

## **Mid-Week Makeover by Lowell Snow**

Frequently I'm asked, **"What can we do about our Mid-week prayer meeting?"** Some wonder if this icon of church prayer should be sacrificed for more 'user-friendly' programs and by my observations, about 40% of mid-sized churches have done just that. Is it too late to save the mid-week prayer service in your church? I don't think so, but it needs an Extreme Makeover. 'Are you with me on this? We can do this people!'

### **Examine the Problem?**

Extreme Makeover – Home Edition has become a phenomenon of prime time TV. In this celebration of American ingenuity and generosity; a struggling family with a crumbling home is surprised by a big bus and a lunatic with a bull horn. They are instantly filled with joy because they know that in just one week all their housing worries will be over. But before the family can leave on their extreme vacation; they lead the design team on an evaluation tour of their current housing malfunction.

Years ago, somebody gave me a new fanged wrench with a unique head that was supposed to be one-size-fits-all. It worked – sort of, but the head wouldn't fit in small spaces and it didn't grip tight enough for really stubborn bolts. It quickly settled to the bottom of my tool box and out of use.

The mid-week prayer service has the same inherent design flaw - it tries to be a one-size-fits-all meeting. It's the pastor's Bible class, congregational call to prayer, and prayer ministry all rolled into one fifty minute package. Very efficient, but doesn't accomplish any of those tasks very well.

### **Plan your Makeover to Meets Needs.**

My son-in-law participated in one of those Extreme Home Makeovers. It all looks so spontaneous on TV, but he knew exactly when and what he was going to do months before the family was surprised by a bull horn in the front yard. How? A team of designers had considered the family's request for help and planned a new home to meet their needs long before 'that bus' showed up. And that's the key to the huge success of that show. Just building a house in a week would get old fast. It's really about meeting the needs of deserving people isn't it?

Before you start your extreme makeover of the mid-week service, you need a design based on purpose. Ask yourself, "What do we really need to accomplish?" Should it be a mid-week retreat for soldiers of the cross, or a ministry of prayer for the needs on the church prayer list? A great meeting can be built on either of these foundations, but not both.

### **Build your Makeover on a solid foundation.**

The two basic foundations for mid-week prayer service are prayer meeting and prayer ministry. Some 'demolition' will be necessary in both and unlike the TV show; you can't send the family away while you do it. Remember, even the folks that are deeply committed to the mid-week prayer service want it to be better. That's the goal so continually remind that the makeover will result not only in more prayer, but better prayer. Here are some suggestions for both formats:

**1. Prayer Meeting** - An hour of power and spiritual refreshing for those who attend. This format will meet the needs of more people, but should not be used to the exclusion of a prayer ministry.

- ✚ Surrender the church prayer list – The first step is to give the church prayer list to a prayer ministry that meets at some other time.
- ✚ Give prayer priority – Generally, in a 'prayer' meeting, the Bible study is just a short devotional and most of the meeting is devoted to prayer.
- ✚ Plan with purpose – Plan the prayer time to focus on the people who attend – their personal needs and needs outside themselves that they feel some connection with.
- ✚ Limit requests – If you have a prayer request time, put limits on it. Explain the meeting's purpose regularly and ask that requests conform to it. (chapter 15)\*
- ✚ Use scripture and suggestion – Begin the prayer time with scriptural meditation and prayer by suggestion to guide them into silent encounters with God. This should include thanksgiving, praise, confession, and private issues. (Chapters 11 & 13)\*
- ✚ Use topical prayer – Teach them how to use this conversational technique to pray in agreement for Kingdom needs both local and worldwide. (Chapters 12 & 17-19)\*
- ✚ Pray for each other – Divide the group into smaller groups to pray for one another. (Look for 'huddle groups' on pages 101, 113, & 116)\*

**2. Prayer Ministry** - If the faithful folks who attend your mid-week service are the only group in the church devoted to prayer then you'll do well to help them morph into a functioning prayer ministry.

- ✚ Recruit a Prayer Coordinator – Find a prayer warrior with the gift of administration and put them in charge of the church prayer list.
- ✚ Focus on the list - Throw out or reduce the devotional and other time consumers and devote yourselves to praying for every need on the list. If it's long, separate into smaller groups and divide it up.
- ✚ Upgrade the list –Each entry on the prayer ministry list should have: all the details of the request, dates for when it was first received and last updated, an address for the person in need, and a number to call for updates. Create a smaller edited list to give the congregation on Sunday.
- ✚ Update the list – Keep the list fresh with frequent updates. Remove needs that have been answered or can't be updated.
- ✚ Make the list personal – Connect the prayer team with the people on the list. Include time for each of them to write brief notes to two or three of the people they've prayed for. Keep track so everyone on the prayer list is contacted periodically. The church should provide post cards and postage.

- ✚ Plan the prayer time – Don't get in a rut. Use the Prayer Guide principles and techniques. (Chapters 11-20)\*
- ✚ Advertise – Make the community aware of the prayer ministry and how to contact it.

## **Have a Great 'Reveal'**

The 'reveal' makes it all worthwhile. Righteous prayer warriors, praying in agreement with Jesus, will see results. Don't keep those victories secret. Brag on them and Jesus every chance you get.

\* **“You can do this, we can help.”** If you don't already have the Prayer Guide book and conference CDs, I encourage you to take advantage of the discounts available in this newsletter. Also, don't hesitate to contact me with any question.

Published in our Nov. '07 Newsletter and National Pastor's Network