



Guidelines for Effective Prayer

9 principles for including God in church decisions.

Ephesians 4:16; Philippians 4:6–7

For each guideline, mark how you think we're doing as a board or committee:

How are we doing?

1. Prayer must be dynamic and flowing. That simply means the leader must be sensitive to the uniqueness of each meeting. Some nights we pray for forty-five minutes; other nights only two.

Need Work Pretty Good Great

2. God is looking only for simple, sincere prayers. God desires conversation that honestly expresses the hearts of his people.

3. It is corporate prayer. Little happens if everyone prays silently. We encourage people to jump in with conversational prayers.

4. Focus on attitudes and perspectives. The point of prayer is to make us more sensitive to God's will. We're not looking for a "word from the Lord" on whether to buy a specific brand of copier. We'll decide that later out of the change he works in us through prayer.

5. Everyone must want God's will. This is too often assumed, but it's easy in the routine of meetings to think that my first inclination is also God's desire.

6. No one person has a monopoly on God's wisdom. As we pray, we look for God to lead us "by every supporting ligament" (Eph. 4:16). Wisdom in the body of Christ is always manifested corporately. If people aren't responsive to the insights of others, they can't be part of a team.

7. Everyone agrees not to use prayer to manipulate others. Nothing kills prayer faster than prayers aimed at the people in the room rather than at God. As the angel reminded Joshua, God is not on anyone's side but rather wants to know if we are on his.

8. We trust each other. Whenever our leadership teams had trouble praying together, mistrust was at the heart of it. Prayer flourishes only in an atmosphere of trust.

9. Don't fear mistakes. Learning to pray has its ups and downs, but enduring them together is what being the body of Christ is all about. When struggling, we can simply say, "Lord, teach us to pray."

—WAYNE JACOBSEN

Discuss

1. How did you evaluate how we're doing?
2. What strategic decision that we're currently facing needs focused prayer?
3. Other than at the beginning or close of meetings, how can we include prayer as a core feature of our discussions?