 4:5-6**). We need to pray that God will strengthen us to think like disciplers all the time.
2. *Growing and sharing our faith:* According to **I John 5:4**, faith is the victory. Faith is our victory. Faith is not only the victory for us individually, it is the victory for us as a congregation. As **Galatians 2:20** demonstrates, the stronger our faith in Jesus, the more we will surrender to His will. The more we surrender to His will, the more victory we will have. We know that God’s way works, but only when we work God’s way. We will only work God’s way when we grow our faith. As **II Peter 1:5-11** teaches, it is only when we are growing our faith that we will have a guaranteed entrance into the eternal kingdom of Jesus Christ. We need to pray for our own faith. We need to pray for the faith of our brothers and sisters here. We need to pray for our ability to share our faith with others in this congregation, praying for the opportunity and abilities to exercise and demonstrate our faith. We need to pray that this congregation will act only in good faith, doing everything based upon God’s Word, which is the basis for our faith (**Romans 10:17**).
3. *Growing and sharing our love:* Paul said that the aim of our charge or the goal of our teaching is love, from a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith (**I Timothy 1:5**). We know that the two greatest commandments are to love God and love others (**Matthew 22:36-40**). Faith, hope, and love all abide, but the greatest of these is love (**I Corinthians 13:13**). Love caps off the virtues we should add to our faith (**II Peter 1:5-8**) and it is the ultimate fruit the Spirit bears in our lives when we are walking in Him (**Galatians 5:22-23**). All the world will know we are truly Jesus’ disciples when they see love among us (**John 13:34-35**). We need to pray for love within and among this congregation. Let’s face it, when people crowd together, folks get bumped, bruised, and stepped on. Feelings get hurt. Egos get bruised. As **Proverbs 10:12** says, love will cover these offenses. Love will help us be knit together and grow. We need to pray for love to grow in this congregation. We need to pray for love between us. If you know of turmoil among brethren, you need to pray for them (and even with them) for growing and sharing love.
4. *Growing and sharing our talents:* We know the parable of the talents from **Matthew 25:14-30**. We all have different abilities, resources, and opportunities. Some have more than others. But no matter who we are, we have some gifts God has given us to be used to His glory and in service of others. It is by this working that the whole body grows (**Ephesians 4:15-16**). Only when each part is using the talents God has given it can this body grow. Therefore, we need to pray for our talents; that is, pray for the abilities, resources, and opportunities of this congregation and of each of its members. Pray that these talents will increase and that each of us will be like the 5-talent and 2-talent men, who used their talents to glorify their master. We must pray that none will be like the 1-talent man, hiding their talents.
5. *Having confidence in our salvation:* **Hebrews 10:19-22** talks about our confidence. We are in Jesus Christ, we have confidence to come into God’s presence. We can approach Him with full assurance. **Vss. 23-24** demonstrate that it is this confidence that actually emboldens us to hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering and also to provoke one another to love and good works. Sadly, it seems that many Christians today think that only doubting our salvation causes us to work harder. It is as if they think that this doubting of whether or not we are really saved will cause us to try all the more. The problem is this approach is not actually helping anyone be saved. It is only attempting to control and manipulate behavior. Rather, the scripture demonstrates that it is confidence in Jesus that prompts us to grow in Him. As **I John 4:19** says, we are prompted to love by fully understanding Christ’s love for us. According to **Philippians 2:12-13**, we are only confidently motivated to work in Christ when we are fully confident that God is working in us. As **Roman 8:28-30** says, God is going to work everything together for our good if we love Him. That confidence

prompts us to keep on keeping on when we stumble and fall. According to **I Peter 5:10**, God will restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish us. We need to pray for confidence in these promises because only by confidence in God's promises will we continue to hold on to God's hand.

D. If we want the Lord's hand to be with us, we need to pray our congregation's purpose.

### III. Pray purposefully.

- A. As you pray specifically for the congregation, don't let your prayers be hit or miss. We have already talked about planning your prayer times. Now plan your prayers themselves. Don't just pray whatever happens to come into your head that day. Pray purposefully. Here are two different possible approaches.
- B. You have lots to pray for. You might be thinking right now, "I'm already praying for so much, I just don't have time to add all of this to my praying." I can understand that. Instead of trying to hit on every possible prayer topic each day, why not choose one day out of the week to pray for the congregation and its purpose. Obviously, you can pray for anything else you want on that day as well. But instead of feeling pressured to get all of this in every day along with all of your other praying, set aside one day to focus your praying on the congregation. This is the choice I have made. Thursday is my prayer day for this congregation, its work, its leadership, its purpose, and its members. I no longer feel guilty about prayer being hit or miss for this congregation. I know I have a day each week in which I'll be praying for each of you and this congregation as a whole.
- C. But perhaps you don't like the idea of reserving that kind of prayer for one day per week, but you are still stressed about your prayer schedule. Instead of trying to pray for every aspect of the church's work, why not schedule the aspects of the congregation and its work you are going to pray about each day. Consider the following possible schedule:
  1. *Sunday*: Praying with the congregation. We offer several prayers together. Increase your focus to pray along with the leaders and to let the prayers the leaders offer be from you as well as them.
  2. *Monday*: Pray for our shepherds. (Use the qualification lists in **I Timothy 3:1-7** and **Titus 1:5-9**. Another great passage is to contrast with the shepherds of Israel in **Ezekiel 34:1-10**.)
  3. *Tuesday*: Pray for our deacons. (Use the qualifications list from **I Timothy 3:8-13**, also **Acts 6:1-6** is helpful to me.)
  4. *Wednesday*: Pray for evangelism. (This includes our local evangelist, evangelists we support elsewhere, our guests and our guest evangelism program, Friends and Family day, website, etc.)
  5. *Thursday*: Pray for our Bible classes (for the teachers, students, VBS, guests to class).
  6. *Friday*: Pray for the brethren (go through the directory).
  7. *Saturday*: Pray through the vision statement.
- D. Whatever choice you make about when you pray, make sure you pray purposefully for the church, its leaders, its workers, its work, its members. Don't let that slip through the cracks in the midst of all your personal prayers.

### Conclusion:

I want to end with a story to show the power of God in response to prayer. Several weeks ago, I wanted to take another step of growth in my prayer life. I had been praying decently every day. I prayed every morning with a lot of general vagaries. But I realized despite all that I knew about prayer and all the good advice I offered about prayer that I wasn't practicing what I preached on it. So I developed a schedule for prayer and decided to devote myself to deeper prayer with more specific intent. Monday became my day to pray for evangelism: my own, this church's, and other evangelists I know. The very first Monday I started the day in my office with prayer about evangelism. I pleaded with God to help me grow in evangelism, to bless this congregation's efforts to evangelize, and to provide opportunities for evangelism. Then I went on about my work for the day. That afternoon, a man came from a company who inspects the fire extinguishers in the building. I welcomed him, sent him on his way throughout the building and went back to work in my office. Despite my praying, I was blind to the opportunity. But then he came into my office with a paper for me to sign. I noticed that he had one of our guest brochures in his hand. Yet still, I was blinded. I thought, "Good, maybe he'll be intrigued and come visit." Finally, before the man turned to leave, he said, "I picked up one of your brochures. My wife and I just had a baby about 6 months ago. That has really gotten us thinking about spiritual things. We think we want to get back into a church." It was as if God was saying, "Hello, Edwin, wake up. Here's what you prayed for this morning." We talked for 20-30 minutes about the congregation and his family. I don't know if he'll ever attend. Growth is up to God. What I know is I prayed purposefully and look at what God did in response. He gave me exactly what I asked for. Imagine what will happen if we become a people who walk by faith and not by sight, praying constantly, asking the Lord to be with us. This is the fundamental key to having any success. Let's make sure we purpose to pray, we pray our purpose, and we pray purposefully. I believe God's hand will be with us if we do. And then many will turn to the Lord (**Acts 11:21**).