

ABC/OHIO INSIDE THE REGION

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Keys To A Praying Church...

It seems hard to believe, but here we are on the threshold of a new year. On one hand, one can reflect on what has transpired in the previous year, while on the other we look forward with great anticipation to what God wants to accomplish in and through us into the New Year. This certainly applies to our individual lives, but also collectively as the body of Christ we call the church.

For certain, if we as individuals and churches are to realize to the fullest what God wants to do in and through us, we must pray fervently! A resource book I have found helpful is entitled *The Praying Church Sourcebook* by Alvin J. Vander Griend with Edith Bajema. In his book, Griend offers eight 'keys' to help your church grow strong in prayer. Allow me this opportunity to share them with you...

- 1) **Praying leaders are essential.** Many of our church leaders today simply are not, by biblical standards, praying leaders. It takes praying leaders to develop praying churches. They need to not only talk about prayer, teach about prayer, encourage people to pray, but they NEED to pray.
- 2) **Give prayer high priority in the church's life and ministry.** Prayer clearly had a high priority with Jesus. The same can be said about the early church. O. Halleby contends that 'prayer is the most important work in the Kingdom of God. It is a labor for which there is no substitute in the kingdom of God.' 'We can do more than pray after we have prayed,' says A.J. Gordon, 'but we cannot do more than pray until we have prayed.'
- 3) **Correct thinking about prayer is important.** We must have a correct mind-set about prayer. If we understand how prayer fits into God's rule of our lives, we are more likely to give prayer its rightful place.
- 4) **Clear communication of needs and answers to prayer is vital.** A simple way to increase the amount of effective prayer within a congregation is to effectively communicate prayer needs and answers. It is also critical to communicate prayer answers as well. If we expect our prayers to make a difference, it's important to watch for the answers and to report these to all

who have been asked to pray. Communicating requests without answers dampens the faith of those who are praying.

- 5) **Prayer should be linked to ministry.** Simply put, there is the need to stay away from selfish reasons. The key is to link prayer and ministry. Giving specific reasons for pray that revolves around ministries of the church are really helpful in keeping our prayers on focus. Ministry without prayer becomes work in the power of the flesh. Prayer without ministry is complacent Christianity. The two belong together.
- 6) **Make times, ways, and places for people to pray together.** This encourages consistency in prayer. It expands our prayer life. It strengthens our faith. Mutual praying makes the larger task of prayer more manageable. It encourages partnerships in prayer.
- 7) **Encourage personal devotions.** It is in private prayer that we most easily get in touch with our spiritual selves. People experience obstacles and hindrances to their personal devotions. Perhaps the most difficult of all is our lack of desire to pray.
- 8) **Encourage family devotions.** One of the greatest forms of support for a church's ministry is praying families. Family worship is basic to other kinds of worship. If family worship is neglected, other attempts at prayer are like sprinkling the foliage of a plant with water while leaving the roots dry.

I believe prayer is the key by which the church does its work. Through prayer we impact the world for God. As we enter this New Year, I pray that your church will be all that God means it to be. May you grow strong with prayer as the foundation for all of God's growth in and through you.

2008 ABC/OHIO American Baptist Youth Convention

The 2008 ABC/OHIO American Baptist Youth Convention will be held on February 22-24, 2008 at the Heartland Conference Retreat Center, 3201 County Road 225 , Marengo, Ohio. www.heartlandretreat.com

Cost of 'the Convention' will be \$130.00 per person, which includes all meals Saturday morning through Sunday morning. Further details including registration will be mailed to all ABC/OHIO Churches soon. Info may also be found at www.abc-ohio.org.

Columbus Baptist Association Annual Rally

The Columbus Baptist Association Annual Rally will be held on Tuesday evening, January 22, 2008. Information will be mailed to your churches soon. Plan now to attend this annual event where our C.B.A. churches come together as a family.