

Targeted Prayer for Generational Growth

Generational growth, first seen in the reproduction of a first generation house church into a second generation house church, is essential for movements to happen. A lack of generational growth truncates a movement before it even begins. So what specific things should we ask the Lord for as we pray for groups to reproduce? The first and most foundational answer is that we must start not by asking, but by *listening* - first to God, and second to our local partners and the new believers themselves.

So begin by setting aside a significant amount of time to put open-ended questions before the Lord, and to listen to what he is saying about the situation (see Questions for Listening Prayer for CP Strategy earlier in the Strategic Prayer Manual). This may be one time, or it may be several times, or it may (and likely should) become a regular part of your routine as you intercede for the work the Lord has entrusted to your team.

After you have a clearer picture of what the Lord is saying about the situation, (and after you've written those things down somewhere where you will be repeatedly reminded of them), consider the following areas for targeted prayer.

- I. Prayer - perhaps this should be obvious, but the first thing to examine after waiting on the Lord is prayer.
 - A. Personal prayer - how are you personally praying for breakthrough in this area?
 - B. Team prayer - how is your team praying for breakthrough in this area?
 - C. Strategic prayer - do you have a plan for strategic prayer? If not, consider going back to "Developing a 5-point Team Prayer Strategy" earlier in the SPM.
 - D. Prayer mobilization
 1. Among outsiders - prayer mobilization among sending churches, supporters, etc. is fairly common; but what about coordinating prayer among other workers in your area \ nation? Are there others you could train and mobilize to pray for breakthrough?
 2. Among insiders - this may be the most important aspect of prayer in movements, though it is rarely talked about. Training leaders and even new believers in not just devotional prayer, but strategic prayer, is powerful! For help in this area, consider using the book God's Grace for the World: A

- II. Expectations for Obedience - first generation groups often fizzle out because there is a low expectation for obedience, or because obedience is allowed to be postponed indefinitely, often "until the understand better", but...
 - A. As a prerequisite for understanding and revelation - Jesus does not tell us to wait until we understand better to obey his commands. More often than not, obedience to the words of Jesus is the key to unlocking deeper understanding - understanding that will elude us (and new believers) until they choose to obey in faith, even they may not completely understand. Consider praying through scriptures about obedience and blessing (see the document "Biblical Overview - Love and Obedience")
 - B. Sharing the message - It should be obvious that if new believers are not sharing the good news, their groups will not reproduce, but this imperative is often delayed as well. New believers must learn to share whatever they have learned, even if it's shaky, risky, or messy. If this is not happening, ask the Lord (and your partners) why. Is it fear? Apathy? Selfishness? Then pray into those things and ask the Lord if there is some other way to combat them - in prayer and in study of the Word.
- III. Apostolic gifts - Generational reproduction is often jump-started whenever believers with apostolic or evangelistic gifts are encountered, but we must learn to recognize these gifts, even in their roughest forms - which takes spiritual discernment. Ask the Lord where he is already moving, through whom he is already moving, and seek to meet him in those places, alongside those people. Apostolic people are often rough around the edges, they may not get along well with other leaders, they will be opinionated and likely to charge ahead before others are ready. Pray for discernment to properly interpret these signs, as well as the more obvious signs like significant fruit in short periods of time, or fruit spread out over a large geographic area. Once you identify believers with these gifts, pray for them vigorously and often, and encourage them to gather with others like them and pray

for and encourage one another - they need each other, whether they realize it or not!

- IV. Priesthood of the Believer - To be blunt, an overemphasis on positional authority kills movements. Workers coming from a traditional church background, whether Western or not, are almost always infected with an over-reliance on hierarchal leadership structures that rely more on the exercise of positional authority than on spiritual and relational authority. If this describes you (and be honest, especially if you come from a mega-church background!), spend some time with the Lord asking him to excise your unbiblical ideas around leadership. Then start praying like crazy into the priesthood of the believer. This concept, more than most any other, is crucial to reproducing movements, especially in high power-distance cultures where a leader's success is measured in the number of their followers. Ask the Lord (and your partners) what unhealthy ideas about leadership predominate in your target culture, then pray against those ideas together, and encourage the study of biblical leadership models in the house churches.
- V. Persecution - persecution can break movements if it happens too early or without adequate preparation; but persecution at the right time, in the hands of God, can spread a movement much farther, much faster, than would happen naturally.
 - A. Early study and preparation matters - As soon as people start coming to faith, start praying that the Lord would prepare and strengthen them to stand against persecution; but also that they would not unnecessarily seek it out. As new believers study persecution in the Word, pray that they would understand it not just in theory, but would consider how they would respond to persecution and social pressure themselves.
 - B. Expect God to use it - When persecution begins, remember that anything the enemy tries to use for death and destruction, the Father wants to use for life and the expansion of his kingdom. It's fine and good to pray that persecution would stop, but also (and maybe primarily) ask the Lord what he wants to do through the persecution and pressure. What is he up to? What result would most glorify him? Are there unexpected opportunities hiding among the threats? Ask for

God's perspective when persecution comes, and look for how he wants to use it to short-circuit the destructive plans of the enemy.

VI. Relationship as the foundation - Too often movement is treated as a mechanism that is supposed to produce certain outputs after receiving certain inputs. Movements are works of the Lord, and as such they are meant to be built on the foundation of relationship. Everything about God's kingdom is based on and built out of relationship; relationship is the very nature of God himself, as each person of the Trinity has been in relationship with the others for all eternity! When we forget relationship in pursuit of a goal, we miss the point. This is another way in which Western workers bring in unhealthy baggage that hinders the growth or movements. Recognize that relationship is the core of movements, and then structure your prayers accordingly! Pray for every level of relationship - relationship between believers and God, between believers and other believers, between believers and their families (whether their families believe or not - each requires prayer!), between believers and their marketplace friends and acquaintances, and on and on and on.