

ALONGSIDER BRIEFINGS

Building disciplemaking cultures by Bill Mowry

Volume 4

Lead through prayer

The one thing that pushes my guilt button it's thinking about prayer. As a busy leader, it's hard to carve out time to pray. My prayer life is like an oscillating curve, with ups and downs fluctuating wildly between success and almost non-existence.

When I think about prayer in building a disciplemaking culture, I'm not talking about "daily bread" prayer for personal needs or the needs of others. Prayer is more than a quick shout-out to God for daily email requests. The prayer life I'm talking about is strategic, intentional prayer for people. This prayer life was exemplified by the Old Testament prophet Samuel. Samuel modeled how culture-builders should pray.

At the end of his ministry to Israel, Samuel says "...as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you... (1 Samuel 12:23). Prayerlessness was sin to Samuel. I think there's a tie-in between Samuel's prayer life and Israel's adversarial relationship with the Philistines; "And the hand of the Lord was against the Philistines all the days of Samuel" (1 Samuel 7:13). Could it be that Israel's success against the Philistines was directly related to Samuel's commitment to pray? What would have happened if Samuel failed to pray?

When I study the prayers of Jesus and the Apostle Paul, I discover that these men focused on **macro** prayers not **micro** ones. Macro prayers are those heaven-directed big requests like understanding the "immeasurable greatness of his power" (Ephesians 1:19) or the ability to comprehend "the breadth and length of his love!" (Ephesians 3:20) Who wouldn't want these prayer requests to become a reality in a life? Macro prayers draw us to worship, enlarge our vision, and change our character. Unfortunately, we too often settle for micro prayers.

Let's mentally do some quick research. When you solicit prayer requests in a class or worship setting, what do people inevitably ask prayer for? It usually boils down to two categories – money and health. Someone needs a job and others need healing. I consider these micro prayers. They are pretty big to the ones requesting the prayer but may not stretch the greatness of God in answering.

God is concerned, as we should be, with micro prayer requests. However we can turn the micro issues into macro ones. This means turning a health crisis into a moment to have "the eyes of our heart enlightened" (Ephesians 1:18). It means turning financial concerns into an opportunity to see our riches in Christ (Ephesians 1:18). Disciplemaking cultures are build by people who invest time in strategic, macro praying.

SUGGESTED READING

Pray
by Richard Foster

Prayer
by Timothy Keller

How to Spend a Day in Prayer
by Lorne Sanny

The Secret of Intercession
by Andrew Murray

What are some marks of macro prayer life? Here are some to consider.

- **Pray for laborers.** This is more than a suggestion but a command (Matthew 9:36-38). Ask God to raise up laborers from your ministry who will work for the Kingdom in every corner of your community. Bring this prayer concern of Jesus into all of your congregational settings.
- **Pray for people to be sanctified in the truth so they can be sent into the world** (John 17:15-19). This sanctification insulates people from the world's influences rather than isolating them by removing them from the world. Standing for Christ where we live, work, play, or study is a tough assignment. We need to be sanctified in the truth.
- **Pray for multiplication.** Jesus prayed not only for the twelve but for those "who believe in me through their word...so that the world may believe..." (John 17:20-21) Ask God to multiply disciples through the church staff, through your elders or deacons, or the small group leaders. Prayerfully ask God to extend the Kingdom through the relational ministry of your leadership and others.

What encourages this type of prayer? Here are some examples. Pastor Jim recruited men to pray with him each day of the week. Instead of praying alone, he invited a leader to pray not just for accountability but to pass on his burden for prayer. Eric records prayer requests in black ink in his journal. As he prays, he records answers in red ink, tracking how God answers prayer. Joyce and Christi set aside a time each week to pray for each one in their ministry. This allows them to target prayer for specific needs. Other leaders deal with prayer-guilt through a weekly schedule. They divide their major prayer responsibilities into a weekly or two-week schedule and list the prayer concerns for each day of the week.

Choose a prayer strategy and get started. May we be like Samuel who considers a failure to pray to be sin. Let's trust God for prayer lives that influence congregations and communities, believing Him to do "far more than we can ask or think" (Jeremiah 33:3). Disciplemaking cultures happen when people pray.

You can order *The Ways of the Alongsider* at navpress.com.

You can contact Bill Mowry at www.alongsider.com. Check out other disciplemaking resources and alongsider training on his website.

The Navigators Church Discipleship Ministry has a proven process for creating intentional disciplemaking cultures. You can find out more by visiting navigatorchurchministries.org.

