

We begin our study with an overview of the vision of our church set forth by our pastor and leadership. As intercessors in the church we want to align ourselves with that particular vision.

Write out John 3:8.

*"The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but
you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going.
So it is with everyone born of the Spirit."*

How do we know we are following the wind of the Spirit of God? There are great prayer resources and vibrant prayer ministries available to us that call us in many directions. We could get involved in various noble causes such as praying for evangelism across the world, serving in healing ministries, honing our prophetic gifts by following great prophets, or confronting demonic strongholds in our city. We might be interested in heading up prayer walking in our community, joining with other parents to pray against ungodliness in our schools, or marching on Washington to war against injustice. Where do we begin?

"Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God" (Psalm 92:13). We begin our role as intercessors by getting planted and rooted in the local church which God ordained as the primary source of ministry to the world.

Intercessors are a part of the body of Christ, His church. Our pastors provide covering that will protect us. When we are a part of the body, we can do more together than we can on our own.

John 3:8 says we are born of the Spirit. When we are born of the Spirit of God, we live by spiritual principles. Three of those principles are: submission, faith, and humility.

1. Submission:

We willingly submit to our pastor and desire to serve him.

Read Hebrews 13:17. Why do we want to submit to our leaders?

*"Obey your leaders and submit to their authority.
They keep watch over you as men who must give an account.
Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that
would be of no advantage to you."*

2. Faith:

We walk by faith and not by sight. It takes faith to follow and support our pastor because we do not know where the wind of the Spirit has come from or where it is going. However, we are asked to follow our pastor, who is dependent on the Holy Spirit for direction and success.

Even many of those who followed Jesus as His disciples did not have faith to endure. *"The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe."* (John 6:63-64)

Read John 6:66-68. How did Peter respond to Jesus' question?

"From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed Him. 'You do not want to leave too, do you?' Jesus asked the Twelve. Simon Peter answered him, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.'"

3. Humility:

"If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves" (Philippians 2:1-3). Choose the lowest place as a servant in God's house. There is power in laying down our lives for Him and others.

Write out and meditate on Matthew 10:39.

*"Whoever finds his life will lose it,
and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."*

A Covering for Our Pastors

In submission, faith, and humility, we lay down our own agendas and become watchmen for our pastors and the ministries that they oversee.

1 Peter 5:8 tells us to be self-controlled and alert because our enemy, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. His main target will be our leaders because of the influence they have. *"Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful,"* as we are told in Colossians 4:2.

Intercessors are the watchmen for our pastors and our church. Read Isaiah 21:6-8 and explain the role of an intercessor by drawing analogies from watchmen in a war.

"What the Lord says to me: 'Go, post a lookout and have him report what he sees. When he sees chariots with teams of horses, riders on donkeys or riders on camels, let him be alert, fully alert.'"

Our Great Commission

More than any other purpose for our church, we are called to be a Great Commission church that reaches the lost and equips believers to do the work of ministry.

Two thousand years ago, when Jesus ascended to heaven after His resurrection, He gave instructions to those who were watching. Today, we call those instructions the Great Commission.

Write out Matthew 28:18-20 and underline the action words from the commands that Jesus gave the church.

"Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'"

Jesus was saying that after having given His life for ours and conquering the devil and the power of sin, He now had the keys that gave Him all authority on the earth. He then told His church, including us, that He is giving that authority to all of His disciples.

Write out and meditate on John 14:12.

"I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in Me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father."

Jesus wanted our ministry to be even greater than His own ministry while He was on earth. That is why at the end of His time here, He willingly gave His authority to His disciples and said, "Go!". He wanted His disciples to change the world and reach people everywhere. He desired that people all over the world come together in local churches and be baptized in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. He wanted His disciples to teach others to observe what He had commanded them – to pass it on so that new believers would go and do it themselves. Then Jesus said if His disciples would find this mission and live it out, He would be with them until the end of the age.

The mission for our church has those simple instructions from Jesus. We have enjoyed His presence and life-giving anointing as we have purposefully done what He commissioned us to do. We will do everything it takes to stay on mission. Why? Because we will continue to depend on His presence in our church!

In Ephesians 1:17-18, we see the Great Commission stated another way:

"I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people." (NIV)

"I ask the God of our Master, Jesus Christ, the God of glory – to make you intelligent and discerning in knowing him personally, your eyes focused and clear, so that you can see exactly what it is he is calling you to do, grasp the immensity of this glorious way of life he has for his followers" (Message)

Our church is focused on the four elements of the Great Commission found in Ephesians 1:17-18. We will be learning how to pray more effectively by studying different prayer formats and topics that will enrich our prayer experience personally. However, we will study with this goal in mind: to successfully intercede with all kinds of prayers so that He is proclaimed to everyone! Our church does not exist for us. It is organized for one reason - to reach people at every level of spiritual growth.

In 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, we are told that we are not our own, that we were bought with a price. There is no glory in being an intercessor. Only God will ever know the time you spend in prayer and intercession for others.

Write out Matthew 6:5-6.

*"And when you pray, do not be like the hypocrites,
for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and on the
street corners to be seen by men. I tell you the truth,
they have received their reward in full. Go into your room,
close the door and pray to your Father, who is unseen.
Then your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you."*

As intercessors if we follow Jesus' example, we most likely will not win the approval of the religious people because they did not approve of Him. By following in His steps, we will be used by Him to bring revival and renewal to thousands.

In Prayer Force Training, the foundation and purpose of our study on prayer will be to support this vision. There are four phrases from Ephesians 1:17-18 that outline this goal vision: Know God, Find Freedom, Discover Purpose and Make a Difference.

1. "...that you may know Him better" – Know God - weekend services

In proclaiming the gospel message, the key is communicating the goodness and kindness of God. Romans 2:4 tells us that it is the kindness of God that leads us to repentance. There is a time in each believer's life when God's kindness and love covers over sin and He says, "Come to Me. I want to give you a fresh start. I love you. I hold nothing against you. I forgive every one of your sins." We pray for an environment in our Sunday services where anyone who does not have a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ will find His kindness and love in the valley of decision and choose life.

Because of the reality of heaven and hell, growth is not an option – our church must grow. There are over 7 billion people on earth, with about a third professing Christianity and 4.5 billion lost people – lost, destined to an eternity without God unless we as intercessors and believers do something. When we hear statistics, sometimes it is difficult to get our minds around the numbers. To illustrate 4.5 billion people – the number of the lost in the world – we would have to line up every person front to back and circle the world 34.2 times! Nothing is closer to the heart of God than reaching the lost.

If we want to do ministry like Jesus did, we need to pray for sinners to be around us. People flocked to hear Jesus teach. Only the religious people were offended by Him. As holy as He was

– the lost enjoyed being in His presence. Pray that we create an environment where the lost will come. God is more concerned about the outsider than the insider; He is more concerned about the lost than the found.

As intercessors we do not want to have misguided expectations of the weekend service. We want to pray that they come back, and that they will begin the process of a lifetime of knowing God, serving Him, and loving Him.

In Ezekiel 47:1-12, God shows the prophet Ezekiel a river. It is the river of life. In that river everything has life – it is teeming with it. This river represents the Spirit of God and intimacy with Him. The river flows during worship in our auditorium from Heaven, through our worship team, and out to the people with a life-giving anointing. In the river of life, the lost are not condemned and every visitor feels welcome.

2. "...that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened." - Find Freedom - small groups

Then, we as the church must help people find freedom. This happens best in the safety of a few people. The deep and confrontational part of our spiritual growth, where we learn to take up our cross and experience life change happens most effectively in a small group setting. It is there that we get real and honest and get the accountability that we need. Freedom Groups, in particular, are small groups designed to help people close the door on yesterday. Our vision is that every member be connected in a small group.

There are four aspects of a person's life:

- The Arena – I know, and you know. This is our public self, the part that everyone sees.
- The Mask – I know, but you do not know. In small groups we take off our masks and become real with each other.
- Blind spots – I do not know, but you know. When we develop deep relationships with other believers, they help us remove the blinders so we can see our lives in an eternal perspective and begin to change.
- Potential – I do not know, and you do not know. This is where intercession for each other is so important. We encourage each other with words from God, hope, and vision for the future.

Read 2 Timothy 2:21-26. Write out verse 25.

*"Those who oppose Him he must gently
instruct, in the hope that God will grant them
repentance leading them to a knowledge of the
truth."*

Although we cannot be at each small group, we place a shield of intercession over every group.

We ask the Spirit of God to move in each meeting so that people all over will remove the masks, open their eyes to the blind spots, and move on to reach their potential.

3. "...that you may know the hope to which he has called you." – Discover Purpose - Growth Track

Next, we teach everyone to find and pursue their purpose. We do this through the Growth Track. Our vision is that all believers will make up their minds that they will grow. Our vision includes training up the best and the brightest to do our part to fulfill the Great Commission.

Read Hebrews 5:11-14. Write out verse 14.

"But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil."

Many Christians have disqualified themselves from great potential to teach and to minister because of a list of qualifications that are not from God. If what most people think is true about what makes one worthy to lead, God never would have used the twelve disciples because they were uneducated. Moses never would have been chosen because he was a murderer. David certainly would not have been chosen because he was an adulterer. Paul was a slaughterer of Christians, but he became the greatest apostle. Paul said, "By this time you ought to be teachers." Every day we are one day closer to Jesus' return, and we have no time to waste. Pray for a release of spiritual gifts, talents, and passion in leaders.

4. "...that you may grasp the immensity of the glorious way of life he has for his followers." – Make a Difference - Dream Team

Write out Ephesians 2:10.

"For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do."

Pray that more will get baptized, join the Dream Team, go on missions trips, be a part of church

plants, join the prayer force, and live their lives to fulfill the Great Commission. Throughout this study, pray for yourself that you find your place of ministry.

God has brought an incredible team of servants to form the staff of our church. Their job is to equip the saints for ministry. As intercessors, we will intercede for our pastors, staff, and the church for God's blessing and favor.

As we celebrate what God has done in our church, we can never forget that we are a Great Commission church. We do what we do for one primary reason: we want Him to be with us, even until the end of the age.

In Summary

The purpose of this week has been to familiarize intercessors with the specific vision, purpose, and qualities of our local church. As we journey into each teaching on prayer, always keep these ideas in mind. We are called to this church, at this time, to be supportive of this particular ministry. Although studying and practicing each area of prayer will be personally enriching, the goal is that we become a unified Prayer Force, trained for our part to fulfill the overall purpose of our church.

Next, we will focus on the most important gift at our church. Without it we would have no influence, no love, and no life. In week two, we will study what the Bible teaches about the presence of God. Moses said in Exodus 33:15, *"If Your Presence does not go with us, do not send us up from here."* God is calling us up to higher heights, but we cannot go there without Him.

Prayer assignment for Week One:

Familiarize yourself with the church staff. Pray for each one of them. Ask God to give you scriptures to pray for them, and write down anything He shows you.