



## DEVELOPING A CULTURE OF PRAYER

A culture is a set of shared attitudes, values, goals, and practices that characterizes a group. If we embrace a culture, we cannot help but reflect the values of that culture. And if the Church represents its own unique culture, how will that culture be defined?

If we take an honest look at many churches we will probably want to define the culture in terms of programmes, strategies, and methodology. But is that how God wants the culture of his church to be defined? Jesus made it clear that his father's church should be known as a "house of prayer for all nations." Churches should pursue and elevate the ministry of prayer; it is the first heartbeat of the rhythm of mission.

*"God does nothing except in response to believing prayer."*  
John Wesley

*"Prayer strikes the winning blow; service is simply picking up the pieces."* S.D. Gordon

*"Men may spurn our appeals, reject our message, oppose our arguments, despise our persons, but they are helpless against our prayers."* Sidlow Baxter

*"God shapes the world by prayer. The more prayer there is in the world the better the world will be, the mightier the forces of against evil ..."* E.M. Bounds

*"Talking to men for God is a great thing, but talking to God for men is greater still."* E.M. Bounds

*"Prayer is where the action is."* John Wesley

Spelthorne Transformation is committed to encouraging a deeper understanding of prayer culture and how to begin the journey toward the shift that will allow us to develop a culture of prayer. We want to reflect the prayer values at the heart of God. When we bring prayer to the forefront as a great, defining characteristic of a church the people will become engaged in and saturated by the powerful effects of prayer. In turn we will begin to see the Church overtake the culture that defines our society as God begins to move in revival and transformation throughout a community. By determining that our churches will be defined by a culture of prayer, we will add a greater dimension to the prayer life of our churches.

### WHAT IS A CULTURE OF PRAYER?

Understanding a culture of prayer begins by taking a fresh look at the bible's emphasis on prayer in the life of the Church. The New Testament church "all joined together constantly in prayer" (Acts 2:42), suggesting a mindset that places prayer at the heart of a church's activity, always a part of everything we do.

Paul speaks to Timothy about prayer being "first of all" in his ministry (1 Tim. 2:1).

Epaphras "is always wrestling in prayer" for the Colossians (Col 4:12) and Paul urges the Ephesians to "pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests (Eph 6:18).

A culture of prayer both gives rise to, and arises from, the prayer lives of the people in the local churches and it impacts every area of individual and church life.

### PRAYER IN UNITY

A key component of the vision of Spelthorne Transformation is that churches should pray in unity. Isolation does not glorify Christ and does not help the church. We need each other and we need to show our communities that Christ has called his church together.

### HOW DO WE ESTABLISH A CULTURE OF PRAYER IN OUR CHURCHES?

There is no magic formula. There isn't a checklist of things to do to make this shift. But like so many other things it starts with the leadership of the church. They must be a commitment to spend time listening to and hearing from the Lord with generous and indiscriminate intercessions.

The Lord ultimately determines what a culture of prayer looks like in a local congregation. A church should seek the Lord and wait on him to reveal how to begin to "change the culture" in that church.

Ask God how you should pray! Don't tell him how we want to pray, ask him. Why not try an hour of prayer where you only ask God questions; act like you know nothing and have nothing.

Here are some questions for prayer, reflection, and discussion:

- How does the term "culture of prayer" differ from a "prayer program"?
- What is a "culture"? How do you define and recognize the characteristics of a culture?
- Knowing that your church is uniquely designed by God, how would you begin to discover what a culture of prayer might look like in your congregation?
- How can you encourage your leaders to move toward developing a culture of prayer?
- How does one go about changing a culture?
- What are some indicators that the culture of your church is changing?