



Corporate Heartbeat of Prayer in YFC Introduction

Prayer is essential. Two-way communication is the vital lifeblood flowing in any relationship; that's what prayer provides us as we experience union with Christ. It's also how we know what Jesus calls us to, and whether joining like-minded others to concentrate our efforts through Youth For Christ will help us faithfully steward our Kingdom assignments. In prayer we listen and learn, repent and rest, plead and praise. These forms of expression make sense as we love God with all our being and glorify Him in all of life. Prayer is the heartbeat allowing us to experience Jesus' continual companionship, apart from which we can do nothing that matters.

Sometimes we act as if it's only private prayer that is essential. If we're honest, some of us hesitate to make prayer a necessary workplace activity in YFC. Does this expose self-sufficiency as the fatal flaw in our theology of mission? To those wary of spending too much time in prayer, we'd love to hear specific examples from our YFC life! Rather, we suspect the danger is at the other end of our practice spectrum. Failing to engage the Lord in prayer together misshapes who we are in Christ, distorts how we work together with Christ, and limits what we accomplish for Christ. How can we expect YFC to be a thriving movement of Christ-centered leaders who fruitfully engage lost kids in authentic, Christ-sharing relationships if our corporate prayer life and practices are limited, erratic or anemic?

Let's get better together in prayer. We have room to improve, both personally and collectively. When we trust God together in prayer we gain the poise and peace to meet any challenge of life and ministry head-on. We protect one another in prayer. Individuals become a united team in prayer. Walls come tumbling down because we prayerfully obey and praise God together. Mission-wrecking pride evaporates when we experience prayerful confession and joyful restoration. Mutual submission becomes our norm in shared prayer. Love flows freely through a powerful, steady heartbeat of prayer such that wherever we take our corporate pulse we see evidence of the transformational momentum of God's life in our circulatory (operational) systems.

Practically speaking, the leaders of YFC teams everywhere will most likely need to become more intentional. We need to plan for and *protect space to grow consistent heartbeats of prayer on our teams*. Three categories of practice can transform YFC's corporate prayer life...and our mission:

Dwelling Together. In this category of prayer, teams simply come together to abide in the presence of God through worship, silence, stillness and rest. (Psalm 46; Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-37)

Discernment. At times, we dwell together in prayer to seek and sometimes wait for God's leading in order to make careful, Spirit-informed decisions. (1 Chronicles

12:32; Proverbs 3:5-6; John 5:19; 1 Corinthians 2:11-16; 1 John 4:4; Revelation 2 - 3...*we need 'ears to hear'*)

Confession/Repentance. At times, we dwell together in prayer to surrender to the Spirit's conviction about our sin and restore our joy with Christ. (2 Chronicles 7:14; Isaiah 58:1-12; Joel 2:12-17; Matthew 3:8; 2 Corinthians 7:9-11; 1 John 1:9)

Intercession. In this category of prayer, teams '*go between*' God and others, crying out for the Lord to intervene according to his unfailing faithful purposes. (Ezekiel 22:30; Romans 8:26; Ephesians 6:18; 1 Peter 4:7)

Warfare. At times, we intercede together in prayer to boldly contend against the scheming forces of evil which seek to divide, disrupt and destroy leaders and their ministries. (2 Kings 6:8-17; Mark 11:20-24; Ephesians 6:10-18)

Covering. At times, we intercede together in prayer by asking God to protect specific events, empower us for particular tasks, fortify our resolve to prevail and multiply fruit. (2 Kings 19:8-19; Jeremiah 29:11-14; Psalm 91; Acts 4:23-31)

Celebration. In this category of prayer, teams convene to praise the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, thanking God for His mighty works and ensuring that He alone receives glory. (2 Chronicles 5:11-14; 20:21-22; Acts 16:25-34; Romans 11:36-12:1; Revelation 7:9-12)

Note that, like our heartbeat, consistent rhythms provide evidence of vitality. Of course, providing steady times for prayer is not the only health indicator we care about; we hope everyone engages meaningfully with Jesus in personal quiet times. We also know we need the larger Body of Christ to encircle our ministry which is why we value Widespread Prayer - mobilizing others to intercede. But teams who establish baseline prayer practices together tend to generate mutual transparency, and soon enough it is safe to be authentic about what's really going on in their interior lives. Genuine encouragement can find its way into the deep, personal nooks and crannies of our hearts, where we need it most. Interdependence grows when each person recognizes that the rich private life they cultivate with Jesus is a significant source for the contributions they can make to others when they gather in prayer. We also cultivate a more open posture to hear from and be led by the Spirit of God.

Leaders assume multiple roles in establishing YFC's corporate prayer practices; they're protective shepherds, trailblazing exemplars, and organizational gatekeepers, to name a few. As Christ-centered leaders, might we all sense a call to corporately abide together to become a stronger praying culture. Our mission depends on it!