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DEVELOPING A PLAN TO FACILITATE PRAYER
PARTNERSHIPS AMONG PUBLIC SCHOOL
EDUCATORS IN OLDHAM AND WHITLEY
COUNTIES IN KENTUCKY

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Donnie Bruce Patrick

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DEVELOPING A PLAN TO FACILITATE PRAYER
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Donnie Bruce Patrick

Read and Approved by:

Shane W. Parker (Faculty Supervisor)

Danny R. Bowen

Date _____

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PREFACE

Much appreciation is heartfelt toward each congregation I have had the honor to pastor. Each congregation is unique, and thus each has taught me unique lessons. I am grateful for the people of First Baptist Paintsville, who gave this young preacher an opportunity, and for their tireless display of service and hospitality. I am thankful to Crestwood Baptist Church for the lessons learned in leadership and perseverance. Lastly, I am grateful for Main Street Baptist Church for helping raise me, send me, and then receive me back now as their lead pastor.

I am thankful for the many godly pastors and professors who have poured into my life through the years. Jerry Lowrie has my pastor for twenty-five years and to this day continues to speak words of life into me and the ministry. Dr. Roy Fish helped start the fires of evangelism day in and day out with great joy. Dr. Chuck Lawless challenged me to be a disciple maker and a disciple making pastor through lectures, mentoring, and writings during his stay at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. Dr. Claude Thomas was my first pastor of significant remembrance—he conveyed the need for education and also the fire of the Holy Spirit in the pulpit. I am also thankful for Dr. Eric Thomas for his friendship and bold engagement with people for the gospel. I am thankful for Dr. Shane Parker, who agreed to be my faculty supervisor in completing this project. I am grateful for the churches who make up the Southern Baptist Convention, and the investment they make toward Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, so I could afford and benefit from both institutions.

I am also beyond grateful for our daughters, Hannah and Grace. Their outer beauty is exceeded only by their inner beauty. They make my heart smile. Their mother,

and my best friend, is a God send and a supreme act of God's grace toward me. Debbie Jo, I love you thumbs out.

I am grateful to my parents and grandparents. They have prayed and paid for education inside and outside the classroom. Thank you, more than words can express.

Lastly, I am elated to know and be known by my creator through Jesus Christ. He is who He has revealed Himself to be by creation, throughout Scripture, and in the person of Jesus Christ. I am grateful for the gospel and your patient pursuing faithfulness.

Donnie Patrick

Williamsburg, Kentucky

May 2018

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Purpose

The purpose of this project was to develop a plan to facilitate prayer partnerships among public school educators of Oldham and Whitley Counties in Kentucky.

Goals

The first goal of this project was to assess the current understanding of prayer and public school religious liberties among twenty participants who serve as public school educators. This goal was measured by administering a pre-survey called the Public Educator's Assessment (PEA),¹ which provided an accurate picture of the public school educator's level of knowledge of biblical models of prayer, their understanding of their school campus as a mission field, and their awareness of their religious liberties within the public school system. This goal was considered successfully met when the twenty participants completed the PEA and the results were analyzed to yield a clear picture of the current understanding of prayer and religious liberties among public school educators.

The second goal of this project was to develop five sessions addressing prayer partnerships within the public school context. These sessions covered basic biblical models of prayer, viewing the school campus as a mission field, religious liberties within the public school setting, and enlisting prayer partners from among both churches and school campus colleagues. This goal was measured by a panel of pastors, school administrators,

¹See appendix 1.

and a Christian attorney specializing in religious liberties who utilized a rubric² to evaluate biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, and applicability of the class. This goal was considered successfully met when a minimum of 90 percent of the evaluation criterion met or exceeded the sufficient level.

The third goal of this project was to increase the educator's knowledge, understanding, and awareness of the need to form prayer partnerships through participating in five weekly teaching sessions. This goal was measured by administering a post-survey, the Public Educator's Assessment (PEA),³ which measured the public school educator's level of knowledge of biblical models of prayer, their understanding of their school campus as a mission field, and their awareness of their religious liberties within the public school system. This goal was considered successfully met when the *t*-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive statistically significant difference in the pre- and post-survey scores.

The fourth goal of this project was for each educator to enlist a minimum of ten people to commit to be their prayer partners. This goal was measured by the compilation of names of committed prayer partners per educator.⁴ The measurement criteria for this goal was the twenty participants compiling two hundred names of committed prayer partners in their individual school settings.

Ministry Context

During the writing and implementation of this project, a transition occurred in ministry context. I transitioned from Oldham County, Kentucky, as pastor of Crestwood Baptist Church, to Whitley County as pastor of Main Street Baptist Church. A positive element concerning this project was that it was transferrable in concept and practice. I

²See appendix 2.

³See appendix 1.

⁴See appendix 4.

chose a topic outside the church building so that the project could be applied in ministry settings anywhere in the state of Kentucky. Providentially, God placed me in two ministry contexts, which further strengthened the project's applicability. The project was carried out through two local churches which had some similarities. However, the counties in which the project occurred were very distinct and different. Thus, the project was tested through the local church but in different environments.

Oldham and Whitley counties differ drastically. Oldham County has a population of 65,875 people; Whitley county population is 36,129 people. Oldham County is a suburban county located next to Louisville and Jefferson County, Kentucky. Whitley County is a rural county located in Southeastern Kentucky at the foothills of Appalachia. Oldham County is consistently one of the wealthiest counties in the state of Kentucky. Whitley County is one of the poorest counties.

The similarities for this project remained consistent in both ministry contexts. Both churches had undergone a shift in methodology for reaching people beyond the church. Thus, they understood the need to engage the surrounding community. Both settings identified public schools as their largest mission field; therefore, the project supplied training that would impact a large population within the church and community. Both churches initially had limited engagement in the public school campuses, so this project sought to both train church members and equip Christian educators on school campuses. As a result of my transition to a new ministry setting, the pool of participants was modified to include educators from Oldham County and Whitley County.

The ministry project took place in the context of Oldham County and Whitley County Baptist churches where public educators volunteered to participate. Four factors related to the ministry context were relevant to this project. First, the diversity of counties allowed practical testing environments to insure the project could be applied in various ministry settings across the state of Kentucky. The providential factor cannot be overstated. Second, the local church similarities provided a context which was significant

in implementing the project. Both churches shifted their approach in methodology from solely an attractional model to a more missional, disciple-making model.

At Crestwood Baptist church, new initiatives started with the formation of a community mission known as Mission Crestwood in hopes of sending church members to engage their community. The Crestwood Baptist Church mission statement was also changed in order to give greater emphasis for every member's responsibility in fulfilling the Great Commission. The mission statement read as follows: We glorify God by making disciple-makers of all peoples through God's power in relational environments.

The appeal to the church for every member to be on mission initially was undergirded by an expositional sermon series through the book of Ephesians. An emphasis was given to the role of each member's existence for the glory of God and the furtherance of the gospel. The identification of relational environments occurred within each chapter of Ephesians. Ephesians 1 and 2 identified the believer's relationship with Christ. Ephesians 3 and 4 identified the believer's Christ-centered relationships with church family. In Ephesians 5, Christ-centered relationships emerged with those closest, such as the family unit. Ephesians 6 identified the believer's relationships with the community and the world. In general, church members' perspectives shifted as they identified their calling to impact each relational environment with the gospel of Christ, for the glory of God, and by depending on the Holy Spirit. The theological undergirding was the foundation for the major shift of methodology as demonstrated in the life of Christ and in the early church.

The church in Whitley County, Kentucky, is Main Street Baptist Church. Upon arrival as the new pastor, the church had already completed the Church Health Survey.⁵ They found that their greatest need pertained to evangelism and missions. More specifically, the church needed more focus on community outreach. The church

⁵ [Survey developed in collaboration with Kentucky Baptist Convention](#)

identified the need for a shift from an attractional and highly pastoral care model to a missional and disciple-making model. The church is strategically located near a public school. In fact, the church and school share parking lots. The obvious place to begin a more missional strategy was the local school campus across the street. Thus, this project was a catalyst in the shift to transition the church to be on mission in the local community.

Third, public schools were identified as the largest mission field in both Oldham and Whitley Counties. Crestwood is located in the Oldham County, Kentucky, school district. Oldham County has ten elementary schools, four middle schools, and three high schools with a total enrollment of 11,951 students.⁶ The Oldham County school system employs approximately 1,700 people and holds national ranking status.⁷ Thus, Oldham County schools consistently draws new families to the Oldham County area. This vast mission field has largely been overlooked as such. However, with the missional shift, Crestwood Baptist Church had a fresh perspective of being on mission in the community, including the public schools. As of June 2014, Crestwood Baptist had an active membership of approximately 1,300 people. The active membership consisted of 277 families with school-age children. This figure did not include children who were not members.

Main Street Baptist Church is located in Whitley County, Kentucky. The schools in Whitley County are made up of thirteen elementary schools, three middle schools, three high schools, three specialized schools, and one university. The total enrollment for all the schools in Whitley County is 18,656 students. The schools are not only the largest mission field, but the biggest employer in Whitley County with a total of

⁶Becky Gardner, Administrative Assistant for the Oldham County Board of Education, interview by author, LaGrange, Kentucky, June 9, 2014.

⁷Sheila Stewart, Oldham County Board of Education, interview by author, LaGrange, Kentucky, June 9, 2014.

1,700 employees. Main Street Baptist Church has an active total membership of 784 members.

The fourth ministry context factor was that there was limited engagement on the school campuses by local churches as well as educators who were members. Public schools (now identified as a vast mission field) became a matter of prayer at the Crestwood Baptist Church facility. A Sunday morning prayer banner gathering was implemented. Education was one of the eight prayer banners where people gathered to pray every Sunday morning. With the increase in prayer and the growing awareness of public schools as a mission field, a sentiment from church members serving as educators became evident. These individuals expressed their burden to impact their respective campuses but felt ill-equipped by the church and isolated from their peers. This led to a crisis of belief and a call for action to recognize the need to engage the public school mission field by partnering with educators and teaching them how to partner with their colleagues.

Main Street Baptist Church started with calling all educators forward during a worship service for the purpose of prayer. Several church members represented their respective schools. Then the congregation came forward to pray over each school and representative. The educators were referred to as missionaries and thus commissioned back to their school campuses. This raised awareness of the need to form prayer partnerships among educators.

The four ministry context factors (1) diversity of counties, (2) local church similarities of missional need, (3) neglect of the largest mission field, and (4) educators ill-equipped to engage the mission field, made this project urgent and viable. The first priority in reaching the school campuses had to be prayer, closely followed by partnering with the educators who work on school campuses. The potential positive impact was vast and community transforming.

Rationale

The four contextual factors above indicated that Crestwood Baptist Church and Main Street Baptist Church were both strategically positioned and ready to develop prayer partnerships with public school educators. First, because of the diversity of counties, the project's applicability had fertile soil to test its validity across the state. Second, because the churches had undergone a significant theologically-based shift in methodology, they understood the need to engage the surrounding community as a mission field first through prayer. The congregations developed a growing awareness that missions flows out of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Therefore, prayer became a major component in fulfilling the biblically-based mission statement of Crestwood Baptist Church. In addition, this project provided an intentional outlet for Main Street Baptist Church to be on mission in the community through prayer partnerships.

Third, because public schools were identified as the largest mission field within the community, this project supplied training that impacted a large segment of both church and community. The relevance of this project carried the potential to positively impact new families transitioning to Kentucky, a multitude of current residents without Christ, and the statistically spiritually ripest age segment of the population.⁸ This statistical fact demonstrated the validity to reach out to the public schools where young people spend the majority of their day. Educators have a unique window of opportunity to transform the world through transforming these lives.

Fourth, because there had been limited engagement on the school, this project addressed the need to equip and partner with educators who are consistently on the school campus. The relevance in fulfilling the mission as a church, coupled with the need of educators to be equipped and supported, gave this project a great sense of urgency. Prayer

⁸George Barna, *Transforming Children into Spiritual Champions: Why Children Should Be Your Church's Number One Priority* (Ventura, CA: Issachar, 2003), 41.

partnerships are a means to impact the educator as well as the school campus. Therefore, it was of utmost importance to pursue this project.

Definitions, Limitations, and Delimitations

The following definitions of key terms were used in the ministry project:

Attractional model. The attractional model seeks to draw people into the church building so that they will have a specialized need met by catering to their preferences.⁹ An attractional focus tends to be coupled with an entertainment methodology.¹⁰

Expository sermon. This project used Al Mohler's definition of an expository sermon as "expository preaching is that mode of Christian preaching that takes as its central purpose the presentation and application of the text of the Bible."¹¹

Prayer partnership. Prayer partnerships emerge by developing a relationship with one or more praying friends. Prayer partners can pray together or separately, weekly or even daily, concerning personal needs and for church and community.

Relational environment. A relational environment is a place where people can connect, share real life, and get help in following Jesus together.¹²

Religious liberties. Religious liberties are defined as "the freedom to believe and exercise or act upon religious conscience without unnecessary interference by the

⁹Jim Putman, Bobby Harrington, and Robert Coleman, *Discipleshift* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2013), 26.

¹⁰Ibid.

¹¹R. Albert Mohler, Jr., "Expository Preaching and the Recovery of Christian Worship; Part Two," August 10, 2005, accessed July 15, 2014, <http://www.albertmohler.com/2005/08/10/expository-preaching-and-the-recovery-of-christian-worship-part-two/>.

¹²Putman, Harrington, and Coleman, *Discipleshift*, 134.

government. Just as religious liberty involves the freedom to practice religion, it also means freedom not to practice religion.”¹³

One limitation applied to this project. The effectiveness of the facilitation was dependent on the consistency of class attendance. If the participants did not complete all of the teaching series, it would be difficult to gauge how helpful the training was. To reduce this limitation, class notes were e-mailed to the participants and sessions were posted online for participants to view weekly at a time convenient to each.

Two delimitations were placed on the project. First, the project was limited to a fifteen-week time frame. This time frame gave adequate time to prepare and teach the five-week sessions, to conduct the post-survey, and to permit the educators an opportunity to enlist prayer partners. Second, the project was limited to twenty educators so that the class setting would be more conducive to interaction and to limit the overlapping within lists of people who commit to pray for one another.

Research Methodology

The research methodology for this project included a pre-series survey, a post-series survey, an evaluation rubric, and a prayer partnership list of names.¹⁴ Four goals determined the effectiveness of the project. The first goal of this project was to assess the current understanding of prayer and public school religious liberties among twenty participants who serve as public school educators. Prior to the first class session, a pre-survey was distributed to class participants.¹⁵ Each participant identified himself or

¹³Baptist Joint committee for Religious Liberty, “Religious Liberty,” accessed March 5, 2018, <https://bjconline.org/religiousliberty/>.

¹⁴All of the research instruments used in this project were performed in compliance with and approved by the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary Research Ethics Committee prior to use in the ministry project.

¹⁵See appendix 1.

herself on the survey using a personal four-digit code of his or her choice. To be included in this group, the participant committed to complete all five sessions online.

The pre-survey sought to determine three things concerning each participant. First, it assessed the participant's level of knowledge of biblical models of prayer. This section included questions about the importance of prayer in the life of Jesus Christ, the apostle Paul, and the people of God. Second, this section assessed the participant's understanding of their school campus as a mission field. This portion of the survey included questions regarding demographics, Christian missionaries, and secularization. Third, this section assessed the participant's understanding of their religious liberties within the public school system. This portion of the survey included questions about their religious liberty rights, including prayer in school and separation of church and state. The first goal was successfully met when the twenty participants completed the PEA¹⁶ and the results were analyzed to yield a clear picture of the current understanding of prayer and religious liberties among the participants serving as public school educators.

The second goal was to develop class sessions on prayer partnerships within the public school context. The class consisted of five, one-hour sessions dealing with such topics as biblical models of prayer, various kinds of prayers revealed in Scripture, the biblical mandate for every Christ follower to be on mission, the importance of praying together, the facts about religious liberties, and practical ways to form prayer partnerships. The curriculum was submitted to a panel of associate pastors, school administrators and a Christian attorney specializing in religious liberties two weeks prior to the start of the class. This goal was measured by the panel who utilized a rubric to evaluate the class material.¹⁷ The rubric led the panel to evaluate the class primarily based upon biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, and applicability of the class. If

¹⁶See appendix 1.

¹⁷See appendix 2.

less than 90 percent of the indicators on the rubric scored below sufficient, the panel feedback would be used to modify the class, after which the material would be submitted again to the panel for approval. This process required that at least 90 percent of the indicators on the rubric were scored at sufficient or above, at which time the second goal was considered successfully met.

The third goal was to increase the educator's knowledge, understanding, and awareness of the need to form prayer partnerships through participating in the five-session, one-hour classes. The classes were posted online, and participants were sent the link to the class and instructed to participate in one session each week. The class sessions began with prayer and the teaching lasted approximately twenty-five minutes each. At the end of each class session the educators were reminded to recruit prayer partners within their public school environment.

At the end of the final session, the educators were given a post-survey, which was the instrument by which this third goal was measured.¹⁸ Only those who completed the pre-survey and who completed all five class sessions were invited to take the post-survey. Each participant was asked to identify himself or herself on the post-survey using the same four-digit code they used on the pre-survey. Like the initial survey, the post-survey assessed each participant's understanding of prayer, religious liberties, and the need to form prayer partnerships.

A *t*-test for dependent samples was used to determine if there was a positive statistical significant difference between the pre-series and post-series scores. A *t*-test for dependent samples "involves a comparison of the means from each group of scores and focuses on the differences between the scores."¹⁹ Since this project involved a single

¹⁸See appendix 1.

¹⁹Neil J. Salkind, *Statistics for People Who (Think They) Hate Statistics*, 3rd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2008), 191.

group of the same subjects being surveyed under two conditions, a t-test of dependent samples was the appropriate test statistic.²⁰ The third goal was considered successfully met when the t-test for dependent samples demonstrated a positive significant difference between the pre-series and post-series scores.

The fourth goal was for each educator to enlist a minimum of ten people to commit to being their prayer partners. The educators were encouraged to continue implementing times of prayer with others as they practiced during the course of the five class sessions. Because participants were on multiple school campuses throughout Kentucky, I conducted follow-up via email. Follow-up was conducted to accomplish two purposes. First, it reminded educators to continue recruiting their list of prayer partners who have committed to pray for them. Second, it provided an opportunity to commit to a specific starting place whereby the educators could invite their prayer partners to join them in a time of prayer and be trained on ways to specifically pray for each educator. The fourth goal was successfully met when two hundred names were compiled and committed to be prayer partners.²¹

²⁰Salkind, *Statistics*, 189.

²¹See appendix 4.

CHAPTER 2
THE BIBLICAL AND THEOLOGICAL BASIS FOR
DEVELOPING A PLAN TO FACILITATE
PRAYER PARTNERSHIPS

Introduction

The Bible teaches that Christ-followers are instructed to pray together. The four sections of this chapter support this thesis using relevant passages from Scripture. In the first section, an exegesis of Luke 11:1-13 shows that Christ-followers learn how to pray when they pray together. In the second section, an exegesis of 1 Timothy 2:1-8 and Acts 2:42, 46-47 illustrates that praying together was the regular habit of the first Christ followers. In the third section, an exegesis of Luke 10:1-10 and Ephesians 6:18-20 shows that praying together is vital to fulfilling the Christ-following mission. In the final section, an exegesis of 2 Corinthians 1:8-11 and Acts 4:23-31 demonstrates that praying together is crucial for those who follow Christ.

This plan to facilitate prayer partnerships must be grounded in Scripture. The Bible is also the primary example of how prayer partnerships relate to the people of God, both then and now. Any model to develop a plan to facilitate prayer partnerships without the Bible as its primary source opens itself to worldly influences and methodologies. Prayer partnerships in Scripture have components that are particularly important for developing a plan to facilitate prayer partnerships.

Praying Together Is Instructive

Christ-followers learn how to pray when they pray together. An exegesis of Luke 11:1-13 shows that Christ taught the disciples to pray when they were together.

Christ instructs the disciples by modeling his own prayer life and through teaching the disciples lessons on prayer.

The book of Luke gives the strongest insight into the prayer life of Jesus. Jesus prayed at his baptism (3:21-22), as he chose his disciples (6:12-13), before feeding the 5,000 (9:16), at the transfiguration (9:28-29), and at the return of 70 disciples he had sent out (10:21). Jesus prayed for children (18:15-17), for Peter (22:31-32), and for his enemies (23:24). And in Luke 11, he was praying when his disciples approached him for instructions in how to pray.

The brief discourse opens with Jesus praying and afterwards a disciple asks him for instruction pertaining to prayer. “It happened that while Jesus was praying in a certain place, after He had finished, one of His disciples said to him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray just as John also taught his disciples’” (Luke 11:1) John Nolland notes, “It is Jesus’ own practice of prayer that is the starting point for the Christian practice of prayer.”¹ Christ taught the disciples to pray as they observed and listened to him pray.

Christ’s answer to the question is another aspect of learning to pray together. Both teacher and student position themselves for instruction. Joel Green states, “The position of the disciples as genuine learners who address him as “Lord” and who request his instruction” conveys the idea that prayer is learned.² Darrell Bock comments concerning the disciples’ question: “The request for teaching from a religious leader is common, but this is the only place in the Gospels where such a direct request appears.”³ The disciples portray the significance of their chosen subject within the context of asking

¹John Nolland, *Luke 9:21-18:34*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 35B (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1993), 607.

²Joel Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1997), 440.

³Darrell Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 1050.

the question and expecting an affirmative answer from their Master Teacher. They desired to learn to pray together so they could emulate Christ.

Christ began the lesson on prayer by providing a pattern of prayer. He never lost sight of the corporate nature of their instruction. The “you” in verse 2 is plural, indicating that Luke understood this to be a corporate prayer.⁴ He uses words such as “us, our, and we” so that even when praying alone, the prayer brings to mind that the one who prays is part of a larger body of believers whose shared needs are fulfilled by petition to the Heavenly Father. Christ’s model prayer teaches that answers to prayer are given in a relational context. “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us” (Luke 11:4). Petitions to the Father require a heart that reflects God’s forgiveness, love, and compassion, and answers to prayer come in the framework of a connection to saints and sinners who will see God’s forgiveness because the offender has been forgiven. Jesus further illustrates this point in the negative when he says, “do not be like the hypocrites when you pray; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and street corners to be seen of men” (Matt 6:5). The evil in this hypocrisy was that men separated themselves from others in their prayers. They saw themselves as superior in a way destructive to the unity that comes from confession and forgiveness. As James wrote in his epistle, “Confess your faults one to another and pray one for another, that you may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (Jas 5:16). It is in the context of compassion and understanding for one another that the fervent prayer is heard. John Piper suggests that private prayers will not advance in maturity and depth and intensity if believers never pray with others who can take each other higher and deeper. It might be compared to expecting a young person to become a gifted conversationalist, but always sending him away to play by himself when there was

⁴Robert H. Stein, *Luke*, The New American Commentary, vol. 24 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1992), 324.

serious conversation. In praying together, individuals benefit each other to mature in the life of prayer.⁵

Through the model prayer, Christ instructs his disciples to be theocentric as they confidently pray to their heavenly Father concerning their most basic needs.⁶ Christ instructs not only by providing a pattern of prayer, but also by supplying practical illustrations for the purpose of encouraging the disciples to keep praying. He does this by consistently referring to God as their Father. As a title for God, Father is found only fifteen times in the Old Testament, and in none of those instances is God being addressed in prayer. The title is used sixty-five times in the Synoptic Gospels and over one hundred times in John.⁷ Christ is instructing the disciples to approach God as Father, and address God in prayer, like family coming to their Father with respect and requests. This family dimension of prayer that Christ provides is a strong picture of why praying together is instructive.

After presenting a model prayer, Christ follows with examples that further demonstrate the corporate nature of prayer. It is represented by a Father providing material daily needs to a family, and by a neighbor who makes possible the edification and entertainment of visitors. The provider in these examples represents God the Father. Christ is instructing how to approach God the heavenly Father, and to do so in context of a family. The strongest prayer partnerships are formed along family lines, or among those who have a family-type bond. It is a profound illustration that believers are to be connected daily in prayer partnerships; not hastily formed when a crisis suddenly change circumstances, but rather in day-to-day life.

⁵John Piper, “Sweet Our of Prayer” (sermon preached at Bethlehem Baptist Church, Minneapolis, January 4, 1987).

⁶Green, *The Gospel of Luke*, 442.

⁷Stein, *Luke*, 324.

Praying Together Is Habitual

Praying together is not only instructive; it is also habitual. Praying together was the regular habit of the first Christ followers. A brief exegesis of 1 Timothy 2:1-8 and Acts 2:42-47 shows that the first Christ-followers prayed together as a regular habit. Praying together on a regular basis was a priority and given prominence in the life of the first Christ-followers.

In 1 Timothy, the apostle Paul was instructing Timothy concerning his tasks as a young pastor. Paul explained that Timothy's tasks involved preventing the spread of false teaching, sharing a gospel that could save sinners, and preventing a decline of commitment among church leaders. Thus, Paul's first priority was that Timothy lead the church to pray for all people.⁸ He writes in 1 Timothy 2:1, "First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men." "First of all, then . . ." tells that this instruction is the single most significant change Timothy can effect.⁹

In verses 1 and 2, Paul supplies the content and objects of prayer. He listed four words for prayer. Thomas Lea writes, "Paul probably did not intend any sharp distinction between the words but was collecting synonyms that effectively communicate the importance of prayer."¹⁰ The object of the congregational prayers was to be "all men." However, Paul reminded his readers that kings and other leaders are special objects of prayer. Paul was not solely asking Christ followers to pray on a regular basis for the conversion of their leaders, but to include thanksgiving for decisions made that would facilitate the spread of Christianity.¹¹

⁸Hayne P. Griffin, Jr., and Thomas Lea, *1, 2 Timothy and Titus*, The New American Commentary, vol. 34 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 98.

⁹William D. Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 46 (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2000), 78.

¹⁰Griffin and Lea, *1, 2 Timothy and Titus*, 87.

¹¹"Albert Barnes Notes on the Whole Bible," accessed March 5, 2018,

The entire passage is marked by a regular habit of prayer with the intention of being pleasing to God by people coming to the true knowledge of Christ. Paul calls his readers to live an orderly life free of strife and discord so it might convince unbelievers that Christianity was worthy of attention.¹² Thus, Paul reminds his hearers that God designs all men to be saved and to be saved only through Jesus Christ as mediator and ransom.

In verse 7, Paul outlines the special nature of his own ministry in order to further prove the validity of praying together for all people as a regular habit. Paul was appointed a preacher to reach all people for Christ, and the regular praying of God's people would help the furtherance of the message of Christ among all peoples. Paul calls upon all Christ-followers to join in the priority of praying together, including a clear and specific call to men to lead the way without "wrath and dissension."

First Timothy 2 has particular application to the workplace, which is the focus of this study. Paul is instructing Timothy to teach the church to habitually pray for those in authority. Certainly Paul included kings, but also all those in authority. While praying as instructed in 1 Timothy 2, prayer partners set aside all "wrath and dissention," which are barriers to morale and productivity. Co-workers are thankful for specific acts of those in authority that enable them to conduct their lives in the workplace "godly and dignified in every way" (v. 2). A spirit of gratitude and humility can endear the employee to his superiors and co-workers. Regular and habitual prayer following these guidelines has the potential to transform a workplace that has elements of hostility that can quickly become the wrong focus of the believer. God desires all men to come to the knowledge of the truth, which occurs when Christians emulate the love of Christ for all men, demonstrated in regular united prayer for those in authority. Good administration can result in the

<https://www.studydrive.org/commentary/1-timothy/2-1.html>.

¹²Griffin and Lea, *1, 2 Timothy and Titus*, 88.

happiness Paul talks about in verse 2. God’s direction to first pray, and to earnestly and thoroughly pray—with supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks—is a blueprint for addressing the needs of the teacher’s chosen mission field, the public schools. The descriptive words are plural. This is not a single prayer, but as often as prayer partners meet, they are guided to pray continually until a habit of prayer for those in authority is established.

The first Christian church made it their devoted habit to pray together. In Acts 2:42, one sees the prominent practices of the early church. One of the practices is prayer. “And they were continually devoting themselves to . . . and to prayer” (Acts 2:42). F. F. Bruce notes,

As for the prayers in which they participated, the primary reference is no doubt to their own appointed seasons for united prayer, although we know that the Apostles also attended the Jewish prayer services in the temple. The community’s prayer would follow Jewish models, but their content would be enriched because of the Christ-event.¹³

The first Christ-followers made it a regular habit of fellowship expressed in mutual meals and in their prayer life together.

In verses 46-47, one sees the dual locale of life together, which included their praying together. They would continue with one mind in the temple and would also gather in private houses. In both locales, they participated in praying together. The temple led to more formal prayers, while the home setting provided a more intimate setting. This new, young community of Christ-followers gave priority and prominence to regularly praying together. In verse 46, “from house to house” depicts the Christians as individually opening up their houses to fellowship. With such a large, growing membership, the picture is probably that of a number of home fellowships.¹⁴ Thus, a

¹³F. F. Bruce, *Acts*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1988), 73.

¹⁴John B. Polhill, *Acts*, The New American Commentary, vol. 26 (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 121.

number of prayer partnerships were formed simply on the basis of each house gathering, which included praying together.

Praying Together Is Vital to the Mission

Praying together is not only instructive and habitual, but also vital to fulfilling the Christ-following mission. A brief summary of Luke 10:1-2 and Ephesians 6:18-20 shows prayer partnerships as a vital part of being on mission. One could argue that prayer is an initial response of being on mission, an undergirding throughout being on mission, and an act of worship expressed in observing the results of being on mission.

In Luke 10:1, the context is the preparation of sending more people on mission. In verse 2, after initiating the call to be on mission, Jesus explains that the harvest is great, but the workers are few; therefore, they are to pray for workers to be sent into the harvest fields. In the same context, Jesus plans to send seventy-two people out on mission. He further plans to send them out two-by-two. The first instructions He gives to the mission teams is to pray. Thus, they are prayer partners on mission. The context demonstrates that prayer partnerships are vital to the Christ-following mission.

Next, the content of what is prayed further displays the need for prayer partnerships to emphasize mission praying. Bock notes, “First, the mission is a time of opportunity, but currently there are too few to do the task. Second, the mission’s growth will be determined not only by efforts in the field, but also by prayer and God’s sovereign direction.”¹⁵ Jesus instructs the followers to ask God for aid and rely on his sovereign provision. They are to pray behind the scenes and alongside the proclamation for more workers. The message’s expansion is in God’s sovereign control, and He is the one who will send out more laborers.¹⁶

¹⁵Bock, *Luke 9:51-24:53*, 994.

¹⁶*Ibid.*, 995.

In Ephesians 6:18-20, the apostle Paul invited the church to be his prayer partner in order to further the mission of proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ. He writes to let the church know how he prays for them. In turn, he gives prayer requests to the church. Paul, the missionary, was in prison but he used that opportunity to further the mission. Paul knew that prayer partnerships were vital to fulfilling the Christ-following mission. In fact, even though Paul and the church were in different locations, he appointed and agreed upon prayers uniting them on mission.

Paul's desire was to speak with boldness and clarity. He depended upon the prayer partnership of the church to ask God on his behalf. According to Bruce,

“praying in the Spirit” means praying under the Spirit’s influence and with his assistance. It is no criterion of the power of the Spirit that the person praying does not understand his own prayer. On the other hand, there are prayers and aspirations of the heart that cannot be well articulated, and these can be offered in the Spirit.¹⁷

Paul not only influenced them to pray under the control of the Spirit, but also pleaded for their continued prayers. This prayer partnership is to be continual as Paul recognizes his continual calling of Christ’s commission. Paul knew that the proclamation of the gospel was both undergirded and made effectual through prayer. Throughout the writings of Paul, one can witness the vital need for prayer partnerships in fulfilling the Christ following mission.

Praying Together Is Crucial for the Christ-Follower

Praying together is instructive, habitual, vital to the mission, and also crucial for the Christ-follower. A brief summation of Paul’s severe trial in Asia recorded in 2 Corinthians 1:8-11, explains only that Paul’s faith was tested, and the prayers of the church at Corinth allowed them to share together in Paul’s suffering, God’s provision, and his deliverance. Paul shares with the Corinthian church concerning God’s miraculous deliverance from a life threatening trial. Paul does not specifically share what all was

¹⁷Bruce, *Acts*, 411.

involved in his horrific trial, only that the trial was overwhelming. The trial was only bestowed by God to increase Paul's trust, to experience God's comfort, and finally to celebrate together God's deliverance.

Paul believed that God brought his deliverance from such a life threatening trial by the prayers of the members of the Corinthian church. Paul remembers that God acts through the prayers of his people.¹⁸ The verb "helping" in verse 11 means "to work with" or "cooperate" by means of something. In this case, it references their prayers on his behalf.¹⁹ Paul seems thoroughly convinced of the imperative and effectiveness of people praying together.

The value Paul set upon the prayers is seen in the consequence: many people will have the occasion and opportunity to give thanks to God for his deliverance.²⁰ Normally, one associated Paul's prayers for the congregations with what he has to say concerning prayer; however, in this instance, the Corinthian church's prayers for him are noted as crucial and to be celebrated. It is as though the apostle Paul shares his sufferings in order to increase the volume of prayers, including the thanksgiving toward God. United thanksgiving to God is one of Paul's great aims.²¹ Paul is saying that praying together is crucial for the Christ follower.

In Acts 4:23-31, not only was the whole community involved in the proclamation of the Word of God, but they were also involved in praying together. The community of Christ followers gathered to pray for the deliverance of the two apostles.

¹⁸Ralph P. Martin, *2 Corinthians*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 40 (Waco, TX: Word, 1986), 16.

¹⁹David E. Garland, *2 Corinthians*, The New American Commentary, vol. 29 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1999), 82.

²⁰Martin, *2 Corinthians*, 16.

²¹Garland, *2 Corinthians*, 42.

The fellowship responded with praise to God for delivering the apostles and a plea for courage to perpetrate their bold witness in the face of opposition and persecution.²²

The gathering of Christ-followers united in prayer addressing God as Sovereign Lord and Creator. They further supplied Scripture in spelling out the threats of their enemies. Instead of being intimidated or silent due to threats, those praying together prayed for increased boldness. The assurance of divine favor and affirmation came as they prayed. The description of what took place is reminiscent of what happened on the day of Pentecost, both external signs of the Holy Spirit and in the prayerful attitude and actions of the disciples.²³ Their prayer was answered by the shaking of the house where they gathered. This gave them a tangible sense of God's presence and His response to their prayer.²⁴ Praying together is crucial to the life and ministry of the Christ-follower.

Theological Reasons to Pray Together

The Bible reveals that God's people pray together. One needs to look no further than three main reasons to pray together. First, the apostles believed and practiced praying together. Second, Jesus modeled and taught praying together. Third, a radical shift in praying together occurs before and after Christ's resurrection.

The Practice of the Apostles

Praying together was the regular practice of the Apostles. In Acts 6, a complaint arose against the Hebrews by Hellenists because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution of food. The apostles gathered all the disciples together in order to share what the apostles could not neglect, but also a solution in meeting the needs of the widows with daily food distribution. The group agreed to select seven men who met the

²²Polhill, *Acts*, 150.

²³Bruce, *Acts*, 100.

²⁴Polhill, *Acts*, 150.

criteria set forth by the apostles. After the congregation selected, they brought them to the apostles for confirmation and affirmation. The problem was solved and the Word of God continued to spread rapidly.

Interestingly, the two priorities that the apostles would not neglect were prayer and the ministry of the Word. When the problem was solved, the apostles could more readily give their attention to prayer and the ministry of the Word. F. F. Bruce states, “The Apostles would be free to devote their undistracted attention to directing the church’s regular worship and to preaching the Gospel.”²⁵ John Franklin comments on Acts 6:4:

The Apostles were not referring to their personal prayer life but to the ministry of mobilizing the people of God to pray together. They were declaring that the two ministries they especially must do as church leaders were mobilizing the church to pray and preaching/teaching the word of God.²⁶

Franklin makes such a claim while pointing to the context of Acts 6 revolving around ministry issues.

Furthermore, every occurrence of prayer in Acts preceding chapter 6 deals with praying together. The apostles are pictured leading others in prayer. Thus, not one time is their personal prayer life recorded. In each instance, the apostles are leading the people of God to pray together. One can conclude then that Acts 6 and the preceding occurrences of prayer speak of praying together.

The Practice of Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ practiced praying with others. Jesus prayed alone, but He modeled and taught praying together. As one reads the New Testament, most of Jesus’ recorded times of personal prayer happen before choosing his disciples. Whereas after choosing the disciples, most of his recorded prayer times involve them. Author John

²⁵Bruce, *Acts*, 121.

²⁶John Franklin, *And the Place Was Shaken* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2009), 8.

Franklin writes concerning the prayer practice of Christ: “In every way, He modeled and commanded the necessity of praying together. Even in the Garden of Gethsemene when facing the greatest crisis of His life, the looming shadow of the cross, even then He asked the disciples to watch with Him.”²⁷

The majority of Jesus’ teaching on prayer focuses on praying together. “You” can be either singular or plural in English, but there is a differentiation in the Greek.²⁸ The fact that Jesus taught in the plural makes one read and observe an example like Matthew 7:7 differently, as well as affirms that Jesus practiced and taught praying together: “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock; and it will be opened to you.” Jesus also raised awareness of praying together as being a condition to answered prayer in some instances, in Matthew 18:19: “Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven.” Thus, part of following Christ is learning to pray together. The context of this verse is one of church discipline. Jesus used the call to prayer as a means of accountability and encouragement. Adam Clarke writes concerning Matthew 18:19,

It is a metaphor taken from a number of musical instruments set to the same key, and playing the same tune: here, it means a perfect agreement of the hearts, desires, wishes, and voices, of two or more persons praying to God. It also intimates that as a number of musical instruments, skilfully played, in a good concert, are pleasing to the ears of men, so a number of persons united together in warm, earnest, cordial prayer, is highly pleasing in the sight and ears of the Lord.²⁹

A Radical Shift

Along with the practice of the apostles and the practice of Jesus Christ, a radical shift takes place concerning praying together after Jesus calls his disciples. Throughout Scripture, there are examples of private prayers and people praying together. Both the

²⁷Franklin, *And the Place Was Shaken*, 12.

²⁸*Ibid.*, 10.

²⁹*Adam Clarke’s Commentary*, accessed March 5, 2018, <https://www.studydrive.org/commentary/matthew/18-19.html>.

Old Testament and New Testament are replete with examples of God's people praying. This shift runs throughout the book of Acts and the early church. That is not to downplay nor dismiss the personal, private life of a Christ follower, but it is to reclaim and recover the vital need and importance of praying together as God's people.

Examples in the Old Testament of praying together include the Temple dedication and praying in times of revival. Mostly though, in the Old Testament, God chose an individual through whom to exercise power in response to prayer. The people of God did not have access to God in the same way the New Testament followers of Christ gained after Christ's resurrection.

In the New Testament, prayers offered by God's people radically shift. Whereas God still works through individuals, the New Covenant and birth of the church shifts to more of a community of faith praying together. For example, the book of Acts begins with the disciples praying together before the promised Holy Spirit is sent and the church is birthed. This characteristic of praying together threads its way through the entire book of Acts. In Acts 2:42, the church responded together to the baptism of the Holy Spirit by "devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, and to the breaking of bread and prayers." In Acts 4, the arrest of Peter and John triggered a prayer meeting. Their prayers together affirmed their faith in the God of power who made heaven and earth, who determined the death and resurrection of Jesus. Once again they petitioned God for healing, signs and wonders. The result of their prayer was that "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul" (v. 32).

In Acts 6, the church multiplied rapidly and conflict arose. They gathered and prayed over selected leaders, laying hands on them, and the Word of God and number of disciples increased. In Acts 12:5, Peter is held in prison after the death of James, "but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him." Peter was miraculously delivered by an angel, even beyond the expectations of those at the prayer meeting.

Chapter 13 describes corporate prayer in the church at Antioch prior to the commissioning of Paul and Barnabas as missionaries. In Acts 16:16, “as they went to prayer,” they were confronted with a girl who was possessed with a spirit of divination and delivered her. Being thrown into prison for their action, Paul and Silas responded by praying and singing together (v. 25). In chapter 20, Paul, whose prison letters express his great affection for the church at Ephesus, met with the believers for the last time. His final act is described in verse 30: “And when he had thus spoken, he kneeled down, and prayed with them all.”

The book of Acts consistently demonstrates that prayers together were central to the life and increase of the Christian church. The personal prayer life of a New Testament follower of Christ is important; yet in many ways it is also preparation for joining with others in prayer. The apostle Paul frequently begins his New Testament letters by thanking God and praying for the recipients of the letter. In the New Testament, Christ-followers are commanded to pray for one another. When Paul wrote to Timothy about how believers ought to conduct themselves in a church, he said praying together was the first thing to do: “First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgiving be made for all people” (1 Tim 2:1).

Conclusion

Developing prayer partners is undergirded and informed theologically. Praying together follows the examples of God’s people throughout the Bible. As Christ followers pray together, they are instructed in developing the habit of corporate prayer. God has designed and determined that praying together is vital to the Christ-following mission and crucial to the very life of the Christ-follower.

CHAPTER 3
THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL ISSUES TO DEVELOPING
A PLAN TO FACILITATE PRAYER PARTNERSHIPS
AMONG PUBLIC SCHOOL EDUCATORS

Introduction

A plan to facilitate prayer partnerships among public school educators raises awareness of the need for prayer while serving on the public school campus. A plan further supplies various models and methodologies of prayer. Due to the vacillating of some courts and administrators, a plan to facilitate prayer partnerships informs the educators of their religious liberties concerning prayer. As prayer partnerships are formed, instruction on how to sustain prayer partnerships through accountability and encouragement emerges. Mutual accountability and encouragement provide a much needed team concept for both educators and all those who join the prayer partnership.

A teacher's work is never done. There is always curriculum to revise, a student to counsel, an after school meeting, a report to write, and extracurricular activities the teacher is pressured to attend to support the students and school. A teacher must be thoroughly convinced that prayer is a priority so important that it will always trump the urgent. Fortunately, it is an easy principle to win over for those who stop long enough to listen, because historically, God has heard and answered the prayers of His people, and changed institutions and nations as a result.

In the early nineteenth century during the Second Great Awakening, two prayer partners, Daniel Nash and William Clary, travelled ahead of famous evangelist Charles Finney, often renting a room for a few weeks ahead of a scheduled revival and spending the time in fasting and prayer for the people. Daniel Nash's commitment to prayer is expressed in a letter of May 11, 1826, in which he declares the work will go on:

The work of God moves forward in power, in some places against dreadful opposition. Mr. Finney and I have both been hanged and burned in effigy. We have frequently been disturbed in our religious meetings. Sometimes the opposers make a noise in the house of God; sometimes they gather round the house and stone it, and discharge guns. There is almost as much writing, intrigue, and lying, and reporting of lies, as there would be if we were on the eve of a presidential election. Oh, what a world! How much it hates the truth! How unwilling to be saved! But I think the work will go on.¹

As theoretical and practical issues are examined and explored, the teacher's plan and preparation point to this great truth: prayer assures that the work will go on.

A Prayer Partnership Plan Raises Awareness of the Need for Prayer

Jesus taught His disciples to pray so that God's will would be done on earth as it is in heaven. In the public school setting, there is much work to be done in prayer as schools have become both a battleground and a mission field for faith. The motivation for praying continually comes through a deep understanding and experience that God works when one prays. God wants all Christians to bring down the enemy's strongholds and set captives free through prayer. Second, prayer works because His people live God's way. Power in prayer depends on the believer's relationship with God. "Whatever we ask, we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight" (1 John 3:22). Third, prayer works because His servant asks boldly. God wants to give the gift of Himself, and lavish His children with His love and good gifts. Finally, prayer works because God works out His purposes in this world through people who pray.²

In Scripture, Luke explains that Jesus told the parable of the persistent widow to impress on His followers that they should always pray and never lose heart (Luke 18:1). Great men of faith have echoed that call for Christians to pray. Martin Luther is

¹J. Paul Reno, "Prevailing Prince of Prayer," accessed March 3, 2017, <https://www.hopefaithprayer.com/prayernew/prevailing-prince-prayer-daniel-nash/>.

²Stormie Omartian, *The Power of Praying Together* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2003), 52-54.

remembered for saying, “As it is the business of tailors to make clothes, and the business of cobblers to mend shoes, so it is the business of Christians to pray!”³ Andrew Murray describes praying as the Christian’s very nature:

You are created in Christ to pray. It is your very nature as a child of God. Why do you think the Spirit has been sent into your heart? To cry “Abba, Father,” to draw your heart up in childlike prayer. . . . If you want to be an intercessor, give the Holy Spirit much greater honor than He usually receives. Believe that He is praying within you, and then “be strong and of good courage.” As you pray, be still before God, and believe and yield to this wonderful power of prayer within you.⁴

Because prayer is so central to God’s plan for His people, why do followers of Christ lack a devotion to prayer? Donald Whitney writes in his book on spiritual disciplines that prayer must be planned and a specific time allotted for praying. Because prayers are not answered immediately or in ways that cannot be seen, believers are tempted to doubt the power of God through prayer. Whitney explains, “A lack of the sense of nearness of God may also discourage prayer. Our prayers should be driven by the truth of Scripture, but are often directed by frail emotions. Circumstances, however, will drive us to our knees to pray.”⁵

Whitney asserts that the discipline of prayer is learned, and that is good news for prayer partnerships in which members will grow in their faith and receive answers to prayer as they practice praying together. The Holy Spirit teaches people how to pray as they develop prayer habits. Meditation unites the truth of Scripture with prayer. As prayer partners hold each other accountable to study the Scriptures and claim its truths for

³Taylor University, “Encouraging Words concerning Prayer,” accessed May 10, 2017, <http://www.taylor.edu/give-to-taylor/memorial-prayer-chapel/encouraging-words-concerning-prayer.shtml>.

⁴Andrew Murray, *The Practice of God’s Presence* (New Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 1999), 497.

⁵Donald Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress), 69.

their circumstances, prayers become rich with God's promises and His answers.

Believers can learn to pray by praying with others who model true prayer principles.⁶

Andrew Murray wrote that Christ followers need to pray because prayer is answered:

This is the fixed law of the eternal kingdom: if you ask and receive not, it must be because there is something amiss or wanting in the prayer. Hold on; let the word and Spirit teach you to pray aright but do not let go the confidence He seeks to waken: Everyone who asks receives.⁷

The need for prayer is intensive when one understands how it pleases God.

John Piper writes that God loves prayer with all His heart:

The intensity of God's pleasure in prayer is proportionate to the intensity of his passion that all his purposes be complete. If he loves his Son, if he loves his sovereignty, if he loves his creation, and his fame, and his electing grace, and his redeeming work, and the good of his people, and the ingathering of all the children of God, then he must love prayer with all his heart.⁸

Prayer becomes an opportunity rather than a dry obligation when the prayer partner understands God's joy in answering the prayers of his people. Piper explains,

The most wonderful thing about the Bible is that it reveals a God who satisfies his appetite for joy by answering prayers. He has no deficiency in himself that he needs to fill up, so he gets his satisfaction by magnifying the glory of his riches by filling up the deficiencies of people who pray.⁹

The pressures in schools today are unprecedented, and demonstrate the need for prayer partnerships that provide encouragement and accountability. While teaching was once considered a calling and a highly respected profession, there is now open hostility toward Christian teachers in particular. The Supreme Court and the Department of Education have sanitized schools of faith. Bruce Shortt writes that those regulations

⁶Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 75-77.

⁷Andrew Murray, *With Christ in the School of Prayer* (Old Tappan, NJ: Spire, 1975), 33.

⁸John Piper, *The Pleasures of God* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah, 2000), 226.

⁹*Ibid.*, 216.

are an attempt to rein in the increasingly overt hostility toward Christianity manifested in government schools across the country. . . . The new regulations notwithstanding, those within the education establishment who are opposed to Christianity will continue to find ways to make government schools a hostile environment for Christian children, teachers, and administrators.¹⁰

There are many examples to confirm hostility and intimidation in schools today. In the Seattle area, an assistant coach was fired for praying on the field after football games. Though students sometimes joined him, it was private prayer, a tradition he had carried on for eight years.¹¹ A special education teacher, Anita Wooten-Francis, claims she never hid her faith but took care not to influence kids. She worshiped in her classroom before or after students left, read the Bible on her lunch break, led other teachers in a prayer group, and played gospel music during non-instruction hours. She was fired from her position in Brooklyn.¹² A Maine school employee was disciplined for telling a colleague she would pray for him. They attended church together and had worked in a nursing home ministry through their church. Her remarks were made in private. This case is currently being litigated to determine if school employees must hide their faith from each other while at work.¹³ The pressure to be all together silent at school is pervasive. For years, the American Civil Liberties Union has written letters to schools threatening costly lawsuits even when prayers are student led. The West Lincoln School

¹⁰Bruce Shortt, *The Harsh Truth about Public Schools* (Vallecito, CA: Chalcedon, 2004), 20.

¹¹Jason Hanna and Steve Almasy, “Washington High School Coach Placed on Leave for Praying on Field,” October 30, 2015, accessed May 18, 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/2015/10/29/us/washington-football-coach-joe-kennedy-prays/>.

¹²Charles Dixon, “Brooklyn Teacher Says She Was Fired for Praying in School,” accessed May 18, 2017, <https://newsone.com/1267655/brooklyn-teacher-says-she-was-fired-for-praying-in-school/>.

¹³Heather Clark, “Maine School Employee Reprimanded for Telling Churchgoing Coworker ‘I Will Pray for You,’” May 17, 2017, accessed May 18, 2017, <http://christiannews.net/2017/05/17/maine-school-employee-reprimanded-for-telling-churchgoing-coworker-i-will-pray-for-you/>.

District in Mississippi,¹⁴ Bossier Parish Schools in Louisiana,¹⁵ and twenty school districts targeted by the Oklahoma ACLU received letters threatening lawsuits.¹⁶ Hostility toward Christians in the public school system has caused many to remain silent to avoid conflict or job loss. A prayer partnership provides a refuge for the teacher oppressed by real or perceived restrictions.

Norman Blackaby and Henry Blackaby examine the power of Jesus' example in prayer to motivate His followers to pray. God revealed His perfect will to Jesus in all nights of prayer and frequent fellowship with Father and Son. Blackaby and Blackaby write, "The Lord isn't interested in us disciplining ourselves to 'say our prayers'; the Pharisees had their prayers down cold, but they were absolutely useless to God. What God is looking for is a heart that's increasingly responsive to His touch."¹⁷ The need for prayer, especially in the mission field within public schools, is poignantly expressed by the Blackabys: "This need for serious intercession from God's people is crucial in every generation, but especially ours, for there are now well over six billion living souls in our world, with their eternal destiny at stake."¹⁸

A Prayer Partnership Plan Supplies Various Models and Methodologies of Prayer

Prayer is learned. No matter the starting point of one's prayer life, as a

¹⁴"ACLU Demands WL School Prayer Stop," October 18, 2012, accessed May 18, 2017, <http://www.dailyleader.com/2012/10/18/aclu-demands-wl-school-prayer-stop/>.

¹⁵ACLU, "Open Letter Regarding Official Prayer and Religious Activity at Airline High School," September 24, 2015, accessed May 18, 2017, <https://www.laaclu.org/press/2015/092415.htm>.

¹⁶Jim Killackey, "Schools Face ACLU Warning on Prayers," November 1, 1992, accessed May 18, 2017, <http://newsok.com/article/2411127>.

¹⁷Henry Blackaby and Norman Blackaby, *Experiencing Prayer with Jesus* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah, 2001), 46.

¹⁸*Ibid.*, 75.

believer in Christ, one can learn to pray and grow stronger in the life of prayer. In fact, a good place to start in praying is sincerely praying back to the Lord what his disciples said to him in Luke 11:1: “Lord, teach us to pray.” Thus, if one is a believer, then that same one can pray and continue to learn to pray individually and with others.

Meditating and praying the Scripture is a powerful model found in the Scriptures and practiced by many godly saints. Concerning meditating on Scripture, Whitney writes,

This is one of the most compelling concepts in prayer I’ve ever learned. Meditation is the missing link between Bible intake and prayer. . . . There should be a smooth, almost unnoticeable transition between Scripture input and prayer output so that we move even closer to God in those moments.¹⁹

A well-known spiritual giant in the area of prayer is George Muller. Muller experienced many affirmative answers to his prayers. Millions of dollars came through his hands with asking nothing of men but everything from God. He cared for as many as two thousand orphans at a single time while also supporting mission work around the world.²⁰ In the spring of 1841, George Muller made a discovery regarding the relationship between meditation and prayer that changed, in a profoundly positive way, his spiritual life. He began his prayer times by meditating on the Word of God, looking first for God to speak to him and to be strengthened in the inner man before bringing his prayers to God. As a result of prefacing his prayers with meditation, he found “help and strength to pass in peace through deeper trials, in various ways, than I have ever had before; and having now above fourteen years tried this way, I can most fully in the fear of God, commend it.”²¹

Whitney further clarifies this mode of praying:

The process works like this: After the input of a passage of Scripture, meditation allows us to take what God has said to us and think deeply on it, digest it, and then

¹⁹Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 71.

²⁰Ibid., 74.

²¹Murray, *With Christ in the School of Prayer*, 33.

speak to God about it in meaningful prayer. As a result, we pray about what we've encountered in the Bible, now personalized through meditation. And not only do we have something substantial to say in prayer, and the confidence that we are praying God's thoughts to Him, but we transition smoothly into prayer with a passion for what we are praying about.²²

Another model that can be used for prayer partnerships is an acrostic A.C.T.S. Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, adopted this methodology as he and hundreds of his staff taught believers on university campuses how to pray.²³ Bright incorporated this prayer model in the training manual, *Ten Steps toward Christian Maturity*. Bright's objective in providing Christians with a guide to effective daily prayer was "to teach students a simple guide to use in their daily prayer times."²⁴ This simple acrostic guide stands for Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication. This pattern of prayer categorized prayer in two parts: Giving to God and receiving from God. Giving to God included adoration, confession, and thanksgiving. Receiving from God took the form of supplication. Adoration would lead the way in this pattern of prayer.

Adoration reminds the pray-er who they are addressing and helps foster a God centered focus. Bright writes, "Adoration is paying honor to a divine being; regarding with fervent devotion and affection. Adoration is adoring God, telling Him how much you love Him, praising Him for who He is."²⁵ Confession means to confess sins to God. Bright explains, "Confession is admitting one's faults, especially confessing one's specific sins. The Greek word means to say the same thing with. We agree with God about our sins."²⁶ Thanksgiving solicits the proper response to God's glory, grace, and gifts. Bright writes, "Thanksgiving is offering thanks, especially to God; a prayer

²²Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 72.

²³Bill Bright, *Ten Basic Steps toward Christian Maturity* (Orlando: New Life, 1994), 7.

²⁴*Ibid.*, 211.

²⁵*Ibid.*, 212.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 213.

expressing gratitude.”²⁷ Supplication can be a request of God for others or for oneself. Bright explains, “Supplication is imploring God; a humble petition or entreaty.”²⁸ Certainly the A.C.T.S. methodology is a proven prayer tool already tested and triumphant on the public school campus through educators and students alike.

An often overlooked model of prayer is that of learning the posture of praying like children to a father. In *Celebration of Discipline*, Richard Foster remarks, “We should never make prayer too complicated. Jesus taught us to come like children to a father. Openness, honesty, and trust mark the communication of children with their father.”²⁹ This model is powerful not only for a parent or grandparent but also for the educator surrounded by children. Often times Jesus would use the simplicity of a child to teach profound spiritual lessons. Christ also was fond of using examples and illustrations from everyday life as a lesson in relating to Him. Foster points to the fact that children usually ask something, such as for daily bread, with utter confidence:

Children have no need to stash away today’s sandwiches for fear none will be available tomorrow. As far as they are concerned, there is an endless supply of sandwiches. Children do not find it difficult or complicated to talk to their parents, nor do they feel embarrassed to bring the simplest need to their attention. Neither should we hesitate to bring the simplest requests confidently to the father.³⁰

Foster reminds the believer to ask humbly and confidently like a child asking a faithful and loving parent. Thus, asking for prayer requests from other educators can be a powerful tool for the public educator as a prayer partner. The follow up to each prayer request can build excitement when prayer is answered in the affirmative, and fosters endurance when not answered in the affirmative. The process of persisting in prayer

²⁷Bright, *Ten Basic Steps*, 214.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* (New York: Harper Collins, 1998), 40.

³⁰Ibid., 41.

further helps the prayer partners wait and watch for how God is answering a prayer, even if the answer is delivered in an unexpected way.

Another evangelistic model of prayer is shared by Chuck Lawless in *Nobodies for Jesus*. The model directs prayer from the acrostic, GOD’S HEART.³¹ Each letter guides the group prayer. The letter G reminds the group to appreciate God’s grace. The letter O guides the group to pray for believers’ obedience to God. The letter D calls for the group to decide to tell others about the story of Jesus. The letter S informs the group to pray that believers will speak the gospel fearlessly and clearly. The letter H leads the group to pray for nonbelievers to have a receptive heart to the gospel. The letter E guides the group to pray that unbelievers’ spiritual eyes will be opened. The letter A guides the group to pray that unbelievers will have God’s attitude toward sin. The letter R guides the group to pray unbelievers will repent and believe. The letter T leads the group to pray lives will be transformed.³² This model can guide the group in prayer while also being purposeful to fulfill their mission as missionaries on the public school campus.

Models and methodologies are important for prayer partners to learn to pray. However, A. W. Tozer rightly states that “prayer at its best is the expression of the total life . . . one that elevates and purifies every act of body and mind and integrates the entire personality into a single spiritual unit. Such prayer can only be the result of a life lived in the Spirit.”³³ The methods will not be restrictive, but rather will provide guidance for the sure expression of a believer’s life. Spurgeon affirms that prayer will occur spontaneously from those who are exercised in faith:

Jesus says, “If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask.” Prayer comes spontaneously from those who abide in Jesus. Prayer is the natural

³¹Chuck Lawless, *Nobodies for Jesus* (Nashville: Rainer, 2013), 90.

³²*Ibid.*, 91-92.

³³A. W. Tozer, *The Root of the Righteous* (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, 1986), 81.

outgushing of a soul in communion with Jesus. As the leaf and fruit come out of the vine branch without any conscious effort and simply because of its living union with the stem, so prayer buds and blossoms and fruits out of souls abiding in Jesus.³⁴

Andrew Murray answers the question, “how do we learn to pray,” by asking the believer to sense his own weakness. In this way, God’s grace works through humble submission as the one who prays responds by acknowledging the need to learn. Learning also begins with a decision to begin praying now. That decision means that the prayer partner makes his life completely available for God’s blessing to flow through him to his world. The prayer partner cultivates faith with the simple truth that “God hears prayer; God will do what I ask.” Finally, Murray admonishes, “Take up your position in Christ and in the power that His name and life and Spirit give you. And go on practicing definite prayer and intercession.”³⁵

A Prayer Partnership Plan Informs the Educators of Their Religious Liberties Concerning Prayer

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Section 9524, affirms that constitutionally protected prayer is a tenant of public elementary and secondary schools. The current “guidance” issued by the Department of Education and reviewed by the Department of Justice provides direction to local schools on the matter of prayer:

SEC. 9524. 20 U.S.C. 7904 SCHOOL PRAYER. (a) GUIDANCE.—The Secretary shall provide and revise guidance, not later than September 1, 2002, and of every second year thereafter, to State educational agencies, local educational agencies, and the public on constitutionally protected prayer in public elementary schools and secondary schools, including making the guidance available on the Internet. The guidance shall be reviewed, prior to distribution, by the Office of Legal Counsel of the Department of Justice for verification that the guidance represents the current state of the law concerning constitutionally protected prayer in public elementary schools and secondary schools.³⁶

³⁴Charles Spurgeon, *The Power of Prayer in a Believer’s Life* (Lynwood, WA: Emerald, 1993), 33.

³⁵Murray, *The Practice of God’s Presence*, 413.

³⁶Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, accessed June 11, 2017, <https://www2.ed.gov/documents/essa-act-of-1965.pdf>.

The fact that prayer is protected by federal law is the good news for students and teachers alike. The fact that it must be reviewed every two years to assure compliance with the law indicates just how fluid the legal system has become in overriding the role of legislative bodies by redefining constitutional limits to religious expression. Teachers must be vigilant in following court challenges and conflicting outcomes that may directly affect their abilities to exercise religious freedom.

When teachers are in the classroom, they are acting in their official capacity as representatives of the state. The First Amendment has been interpreted to prohibit someone representing the government from either encouraging or discouraging prayer. Teachers are free to actively participate in activities where they have made it clear that they are not participating in their official capacities. Before school or during lunch, teachers may meet together for prayer to the same extent that they meet for a secular activity or conversation.³⁷

As church state litigation has proliferated and schools are often threatened with costly lawsuits by organizations such as the American Civil Liberties Union and Americans United for Separation of Church and State, local school districts, school superintendents, principals, and teachers could become fearful of exercising their religious liberties. Indeed, the courts are unpredictable in their interpretation of religious freedom and are heavily influenced by personal bias.

These challenges have become more complicated in the last two years with cases such as Atlanta Fire chief Kevin Cochran, who was fired for authoring a book for his church men's Bible study expressing his religious beliefs concerning homosexuality. Aaron and Melissa Klein, owners of a bakery in Oregon were forced to close their store and fined \$135,000 for refusing to bake a wedding cake for a lesbian couple because it

³⁷Brad Dacus and Susanne Dacus, *Reclaim Your School: Ten Strategies to Practically and Legally Evangelize Your School* (Sacramento, CA: Pacific Justice Institute, 2007), 150.

violated their religious beliefs. These cases reflect a significant suppression of Christian religious expression, and a shift in court interpretations of the First Amendment never seen before in America. The school is a target for the homosexual agenda, and teachers are being trained to integrate homosexual education as a normal immutable trait to be validated by everyone. Teachers must not compromise their religious beliefs, while at the same time respond in a loving and compassionate manner, realizing that they will face hostility in the public arena. The American College of Pediatricians has developed a website for educators that teachers can use as a reference and referral, addressing homosexual behaviors and youth.³⁸ Although these examples may incite timidity among teachers, they also illustrate the great need for prayer partnerships among teachers whose rights are “endowed by their Creator.” As teachers remain bold, yet humble; informed, yet teachable, they fulfill the biblical mandate to be salt and light in places where hostility may be a daily part of life.

For examples of disagreement within the Circuit Courts concerning religious liberty in the schools, the Seventh Circuit Court ruled that a school district is not required to allow teachers to meet before school for a Bible study, because the teachers could not show that other teachers were allowed to meet before school for speech about other topics.³⁹ The Eighth Circuit Court, however, ruled that a school district must allow an elementary school teacher to participate in religious discussions with students after school in school facilities.⁴⁰ It would seem probable from this court decision that a teacher could exercise freedom of religion in the way that she chooses outside of contract

³⁸Facts about Youth, accessed April 3, 2017, <http://factsaboutyouth.com>. See also Finn Laursen, *Standing on the Word: Christian Educators in Public Schools* (Longwood, FL: Advantage, 2015), 113-24.

³⁹*May v. Evansville*, 787 F.2d 1105 (1986).

⁴⁰*Wiggs v. Sioux Falls School District* 49-5, 382 F.3d 807 (2004).

time, and making clear that she is not acting as a representative of the school but rather in her personal capacity as a Christian individual.⁴¹

The courts give great deference to the school superintendent to determine a teacher's rights. The Seventh Circuit Court ruled that if supervisors make it clear that no religious viewpoints are permitted to be expressed in the classroom, a teacher must comply.⁴² In the Tenth Circuit Court, a principal ordered a teacher to remove his Bible from his desk. The teacher sometimes read the Bible during daily silent reading time for his fifth grade class, and he also read other books. The court again sided with the supervisor.⁴³ In contrast, the Eighth Circuit Court ruled that a principal could have a Bible and a framed psalm on the wall of his office even though a teacher complained that these violated the Establishment Clause.⁴⁴

As principals and supervisors take more authority over the curriculum and require specific lessons be taught, these restrictions on content can also be applied to religious expression. A high school biology teacher in California was required to teach evolution, and did not convince the court that evolution is a religious belief system. In addition, a principal ordered a teacher not to include creation science, and the court affirmed that school administrators have the final word regarding the content of the curriculum taught by teachers.⁴⁵

Students have a greater freedom to express their religious beliefs since they do not act as agents of the state. Current guidelines instruct,

⁴¹Forrest Turpen, ed., *Teachers & Religion in Public Schools* (Pasadena, CA: Christian Educators Association International, 2006), 33.

⁴²*Helland v. South Bend Community School Corp.*, 93 F.3d 327, 331 (1996).

⁴³*Roberts v. Madigan*, 921 F.2d 1047 (1990).

⁴⁴*Warnock v. Archer*, 380 F.3d 1076, 1079, 1082 (2004).

⁴⁵*Webster v. New Lenox School District*, 917 F.2d 1004 (1990).

Students may read their Bibles or other scriptures, say grace before meals, and pray or study religious materials with fellow students during recess, the lunch hour, or other non-instructional time to the same extent that they may engage in nonreligious activities.⁴⁶

In other words, students may express their faith and worldview in both curricular and non-curricular work. To censor a student's expression of faith is illegal viewpoint discrimination. Students' works must be judged on academic standards whether they are writing about the apostle Paul and using the Bible as a source, or choosing a Psalm as a poem to be analyzed for its literary and historic value.⁴⁷

Teachers and administrators have been bullied by frivolous costly lawsuits so that many are afraid to even mention God or Christianity. The Department of Education has affirmed that the Bible may be taught as a source of literature, as well as discussing the role of religion in the history of the United States, and the Bible may be used as the central piece in a literature or history assignment. By ignoring these central topics in America's history, teachers are inadvertently helping to establish a religion of secularism.⁴⁸

The Alliance Defending Freedom is an organization of over 3,100 attorneys who have donated over 1 million hours in legal advocacy and trained 1,900 attorneys to defend religious freedom. They have published a guide for teachers that can be downloaded for free at their website. They affirm, "Music without sacred music, architecture minus the cathedral, or painting without the Scriptural themes would be eccentric and incomplete, even from a secular view."⁴⁹ The Alliance Defending Freedom states that teachers may mix the secular and the sacred, including teaching about religious

⁴⁶US Department of Education Guidance on Constitutionally Protected Prayer in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools, February 7, 2003. Forrest Turpen, ed., Appendix A to *Teachers & Religion in Public Schools*, 71.

⁴⁷Stephen Williams and Sarah Williams, *Navigating Public Schools* (Bend, OR: Prepare the Way, 2016), 86.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, 88.

⁴⁹*McCullum v. Board of Education*, 333 U.S. 203, 206 (1948).

holidays. For example a teacher may explain that Easter is a religious holiday celebrated by Christians who believe that the person of Jesus Christ was raised from the dead. Historically, Easter celebrates the resurrection of Christ, whom Christians believe to be God. Teachers also have a limited ability to discuss alternative theories in science regarding the origins of humankind when there is a clear secular intent to enhance the effectiveness of scientific instruction. Teachers may distribute flyers for noncurricular activities that are religious in nature if secular flyers are publicized in the same manner, and teachers may utilize a classroom or lounge to meet for prayer if the school allows such meetings for secular activities.⁵⁰ Many detailed resources at The Alliance Defending Freedom website help the teacher clarify their rights.

Teachers may meet for prayer or Bible study to the same extent that they may engage in nonreligious activities during times such as lunch or before or after school. It is always appropriate for a teacher to state that he is acting personally and not in his official capacity. Teachers may meet for prayer or Bible study to the same extent that they may engage in nonreligious activities during times such as lunch or before or after school. It is always appropriate for a teacher to state that he is acting personally and not in his official capacity when expressing his religious beliefs. For example, a teacher should be permitted to teach a Sunday school class, write a letter to the editor of the local paper, lead a youth group through a church, or enroll his children in a private religious school.

A Prayer Partnership Plan Instructs on How to Sustain Prayer Partnerships through Accountability

Mutual accountability is an intentional way to set early expectations when a prayer partner group begins. The group may express their mutual need and agreement for

⁵⁰Alliance Defending Freedom, “Students Don’t Have to Leave Their Faith at Home: Resources,” accessed April 3, 2017, <http://adflegal.org/issues/religious-freedom/k-12/resources>.

accountability through a covenant. In *Discipleship Essentials*, Greg Ogden helps define such a prayer partner group:

Accountability means giving your discipling partners authority to call you to keep the commitments you have made to one another. A covenant is a shared agreement whereby you clearly state your mutual expectations. In so doing, you are giving each other permission to hold you to your agreement.⁵¹

The larger the number of people within a group, the easier it is to hide from responsibility. Larger numbers decrease access to a person's life. Thus, within a large prayer partner group, smaller groups can be formed for maximum accountability. Smaller groups of three or four people per group can be an optimum setting, although not required. This model follows Christ's method of bringing the twelve disciples closer with more ministry experience. James, Peter, and John witnessed more of Christ's workings than did the others. Forming small subgroups is an intentional method to foster transparent relationships that build mutual accountability.

Accountability is sustained by connecting the prayer partner group with a pastor and local church.⁵² God's primary instrument for accomplishing the Great Commission is the church. Each community should have a local church and a pastor who are seeking to fulfill the Great Commission. Certainly the formation of prayer groups on the largest mission field in America is a great initiative. Furthermore, the prayer for laborers in the harvest is answered, at least, in the initial stage through the gathering of a prayer partner group. A prayer coordinator can be selected from within the group. Their role would be to provide administrative leadership to the group and function as the primary communication link between the prayer group and the pastor or local church.⁵³ This connection with a local church builds accountability into the prayer partner ministry.

⁵¹Greg Ogden, *Discipleship Essentials* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity, 1998), 10.

⁵²John Maxwell, *Partners in Prayer* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1996), 114.

⁵³*Ibid.*, 117.

A commitment to authentic biblical fellowship fosters prayer partner accountability. Whitney shares the need to understand biblical fellowship:

Christians in Western cultures find it easy to forget the role played by fellowship in the theology and practice of the spiritual disciplines. One cause of that oversight is the intense individualism touted in our do-your-own-thing, be-your-own-boss, look-out-for-number-one society. But there is a more subtle reason: the common Christian failure to distinguish between socializing and fellowship. Although socializing is often both a part of and the context of fellowship, it is possible to socialize without having fellowship. Socializing involves the sharing of human and earthly life. Christian fellowship, New Testament Koinonia, involves the sharing of spiritual life.⁵⁴

Therefore, promoting and practicing biblical fellowship further bolsters accountability within a prayer partnership. Biblical fellowship supplies intentionality of the practice of prayer within the prayer partnership groups.

Sustaining accountability is further solidified by agreeing on a selected lead prayer partner. For example, Christ was the Lord but also the leader among leaders who provided a supervisory role in order to accomplish their assignments. In *Master Plan of Evangelism*, Robert Coleman notes the importance of supervision: “The important thing about all this supervisory work of Jesus was that he kept the disciples going on toward the goal he had set for them. His plan of teaching by example, assignment, and constant check-up was calculated to bring out the best that was in them.”⁵⁵ Christ was a master at on-the-job training. Thus, the prayer partner group needs to agree upon a leader with hope that leadership training be modeled, supervised, and eventually reproduced. Their mode of leadership training cultivates accountability as leaders are being groomed with hands-on experience.

Sustained accountability is nourished as prayer partners share both struggles and successes. Struggles can be opportunities to further prayer, but also to build a caring

⁵⁴Whitney, *Spiritual Disciplines for the Christian Life*, 240.

⁵⁵Robert Coleman, *Master Plan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1963), 97.

and encouraging environment. However, even greater accountability accompanies the answer to the prayers which the prayer partners are praying. Coleman writes,

Jesus made it a point to meet with his disciples following their tours of service to hear their reports and to share with them the blessedness of his ministry in doing the same thing. What does matter, as the record shows, is that after the disciples were sent out to work, they were expected to share their experiences later with the group.⁵⁶

Perhaps nothing creates the motivation and momentum to pray as does the answer to prayer.

Accountability is sustained as prayer partners are more and more convinced of the importance of prayer in evangelism. In *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church*, Mark Dever remarks on the importance of prayer:

Remember the importance of prayer in evangelism because, of course, salvation is the work of God. We depend on Him utterly and completely, and nowhere more than in seeing the spiritual resurrection of non-Christians being converted. Pray regularly for your non-Christian friends and neighbors.⁵⁷

Accountability reaches new heights and heaviness when prayer and evangelism are connected. The need of non-Christians, coupled with the burden and blessing of praying Christians, produces sustained accountability among prayer partners. The prayer group might prove a beneficial place for new Christians to join as well as a source of hope for others who become aware of the prayer partners. Having both new Christians and seasoned prayer warriors encourages sustained accountability for all prayer partners.

Military Prayer: Historical Examples Using a Biblical Metaphor

A great illustrative model of developing a plan to facilitate prayer partnerships comes from American military history. It is a good theological practice is to observe biblically-based historical examples. Certainly, the early church fathers help confirm and guide theological formations. Contemporary examples can also prove beneficial to ensure

⁵⁶Coleman, *Master Plan of Evangelism*, 92.

⁵⁷Mark Dever, *Nine Marks of a Healthy Church* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2000), 147.

theological moorings and convictions. The apostle Paul used metaphors to clarify and solidify deep theological practices. One of Paul's main metaphors when explaining the Christian life is a soldier serving in the military. Paul's prison letters give repeated examples of likening the Christian in adversity to a soldier. When a soldier puts on his armor, he is not preparing to stand alone against an enemy. Rather, an army under authority and unified in a common mission prepares together to fight. Paul called upon the church at Rome to be an integral part of the strife he was experiencing, and he expressed the benefits of their partnership. Paul indicates the nature of his soldier-life, giving some views of the kind of praying needed for such a career:

Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judaea, and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints, so that by God's will I may come to you with joy and be refreshed in your company. (Rom 15:30-31)

In one of his many volumes on prayer, E M. Bounds writes regarding Romans 15:

Here is a great soldier, a captain-general, in the great struggle, faced by malignant forces who seek his ruin. His force is well-nigh spent. What reinforcements can he count on? What can give help and bring success to a warrior in such a pressing emergency? It is a critical moment in the conflict. What force can be added to the energy of his own prayers? The answer is -- in the prayers of others, even the prayers of his brethren who were at Rome. These, he believes, will bring him additional aid, so that he can win his fight, overcome his adversaries, and, ultimately, prevail.⁵⁸

Bounds is pointing out the same situation as occurred in Asia when Paul called on the Corinthian church for their assistance in praying for him. Paul was unquestionably a great leader and chosen of God, yet he was always connected to other believers for support and encouragement. Using the army metaphor, Bounds reminds that the warrior will expend all that he has, and then he must rely on others when his strength is not enough for victory. The principle was true for Paul's great spiritual battles. Bounds continues,

⁵⁸E. M. Bounds, "Necessity of Prayer," Christian Classics Ethereal Library, accessed December 10, 2016, ccel.org/bounds/necessity.xii.html.

The soldier-prayer must reflect its profound concern for the success and well-being of the whole army. The battle is not altogether a personal matter; victory cannot be achieved for self, alone. There is a sense in which the entire army of Christ is involved. The cause of God, His saints, their woes and trials, their duties and crosses, all should find a voice and a pleader in the Christian soldier, when he prays. He dare not limit his praying to himself.⁵⁹

The metaphor of the soldier in Scripture has meaning and application to all Christians but is particularly applicable to the public school teacher. The teacher is part of a large body politic with an extensive hierarchy. Teachers are under authority, and wrestle with concepts and directives that stretch their faith and challenges their ethics. The prayers of the soldier and the prayers of the teacher share necessary themes.

When examining the history of praying together, no example shines more brightly than the American military. The largest social science study ever conducted up to that time gathered data from soldiers returning from World War II measuring combat motivation. Prayer was selected most frequently as the soldier's source of strength; higher than "thinking that you couldn't let the other men down" and "thinking you had to finish the job in order to get home again." The researchers concluded, "The fact that such an overwhelming majority of combat men said that prayer helped them a lot certainly means that they almost universally had recourse to prayer and probably found relief, distraction, or consolation in the process."⁶⁰

During the Civil War, many state militias were trained at a military school within each state. Virginia's military institute is one of the few that remains today. In *The Military History of Virginia Military Institute*, Jennings C. Wise records a cadet's description of the scene moments before committing the cadets to combat:

Before the command to march was given, a thing occurred which left a deep impression upon us all—a thing which even now may be solace to those whose boys died so gloriously that day. In the gloom of the night, Captain Frank Preston, neither afraid nor ashamed to pray, sent up an appeal to God for His protection of

⁵⁹Bounds, "Necessity of Prayer."

⁶⁰Social Science Research Council, *The American Soldier: Combat and Its Aftermath* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1949), 185.

our little band; it was an humble, earnest petition that sunk into the heart of every hearer. Few were the dry eyes, little the frivolity, when he had ceased to speak of home, of father, of mother, of country, of victory and defeat, of life, of death, of eternity.⁶¹

With this heartfelt prayer, young Virginia Military Institute cadets as young as fifteen marched to the Battle of New Market. Ten of the cadets gave their lives on the field of battle that day. Their names are still remembered in a ceremony at Virginia Military Institute each year on the battle's anniversary.

World War II has numerous examples of a nation at prayer. Perhaps the most famous instance of prayer in the troops was a circulated prayer by General George Patton in December, 1942. On December 11 and 12, 3,200 training letters on prayer were distributed to every chaplain and organizational commander down to and including the regimental level, and 250,000 prayer cards were printed and distributed to every soldier in the Third Army with the now famous Patton prayer:

Almighty and most merciful Father, we humbly beseech Thee, of Thy great goodness, to restrain these immoderate rains with which we have had to contend. Grant us fair weather for Battle. Graciously hearken to us as soldiers who call upon Thee that armed with Thy power, we may advance from victory to victory, and crush the oppression and wickedness of our enemies, and establish Thy justice among men and nations. Amen.⁶²

Chaplain James H. O'Neill reports,

On December 20, to the consternation of the Germans and the delight of the American forecasters who were equally surprised at the turnabout—the rains and the fogs ceased. For the better part of a week came bright clear skies and perfect flying weather. Our planes came over by tens, hundreds, thousands.⁶³

General Patton called on all men of faith to pray, and even provided the words to voice a request. The chaplain wrote in his training letter, “We must urge, instruct, and indoctrinate every fighting man to pray as well as fight. . . . This Army needs the

⁶¹Jennings C. Wise, *Military History of VMI from 1839 To 1865* (Lynchburg, VA: J. P. Bell, 1915), 300-301.

⁶²James H. O'Neill, “The True Story of the Patton Prayer,” *The Military Chaplain*, 19, no. 2 (1948): 2.

⁶³*Ibid.*, 3, 13.

assurance and the faith that God is with us. With prayer, we cannot fail.”⁶⁴ This was the spirit of the American military through the end of World War II.

In the Vietnam era, a communist prison camp, named by its captives the “Hanoi Hilton,” survived the most austere circumstances through prayer. Colonel Robinson Risner, a leader among prisoners there, recounted their decision to conduct unit worship and prayer services in defiance of the communist North Vietnamese. To Risner and most other POWs there was no doubt of the absolute military necessity of leader-led unit prayer to their survival as an American military unit:

I could not have existed if I had not been able to pray. To be able to mention in prayer the names of my wife, children, friends or relatives, or one of my fellow POWs who I knew was being tortured or mistreated, brought us together. The thousands of miles, the walls of my cell, the guards, were all transcended by this dimension of communication.⁶⁵

The Commanders at the Hanoi Hilton knew that the unit would need total participation to bolster morale and to resist their captors. Since there were a few agnostics, they agreed to make the service both patriotic and religious. The Code of Conduct, written for POWs, was tested in a very matter-of-fact course of action—“I will trust in my God and the United States of America.” Along with the decision to pray, planning for the eminent possibility of severe life and death consequences to this simple display of loyalty to God and country by men who were strengthened and unified to endure as prisoners of war was required.

The very first orders for the Navy were written by John Adams in 1775. Article 2 gives the following regulation: The Commanders of the ships of the Thirteen United Colonies, are to take care that divine service be performed twice a day on board, and a sermon preached on Sundays, unless bad weather or other extraordinary accidents prevent it.

⁶⁴O’Neill, “The True Story,” 3.

⁶⁵Colonel Robinson Risner, *The Passing of the Night: My Seven Years as a Prisoner of the North Vietnamese* (New York: Random House, 1973), 217.

Civic leaders have called the nation to engage in prayer together from the very first meeting of the Continental Congress. At the suggestion of Samuel Adams, it was decided that men of such different views about religion, as well as the work ahead, could be united in prayer by their love of country. On September 7, 1774, reverend Jacob Duche opened the congressional session with prayer:

O Lord our Heavenly Father, high and mighty King of kings, and Lord of lords, who dost from thy throne behold all the dwellers on earth and reignest with power supreme and uncontrolled over all the Kingdoms, Empires and Governments; look down in mercy, we beseech thee, on these our American States, who have fled to thee from the rod of the oppressor and thrown themselves on Thy gracious protection, desiring to be henceforth dependent only on Thee, to Thee have they appealed for the righteousness of their cause; to Thee do they now look up for that countenance and support, which Thou alone canst give.⁶⁶

John Adams reported the next day to his wife by letter that the prayer had an excellent effect upon everybody in attendance.

Many books have been written about revivals within military units during the Civil War. The heart-rending losses on both sides brought a cloud of gloom over the nation. Thursday, April 30, 1863, was a day set aside for Americans to gather together to pray. President Lincoln issued the following declaration:

And I do hereby request all the people to abstain on that day from their ordinary secular pursuits, and to unite, at their several places of public worship and their respective homes, in keeping the day holy to the Lord and devoted to the humble discharge of the religious duties proper to that solemn occasion.

All this being done, in sincerity and truth, let us then rest humbly in the hope authorized by the Divine teachings, that the united cry of the nation will be heard on high and answered with blessing no less than the pardon of our national sins and the restoration of our now divided and suffering country to its former happy condition of unity and peace.⁶⁷

The apostle Paul chose the metaphor of the soldier to apply to all Christians who are promised a spiritual warfare with ultimate victory (John 16:33). The lessons of

⁶⁶C. F. Adams, ed., *Letters of John Adams Addressed to His Wife* (Boston: Little & Brown, 1841), 1:23-24.

⁶⁷Abraham Lincoln, "Proclamation Appointing a National Fast Day," accessed December 10, 2016, <http://www.abrahamlincolnonline.org/lincoln/speeches/fast.htm>.

history show teachers that it is necessary and of great benefit to pray together to address the needs of the largest mission field in America, public school children.

CHAPTER 4

DETAILS AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

The four goals of the project included (1) the evaluation of public educators' understanding of prayer and religious liberties; (2) the development of the five sessions covering basic biblical models of prayer, viewing the school campus as a mission field, and understanding religious liberties within the public school setting; (3) increasing understanding of participants as measured by a post-survey; and (4) the identification of prayer partners by the public school teacher participants.

Goal 1: Enlisting Public School Educators and Evaluating Initial Understanding

Prior to data collection, I moved to another city, Williamsburg, Kentucky. As a result, the participants were chosen from Whitley County school district, Williamsburg Independent school district, as well as three teachers from the Oldham County School District in Crestwood, Kentucky.

Public school educators were identified from multiple congregations. They were asked to participate in the five sessions and understood the subject matter would address prayer and religious liberties in public secondary schools. They were asked to complete the Public Educators Initial Assessment (see appendix 1) prior to viewing the outlines and video teaching. Twenty participants completed the five sessions and completed both the initial and post assessments.

Goal 2: Development of Five Teaching Sessions

Due to relocation and a broader demographic with participants in different cities, the five sessions were filmed and made available to participants online, who

committed to watch one video weekly. A church member and faculty member of the University of the Cumberlands filmed the first three sessions. A Louisville attorney and legal researcher were consulted and provided outlines for the fourth and fifth sessions. These experts provided input on constitutional liberties and legal precedent in public schools, as well as the role of prayer in American history. The final two sessions were recorded in Louisville and all five sessions were posted on Vimeo for participants to access.

Developing the Content of Session 1

In the first session, public school educators were shown the need for prayer partnerships in four major areas—the societal need, human need, religious need, and missional need. There is a greater societal need for godly wisdom in schools today due to the breakdown of cultural moral values. Whereas teachers were once concerned about running in the halls and chewing gum, discipline issues are now focused on safety and violence. The breakdown of the family has created a much heavier burden on the public school teacher who is impacted daily by children with special needs.¹

Second, the need for prayer has increased because teachers have a human need to belong, and to experience support, encouragement, and accountability from peers, as well as parents, administrators, and students. Third, there is a religious need—teachers must continually grow in their personal lives and in the community of faith. Finally, there is a missional need—each teacher is called to advance the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Great Commission is to make disciples. Teachers spend most of their time in the workplace and they are working with the future of America. At the conclusion of the first session, teachers were asked to identify great and growing needs in their schools after considering these four areas of need, and to begin thinking about ten prayer partners whom they could enlist when the five sessions were completed.

¹Tony Evans, *The Kingdom Agenda* (Chicago: Moody, 2013), 18.

Developing the Content of Session 2

The second session focused on the Scriptures used in chapter 2 to support the thesis that there is a biblical and theological basis for developing a plan for prayer partnerships: Luke 11:1-13, 1 Timothy 2:1-8, Acts 2:42-47, Luke 10:1-2, Ephesians 6:18-20, and 2 Corinthians 1:8-11.

Luke 11:1-13 is Jesus' model prayer, demonstrating first that prayer is instructive. After Jesus prayed, his disciples asked Him to teach them to pray just as John had taught his disciples. He actually put words in their mouths: "When you pray, say . . ." Praying can be learned. Followers of Jesus can learn how to pray by praying together.

Second, prayer is habitual. Timothy, the young pastor at Ephesus was eager to learn, and Paul's instruction, initially, was to pray all kinds of prayer for all kinds of people. Paul instructed Timothy to pray for kings and those in authority. "Those in authority" is a phrase that describes the public school teacher. They have a unique authority in the classroom that is unparalleled in any other profession. Paul says the result of these prayers is to "lead a quiet and tranquil life." What a classroom this would be—quiet and peaceful learners in answer to prayer! Not only is the result tranquility, but Paul also declares it is good and acceptable in the sight of God.

Habitual prayer is also affirmed in Acts 2:42. The early church, which was new and establishing habits of discipline, began by being continually, habitually, devoted to prayer. The church was birthed in a prayer meeting, and maintained its vitality in prayer meetings. Prayer partnerships became a normal every day part of the Christ following life.

Third, praying together is vital to the mission of the church. In Luke 10, Jesus sent out the 72 disciples and He first instructed them to pray: "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest" (Luke 10:2). God desires that all should be saved, and it is through prayer that laborers are stirred to go and to promote the gospel. This principle was strongly illustrated in the assessment where public educators were asked to rate the

statement, “Christian missionaries need more people praying for them than I do.” A surprising 11 out of 20 educators agreed with this statement. According to Jesus’ instruction in Luke 10, laborers will awaken to this mission first through prayer, an instruction vital to public educators who work in the largest mission field in America.

The need for prayer to advance the mission is seen again in Ephesians 6, where Paul asked that people pray for him so he could speak the gospel boldly. Prayer and boldness still go together as Christian public educators navigate their own mission field daily.

Finally, participants were asked to consider how crucial prayer is for the Christ follower. In 2 Corinthians 1, Paul declares that they were burdened beyond their strength. Time pressure and student struggles create a daily burden for teachers, and the participants readily related to Paul’s statement. In verse 11, Paul offers the solution: “You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many.” Prayer is a concrete and practical way that teachers help one another to rely on God’s strength, rather than their own, and to celebrate the victories and blessings that Paul knew would come as the result of the Christians at Corinth praying together for him. Praying together brings deliverance, and the result is that many rejoice and give thanks to God because they have invested in prayer.

Acts 6 is a warning not to neglect the ministry of prayer. The twelve disciples were confronted with a crisis. Widows were being neglected in the daily distribution, and the conflict of perceived favoritism for one group over another was escalating. The response of the disciples is instructive to those in the workplace who are inevitably caught up in the demands of multiple stakeholders—students, parents, administrators, and peers all demand the time and attention of the public educator every day. The disciples realized that their foundational work could be neglected if they were pulled into this conflict. It was delegated to seven men full of the Holy Spirit and faith, while they continued in their work: “But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4).

This second session was the heart of the project's mission to impress upon teachers the core ministry they must commit to if they would be successful in fulfilling their true calling. Jesus also modeled the centrality of prayer as he prayed all night before choosing the disciples. Perhaps these disciples thought of His example in solving the crisis of Acts 6. He had taught them to pray, and its necessity and reward had become supreme in their commitment to lead the church.

Session 2 closed by asking teachers to consider what hindrances they needed to overcome to form prayer partnerships in their schools. Again, the challenge to write down the names of potential prayer partners was impressed on participants.

Developing the Content of Session 3

Session 3 presented different models of prayer that have helped people enter the discipline of regular prayer and petition. The session began with the example of a child. A child prays for big things, small things, and anything! Prayer is learned, as children demonstrate. They hear, and their faith is established by listening to others. Participants were asked to consider how they learned to pray. The word *disciple* means learner. The disciples asked to be taught to pray, and Jesus both modeled his answer and taught them. Once the teacher has accepted Christ as Savior, he becomes a disciple; that is, a lifelong learner.

The learner begins by going to Scripture, and praying its truths and promises. With an open Bible and an open heart, the learner makes each truth his own, and can pray the scriptures back to God. When the learner prays the Word of God, he is always praying in the will of God. Jesus' model prayer in Matthew 6:9-13 has been taught to believers from the beginning of Christianity. It is one of the first scriptures memorized by children. Participants were encouraged to search the Psalms, the prophets, and the New Testament to find the prayers of God's people, and use them as examples to ask God to fulfill those truths and promises in their own lives.

Participants were asked to use the acrostic ACTS in learning to pray. Although prayer is not a formula, but rather a relationship, participants were encouraged to use ACTS to give expression to the heart language. A is for adoration—a calling to praise and adore the Sovereign of the universe. C is for confession—to say what God says and discover in prayer that He is faithful and just to forgive and cleanse from all unrighteousness. T is for Thanksgiving—thanking Him for what He has done, as well as for who He is. S is for supplication—realizing that God wants his followers to bring their needs to Him. He says through the apostle James, “You have not, because you ask not” (Jas 4:2).

When Christ followers come with a heart of adoration, making sure that their hearts are clean through confession, overflowing with thanksgiving, it is likely that their supplication will be pure. Believers will ask God for the things that He wants to do in their lives and they can align with His agenda. As a matter of fact, one who loves God will readily set aside his agenda in order to say to God, “Your will be done.” God wants Christians to come to Him as children. He is a good Father, and a good God.

The participants were challenged to listen to children as they pray. They would surely be moved by the simplicity and purity of those prayers. If children are asking a big God for big things, or a loving God for small things, they do not hesitate to ask. Let the prayers of children stir teachers’ hearts as they remember Jesus’ admonition to come as a child with the faith and trust that they demonstrate through prayer.

God is who He says He is, and He invites those who are seeking Him into conversation with Him to learn through conversational prayer. Teachers were introduced to conversational prayer using the acrostic, “God’s Heart. Again, it was emphasized that the school is a mission field, and every Christian is called to fulfill the Great Commission. Teachers were given the challenge, “before you talk to people about God, you must talk to God about people.”

Participants were introduced to Chuck Lawless’s acrostic, “God’s Heart.”² It was used to stir teachers’ hearts to realize that they truly need to be God’s evangelists in their mission field, the public school. The acrostic stands for

G: God’s Grace
O: Obedience to God
D: Decision to tell others
S: Speak fearlessly
H: Heart—prayer for receptive hearts to the gospel
E: Eyes—Pray that spiritual eyes would be opened to see sin, and to see the Savior
A: Attitude: Prayer that others will have God’s attitude towards sin and self
R: Repent—repentance is a change of mind that leads to a change of life
T: Transformation—changed in nature from the inside out.

Lawless’s acrostic can be used to focus the prayers of teachers and their prayer partners. When prayer partners report to each other that they have shared the gospel, it is energizing and emboldens more people to engage in the mission. The goal is to see people thoroughly changed from the inside out. When people attempt to change from the outside in, it always fails. This method of praying was recommended to teachers, so they would see their role, not only in inviting people to receive Christ, but also to disciple them to embrace a life committed to total transformation.

In applying the principles of session 3, teachers were encouraged to go to the Crossway website and explore Donald Whitney’s free five-day email course on praying the scriptures.³ These sessions would help teachers use their words to pray God’s Word and share their hearts with Him and with one another.

Again, teachers were reminded to pray about ten prayer partners who would commit to praying for one another. Together, they would pray to impact America’s largest mission field, the public school. As a final action item, teachers were encouraged to approach those whom they have been praying about throughout the first three weeks, and ask them to be prayer partners.

²Chuck Lawless, *Nobodies for Jesus* (Nashville: Rainer, 2013), 90.

³Crossway, “Praying the Bible,” accessed December 10, 2016, <https://www.crossway.org/books/praying-the-bible-case/>.

Developing the Content for Session 4

In session 4, teachers were presented with historic examples of prayer in America's history. Historic examples confirm the theological practice of praying together, specifically at the birth of the nation, and during times of crisis in war. History affirms that American leaders prayed together, believing that God would answer and protect the nation. They also called on all citizens to pray with them. As the apostle Paul wrote in Romans 15:30: "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me."

E. M. Bounds, a well-known writer on the subject of prayer, describes the apostle Paul as a great soldier. Paul was a captain general, in the great struggle, faced by malignant forces that sought his ruin, and he needed reinforcements. His life is characterized by pressing emergencies, and in those critical moments in the conflict, he needed force to be added to the energy of his own prayers. Therefore, he called on the prayers of his brethren.⁴ Teachers were admonished to follow Paul's example to call upon likeminded prayer partners to multiply the force of their prayers as their work in their mission fields. Paul had experienced the same hardship in Asia, and he called on the Corinthian church to assist him in prayer. Paul was a great leader, and he was chosen of God. He had great strengths, but he was always connected to other believers to support the work. The soldier is concerned for the success and well-being of the whole army. Teachers understand that their battles in the workplace are not a personal matter. Victory cannot be achieved for self, or by struggling alone.

There is a sense in which the entire body of Christ is involved in a common mission. Christ died to bring eternal life to the world. The potential army teachers must be concerned about involves each and every student they see daily. Teachers are in a

⁴E. M Bounds, "Necessity of Prayer," accessed December 10, 2016, Ccel.org/bounds/necessity.xii.html.

unique position because they influence not only this generation, but the next generation as well.

The metaphor of the soldier in Scripture has great application to American history. No example in the world shines more brightly than the American military. Teachers were given an excerpt from the Social Science Survey conducted during World War II. It was the largest survey ever taken, and the subjects were soldiers returning from horrendous battles overseas. The survey asked soldiers to identify what motivated them in combat to stay with the task and finish their course. Prayer was selected most frequently as the soldiers' source of strength.⁵ The immediate application to teachers was evident. They sometimes face situations that are hostile to their core faith. What is the first line of defense? If an army of over 300,000 recognized that prayer was the greatest motivation in combat, teachers too would be successful by turning first to prayer, and praying together would afford them accountability, perspective, and the motivation to stay the course. The surveyors of World War II soldiers concluded that the fact that the overwhelming majority selected prayer as their primary combat motivation almost certainly meant that they had ready access and encouragement to pray. It was their source of relief and consolation. The citizen-soldier teacher would do well to take World War II soldiers as their example.

Another great example from American history dates to the civil war, when there were many state militias. One of the greatest examples of praying together is found in the archives of the Virginia Military Institute. Men as young as fifteen years old were sent to the Battle of New Market. Even today, there is an annual memorial at the Virginia Military Institute for this battle, where the names of the young men who died are recited.⁶ Jennings C. Wise wrote a history of the Virginia Military Institute, and he

⁵Social Science Research Council, *The American Soldier, Combat and Its Aftermath* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1948), 185.

⁶VMI Archives, "Cadet Deaths at the Battle of New Market," accessed May 1,

describes the prayer that began the march to the Battle of New Market. The prayer occurred in the “gloom of the night,” when Captain Frank Preston, who was neither ashamed nor afraid to pray, sent up an appeal to God for His protection of each of the brave young men. Wise describes the prayer as humble and earnest, reminding the hearers of life, death and eternity. Ten cadets gave their lives on the field of battle that day.⁷ What a great example for teachers as they look out to the classroom each day. Praying together reminds them that God can see the future. He understands victory and defeat in each life, and ultimately, that each child will make an eternal decision. Historically, these kinds of bonds are formed when people get together to pray through the spiritual war that is a part of each life.

Part of the purpose of sharing these historic examples was to emphasize to teachers that God answers prayer, sometimes in very miraculous ways. The famous prayer of General George Patton in World War II is a prime example. It rained for weeks in December 1942, and the troops were unable to move forward. On December 11, 3,200 training letters on prayer were distributed to chaplains and commanders, and 250,000 prayer cards were printed and distributed to every soldier in the Third Army. General Patton asked the troops to pray the printed prayer together, beseeching God to restrain the rains, because God is good. They asked that God grant them fair weather for battle, so that soldiers who were armed with God’s power would obtain victory and crush the wickedness of their enemies and establish God’s justice among nations.⁸ Patton’s prayer would seem almost foreign to teachers today. History lessons have eliminated the concepts of good and evil, and children no longer know that soldiers called upon God

2017, <http://www.vmi.edu/archives/civil-war-and-new-market/battle-of-new-market/died-on-the-field-of-honor/>

⁷Jennings C. Wise, *Military History of VMI from 1839 To 1865* (Lynchburg, VA: J. P. Bell, 1915), 300-01.

⁸James H. O’Neill, “The True Story of the Patton Prayer,” *The Military Chaplain* 19, no. 2 (1948): 2.

together in prayer. This event spoke volumes to teachers, as God immediately answered prayer, much to the surprise of weather forecasters. General Patton's chaplain, James O'Neill, reported that the weather suddenly changed. The rain and fog ceased, and there were bright clear skies and perfect flying weather for a week. This is a great example of a miraculous answer to prayer in response to people of all faiths praying together. The training letter summed up the mission well: "We must urge, instruct, and indoctrinate every man to pray as well as to fight."⁹ Soldiers who were surrounded by the enemy learned to pray by praying together and were motivated to pray as they saw a dramatic answer to prayer. Teachers can experience the same in their workplaces if they will commit to fight the good fight of faith together with their colleagues.

An historic example of praying in impossible situations come from the Vietnam era, when prisoners of war were held for as much as seven years, tortured and beaten, and forbidden to pray. Robinson Risner was one of those prisoners of war who declared that he could not have existed if he had not been able to pray. He found strength for life each day by interceding for his wife, his children, and his fellow POWs. He testified that the walls and miles that separated him from his loved ones were all transcended by prayer.¹⁰ Teachers face many restrictions on their faith, but none that approach the circumstances of American POWs in Vietnam. Prayer carried them through harsh conditions and gave them the boldness to organize prayer services together over the objection of their captors. The serviceman's code of conduct is memorized by every soldier. It states, "I will trust in my God and in the United States of America." This complete trust is a faith that teachers can practice in the workplace. When faced with adversity, the teacher can trust in his God and gather with other teachers to pray in faith in order to experience encouragement, wisdom, and divine answers to prayer.

⁹O'Neill, "The True Story of the Patton Prayer," 3, 13

¹⁰Colonel Robinson Risner, *The Passing of the Night: My Seven Years as a Prisoner of the North Vietnamese* (New York: Random House, 1973), 217.

Even before America became a nation, leaders called on one another to join together in prayer. On September 7, 1774, the Continental Congress found themselves arguing and unable to move forward. There seemed to be no solution to finding consensus among the colonial representatives who had very different ideas about forming national ties. Wisely, the earliest American leaders called for prayer together to break through. They asked the Reverend Jacob Duche to open the congressional session with prayer. Acknowledging that God is King of kings and Lord of lords, ruler and sovereign over all nations, they petitioned for His protection. They declared their desire to be dependent only upon God. John Adams wrote to his wife the next day describing what happened and the profound effect prayer had had on everyone present.¹¹ Praying together moved these leaders closer to the birth of a nation.

Many books have been written about the effect of prayer on America and her military forces. The spiritual battle that public school educators fight is just as critical for the next generation, as the same God still promises to intervene in the course of history. In 2 Chronicles 16:9 God declares, “For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him.” This session demonstrated to teachers that God is present to help in time of need. The common denominator in these historic examples was people gathering to pray together, and God miraculously answered their prayers. Teachers were challenged to believe that what God has done in American history, he can do in the classroom for tomorrow’s generation. Finally, they were reminded to continue recruiting prayer partners to put into practice the learning they were experiencing throughout the five sessions of learning.

¹¹C. F. Adams, ed., *Letters of John Adams Addressed to His Wife* (Boston: Little & Brown, 1841), 1:23-24.

Developing the Content for Session 5

Session 5 addressed the legal rights of teachers in the public school system. Because the federal courts can change the boundaries of religious freedom with one decision, this is a tricky set of rapids to navigate; but the freedoms to which teachers have a right are usually greater than they realize. As a background and reference for Session 5, a 2016 book that is up to date on current court decisions, *Navigating Public Schools: Charting a Course to Protect Your Child's Christian Faith and Worldview* by Stephen and Sarah Williams, was recommended to participants.¹²

Session 5 focused on guidelines from the Department of Education, the rulings of the courts, and resources for Christians to know and understand their rights. The Department of Education has released official documents stating that teachers are constitutionally protected, and that prayer is a tenet of public elementary and secondary schools. These documents have been reviewed by the Department of Justice and codified in federal law code. This document directs the Secretary of Education to provide guidance on religious freedoms in the classroom, and the document is reviewed every two years. The fact that the Department of Education would mention in an official document that prayer is constitutionally protected is significant for teachers. However, the frequent reviews required also indicate just how changeable laws have become concerning religious freedoms. Where once every citizen was expected to know the law and keep it, today the “law” is often determined by the political and social views of an appointed, and therefore unelected, judge, who may or may not be sympathetic to acknowledging America’s Christian roots. The courts are unpredictable in their interpretation of religious freedom, which makes the challenge for the teacher somewhat daunting. In all the demands of the teaching profession, keeping up with the latest legal opinion is not a high priority. This constantly changing legal landscape is precisely why organizations such as the ACLU or

¹²Stephen Williams and Sarah Williams, *Navigating Public Schools* (Bend, OR: Prepare the Way, 2016).

Americans United for Separation of Church and State can threaten school districts and intimidate them when they are acting in a perfectly legal manner. There are resources and organizations who follow the legal landscape on behalf of teachers, as well as Christian legal defense organizations who have successfully pushed back against unlawful threats against religious freedoms.

When teachers are in the classroom, they are representatives of the state to children. The Supreme Court has interpreted the First Amendment of the Constitution to prohibit the state from either encouraging or discouraging prayer, a decision made without any precedent or legal basis in American history.

Teachers are free to participate in activities where they have made it clear that they are not acting in their official capacity as representatives of the state. Before school or during lunch, teachers may meet for prayer to the same extent that they meet for other activities. Teachers are usually permitted to use the lounge for dinners or a birthday or other celebration. They must be permitted to use those facilities for prayer as well.

Teachers need to approach school officials in humility and love, keeping dialogue open. However, they do need to practice their rights so they do not lose their rights. Several conflicting examples of court decisions were given for teachers to consider. All the teachers in this group were from Kentucky, so they were under the jurisdiction of the 6th Circuit Court,¹³ but a conflict with other circuit courts often results in a hearing before the Supreme Court, as Kentucky's Ten Commandments case demonstrated. The 7th Circuit Court ruled that a school did not have to allow teachers to meet before school for prayer, because those teachers could not demonstrate that the facilities were used for other secular activities.¹⁴ However, the 8th Circuit ruled that a school district must allow

¹³United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit, accessed December 10, 2017, <http://www.ca6.uscourts.gov/about-court>.

¹⁴*May v. Evansville*, 787 F.2d 1105 (1986).

an elementary school teacher to participate in religious discussions with students after school even though the discussion took place in school facilities.¹⁵ One of the best programs that teachers are free to participate in is the after school Bible Club sponsored by Child Evangelism Fellowship. The twenty public educators participating in this study were encouraged to investigate the availability of a Bible Club in their school district.

It would seem from the 8th Circuit Court decision that teachers could share their faith in any way they choose as long as it is outside of contract time and as long as they make it clear that they are not representing the state, but rather speaking in their personal capacities as Christian individuals. However, the courts have shown deference to the school superintendent to determine what a teacher's rights are. If a school superintendent has specifically requested that a teacher not express herself in a certain way in the classroom, she should comply.

The 10th Circuit Court ordered a teacher to remove a Bible from his desk. The teacher read the Bible during silent reading time for his fifth grade class and in that case, the court sided with the supervisor because the teacher was on contract time, even though it was free time for reading for the students. He was not permitted to have a Bible on his desk, nor was he allowed to read it during contract time.¹⁶ However, the 8th Circuit Court ruled that a principal could have a Bible framed and hanging on his wall even though a teacher complained that it violated the establishment clause.¹⁷

Different circuit courts have different levels of acceptance toward America's Christian roots. The 9th Circuit Court, representing the west coast, is considered the most hostile by Christian political activists such as the Christian Coalition, who referred to the 9th Circuit Court as "infamous and the most leftist, ineffective, and strongly anti-Christian

¹⁵*Wiggs v. Sioux Falls School District 49-5*, 382 F.3d 807 (2004).

¹⁶*Roberts v. Madigan*, 921 F.2d 1047 (1990).

¹⁷*Warnock v. Archer*, 380 F.3d 1076, 1079, 1082 (2004).

court” in its religious freedom decisions.¹⁸ Principals and supervisors have authority over the curriculum. They can require that specific lessons be taught. These restrictions can apply to religious content, so even if one is using historic documents—the preambles to state constitutions, the writings from America’s early history, such as the writings of Christopher Columbus, the Mayflower Compact, or the Declaration of Independence—a teacher must use caution in citing religious references in these writings. A high school biology teacher in California was required to teach evolution and he argued that evolution is a religious system, but was unable to prevail in the 9th Circuit Court. Principals have also taken the authority to forbid the teaching of creation science.

Students have much greater freedom of religious expression than teachers. Students are permitted to carry and read a Bible, say grace before meals, study religious materials during a study hall, and use Christian sources in reports. The Bible can be taught and discussed as history and literature. It would be unreasonable to ban all Christian references in music, for example, since the history of music is founded on sacred music. A student could not receive a complete music education if all religious music was ignored, and the same is true of American history.

Teachers and administrators have given up their freedoms to avoid frivolous lawsuits that are costly, despite innocence. This practice has become so prevalent that many are afraid to even mention God. In effect, teachers are giving up their rights when they do not speak, even when it is their right to do so. The Department of Education has affirmed that the Bible is an important book to document ancient history and to study literature of that period. When teachers ignore those rights, they are helping to establish a religion of secularism in the schools. Omitting all religious references in history and

¹⁸Christian Coalition, “America’s Worst Court, San Francisco’s 9th Circuit, Abolishes the War Memorial Cross,” October 19, 2011, accessed December 1, 2017, http://www.cc.org/blog/america039s_worst_court_san_francisco039s_9th_circuit_abolishes_war_memorial_cross.

literature gives students a skewed view of history as well as literature when they are not exposed to the great documents that illustrate a firm faith in God.

The Alliance Defending Freedom, an organization that has donated one million hours in legal advocacy and trained 1,900 attorneys to defend religious freedom, was recommended to teachers as an organization that provides resource regarding religious freedom in the public school, as well as defend teachers whose rights are challenged. Such an organization makes it possible for teachers to stand up for their religious freedom, knowing they will have an advocate in the courts should the need arise. Teachers were asked to download information from ADFlegal.org, which provides guidelines for Christian teachers when living out their faith in the public school system.

Teachers may mix the sacred with the secular. For example, when teaching about holidays, teachers may state facts such as Christians believe that Jesus was God, and that He was raised from the dead on Easter. Flyers announcing after school Bible clubs may be distributed in the same way that secular flyers are distributed. Teachers may meet for prayer and Bible study to the same extent that they meet for other non-religious activities during non-contract hours.

In 1992, Kentucky was the first state to pass a law making it illegal to censor historic documents because of their religious content. This law, KRS 158.195, provides protections for teachers who do not need to skip over paragraphs in original documents simply because they express the colonists' strong faith in God. Alliance Defending Freedom's document, "the Free Speech and Academic Freedom of Teachers in Public Schools" is especially helpful for teachers to understand their constitutional rights in the workplace.¹⁹

Working together and understanding the freedoms teachers have is essential, and praying together will help teachers be godly examples both in the classroom and to

¹⁹Alliance Defending Freedom, "Resources," accessed September 10, 2017, <http://adflegal.org/issues/religious-freedom/k-12/resources>.

their peers and administration. Teachers were admonished in this session to find and access Christian legal resources and have a plan for conflict resolution. Advance planning will assist the teacher to be a more effective kingdom builder in America's largest mission field, the public school.

Evaluation of the Five Teaching Sessions

Three public school educators, a superintendent, a high school principal, and a director of curriculum at Williamsburg Independent School District agreed to review the online curriculum for each class. After review, they completed the class evaluation rubric. The evaluation rated the sessions on a four-point scale from (1) insufficient to (4) exemplary. Evaluators were unanimous in declaring all eight criteria met with an exemplary rating. Details of the eight criteria evaluated are included in appendix 2.

Goal 3: Increase Educator's Knowledge, Understanding, and Awareness through Participation in the Five Sessions

There was great enthusiasm among educators at Crestwood Baptist Church, and the initial group that was recruited for participation were from this congregation, as well as a few who were Christian colleagues of educators in the congregation. Teachers asked others in their schools if they would be willing to participate, and they agreed, even though I did not know them personally. There was resistance to follow through after relocating to another city, and it became clear that time pressures and lack of personal relationships with the participants left no motivation to take on this project. I began recruiting teachers in the school districts at my new location, and found that knowing the teacher personally, and staying in touch with them throughout the process, was necessary to motivate them to complete the Public Educator's Initial Assessment, view the five weekly sessions, and complete the Public Educator's Post Assessment.

As a result of the relocation, teachers came from diverse settings to participate in the project. Oldham County, where Crestwood Baptist Church is located, is one of

the wealthiest counties in the state of Kentucky. In contrast, Whitley County is in the far southeastern part of the state with far less affluence. In fact, Williamsburg Independent School has a 100 percent free lunch program due to the vast majority of poverty level students. Thus, this project was tested among much diversity and in very different settings.

T-Test for Dependent Samples

Twenty participants completed the Public Educator's Initial Assessment and the Public Educators Post Assessment. A number was assigned to each participant and their corresponding pre- and post-assessments in order to measure learning using the *t*-test for dependent Samples. Two questions identified demographic information. Eight questions required an answer of yes or no, and 14 questions were scaled with six responses as strongly disagree, disagree, somewhat disagree, somewhat agree, agree, and strongly agree. Seven of the questions had strongly agree as a "6" score, and seven questions were reverse scored as the desired learning required a response of strongly disagree. A total of 132 possible points scored was available. The mean score on the initial assessment was 117. The mean score on the post assessment was 122.

Because the *t* value was greater than 2.0930, the null hypothesis was rejected. There was a difference between public school educators' initial assessment of the need for prayer partnerships and understanding of religious liberties, and the post-assessment. As a result of the learning process, the teachers decided that praying together is greatly needed in the workplace, and they have the right and freedom to pray together and to exercise their faith in the public school setting.

Goal 4: Enlist Ten Prayer Partners

At the end of each teaching session, participants were asked to consider who in their school setting would join them as prayer partners for one another and for their workplace needs. This list was to be turned in with the Public Educator's Post-Assessment,

with participants implementing long-term prayer partnerships in their schools. Although the goal was to compile 200 names, only 30 names were submitted, and there were duplicates in that the ones who submitted a list had several of the same potential prayer partners listed. The task was simple and straightforward. Each educator received a paper with ten blank spaces, and each space consisted of two elements. The first element was a space to list the name of a committed prayer partner. The second element under each space was to provide contact information for the committed prayer partner. This instrument is almost self-explanatory, but brief explanation was given to each educator.

CHAPTER 5

OVERVIEW OF THE PROJECT

There is little available to public school educators in published literature addressing knowledge of religious liberties or instruction for reaching their mission field. A steady decrease in religious liberties has been available to public school teachers, and fear accompanied by intimidation has increasingly been used by well-funded organizations to keep educators from exercising and understanding their rights. A solution to the ongoing need to support public school educators is found both in Scripture and history. Praying together has historically and theologically offered inspiration and reassurance that teachers can indeed practice their faith in the workplace.

There is a need for mobilizing the church to recognize the workplace as a mission field. Public school teachers are in a unique position to impact America's largest mission field. This project was important because it extended beyond the church building. A missional project would reach not just one public school or one set of public school educators, but could extend across the state to encompass other workplace settings and needs.

This project was birthed with a great desire and passion to instruct educators regarding their religious liberties and mobilize them as a Great Commission workforce at their workplace. The end in mind for this project was to become a catalyst to fulfill the Great Commission across the state of Kentucky.

Prayer is often the most overlooked but most needed spiritual discipline to undergird the missionary, as well as the missional strategy. Furthermore, praying together is one of the most neglected but biblically based change elements one observes in history, as well as in Scripture. Prayer is often assumed to be a fundamental practice for the

missionary and in the missional strategy. However, praying together is often overshadowed by strategic principles or plans. The result is pragmatism with the absence of much of the power of God to initiate and sustain real transformation. Without the power of God through a praying people, a culture erodes and the positive gospel impact declines. One could trace just the cultural shift when public prayer was removed from the classroom. An alternative is to develop prayer partners among public school educators in the hope of reclaiming not only the classroom but also the future generation of the nation.

In two landmark decisions, *Engel v. Vitale* on June 25, 1962, and *Abington School District v. Schempp* on June 17, 1963, the Supreme Court declared school-sponsored prayer and Bible reading unconstitutional. The ruling in the *Engel v. Vitale* decision declared that a prayer approved by the New York Board of Regents for use in schools violated the First Amendment because it represented the establishment of religion. This project set out to expose the great and devastating result of this ruling, but also sought to provide a legal and legitimate plan to equip public school educators to develop prayer partnerships. Prayer partnerships among public school educators call them to prayer as a change agent in an institution that impacts, influences, and educates the next generation of an entire nation.

Evaluation of the Project's Purpose

Encouraging people to pray is a first order priority in Scripture, and therefore has timeless and eternal significance for public school educators and this project. The plan accomplishes its purpose in that teachers were taught the scriptures, given opportunity for application in the unique work setting, and asked to select prayer partners to continue to fulfill the purpose of the project and enhance their success as teacher evangelists in an increasingly hostile environment.

The purpose was further accomplished through the input of public school administrators, a critical researcher, and a Christian religious liberties attorney. Thus, the

plan was implemented with both a legal and missional confidence. This purpose was implemented with confidence as each educator followed the plan's instructions.

Evaluating the Project's Goals

The first goal originally called for recruitment of public school educators who were members of Crestwood Baptist Church in Crestwood, Kentucky. As pastor of the large congregation there, and enthusiasm among public school educators in the congregation for the project, there was no need to extend the participant demographic beyond Crestwood. However, due to a move to Williamsburg, Kentucky, participants were from multiple cities and school districts. Participants could have been expanded from inception to include educators beyond Crestwood, Kentucky. Even among Crestwood Baptist Church members, the diversity is observed more along the lines of theological beliefs. However, as God's will would have it, the project did become more statewide, and educators from very different settings were included as participants. Oldham County, a bedroom community of metropolitan Louisville, is one of the wealthiest in Kentucky. In contrast, Whitley County in the far southeastern part of the state is a more rural setting and one of the poorest in Kentucky.

The project's second goal focused on the development of five sessions which permitted a focus on prayer and deepened teachers' commitments to pray for one another on a long-term basis. The goals were strengthened by adding school administrators to the panel that evaluated the sessions. The input from associate pastors and attorneys were valuable; however, public school administrators had greater insight into the needs of those employed in the school setting, and were able to provide additional valuable input because of their experience. This panel of experts evaluated the five sessions using the rubric included as appendix 2. The rubric was effective in evaluating biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, and applicability of the class. There was greater enthusiasm from administrators than teachers, possibly due to time pressures and liberty restraints. The

rubric was an easy evaluation tool as demonstrated by the ease and efficiency of the administrator response.

The third goal was to increase educators' knowledge, understanding, and awareness of their need to form prayer partnerships. This goal was better served through social media videos due to the difficulty of gathering twenty public school educators for five sessions without absenteeism. Social media also allowed greater flexibility for participants to focus on each session and respond and apply its principles in the workplace. The educators could also review the sessions as they wanted or needed.

The project's culminating goal expected the educators to enlist at least ten prayer partners each. The goal of a minimum of ten prayer partners may have been too lofty a goal. Some were willing to compile such a list, some were reluctant, and there was a crossover from one list to the next. Several teachers had the same prayer partners listed, so there was not a clear delineation of ten prayer partners for each participant in the project. A smaller more intimate group may have provided the desired outcome for long-term prayer partnerships based on relationships and willingness to participate.

The gathering of two hundred prayer partners did not take into consideration that some, in fact many of the prayer partners, would be duplicated by some of the teachers. When it became apparent that individual prayer groups would not form easily among the participant's colleagues, an alternative that provided group prayer and support for educators was implemented.

During the Sunday morning services that occurred over the course of the five weeks that public school educators participated in the project, teachers were called forward to the altar during a worship gathering and the rest of the congregation was asked to surround them to pray over them and commission them to their respective mission fields. This was most effective in raising awareness of the educators' needs for sustaining prayer, supporting the would-be educator missionary, and in allowing public school students to see this act. Thus, all participants experienced group prayer support, and for those who

recruited a smaller number of enlisted prayer partners in their workplace setting, the smaller gathering would serve better for ongoing prayer partnerships based on relationships and common needs in the school setting. The large group setting would add an additional dimension of support as the congregation prayed over the educators. Time was also a positive factor because the educator was already present in the worship service, and members of the congregation became more aware and challenged to pray for those present every day in America's largest mission field, the public school.

Strengths of the Project

One of the greatest strengths of the project was the wealth of information and encouragement found in the teaching sessions. The five sessions provided resources available for participants to learn and implement in the workplace. Public school educators grew in their strength of understanding of their rights, the risk of boldness, the call of Scripture, and were able to evaluate themselves before and after the class sessions.

Another strength of the project was that participants received it as an act of service to public school educators. The target audience greatly appreciated a plan to develop themselves personally and professionally. Thus, the project was viewed by educators as a positive rather than a negative exercise. Oftentimes educators receive little affirmation for their efforts and accomplishments because of the nature of their work with parents, children, administrators, and peers; all of whom may have different expectations.

Another strength of this project was that it raised awareness of the workplace as a mission field. The school as mission field was not only a call to action, but a new concept for a few. Among day to day demands on teachers, it becomes harder to see the mission opportunity available if teachers do not intentionally learn and look for ways to practice their faith within the constraints of the school district. The amount of time spent with our nation's children, and the enormous influence of public school educators on the next generation was spotlighted as a strategic opportunity in the nation's largest mission field.

Another strength of the project was in the introduction of testimonies and facts that emphasize God's answers to prayer. Faith was increased by both biblical and historic examples of prayers that changed history. The project provided both examples in order to demonstrate the powerful accomplishments that began with praying together. Enlarging the vision of prayer was bolstered through examples of those who faced insurmountable and many times seemingly impossible odds.

The project's teaching sessions were available online and were easy for the educators to understand and follow. The educators followed directions and completed the assignments without fail and with limited questions. The educators were also able to explain to others what their assignments were and the purpose of the project. Simplicity and straight forwardness were noticeable strengths of the project.

The project led to a call to action. One part of the call for educators was to enlist personal prayer partners. The educators understood their task and had no questions concerning how to complete the enlistment. This plan can be implemented regardless of the changing laws. Forming prayer partnerships is not dependent upon the legality, but on the willingness of the educator to commit to prayer with others in the workplace. Praying together is timeless as it is based on Scripture.

Weaknesses of the Project

Moving in the middle of the project made it difficult to stay in touch and follow through with teachers who had committed to participate. After moving to Williamsburg, with the demands of a new congregation and the distance from the original group of educators, it became impossible to plan meetings in person with participants.

The first and most challenging weakness of the project was that the first group of original volunteer educators was unwilling to follow through mostly due to time restraints on their part. It was necessary to recruit a second group from a broader demographic in order for twenty people to make a commitment from beginning to end. I had a relationship with each of the participants in the second group, while not all of the first group knew me.

The second weakness was in explaining a very volatile legal landscape that defines religious liberty. It is a difficult challenge to explain the law regarding religious liberty, since the law is no longer fixed. The law was written at the birth of America and remained largely unchanged until the twentieth century, when a new view of law became accepted. Laws are based on cases and precedents set by judges, rather than a fixed set of written laws.¹ As the federal courts and Supreme Court rule in technical cases, individual teachers are affected in their ability to practice their faith. The laws change even though the need to develop public school educator prayer partnerships remains unchanging. However, it is important for educators to know and understand current laws and precedents set by the courts. Laws and their interpretation by the courts cannot be assumed current, but must be updated and the educators made aware each school year.

Another weakness, and seemingly the hardest part for the educators, was to identify ten prayer partners. The difficulty was not apparent in the original project design. The number should not have been set but rather the educator could have been given a challenge of enlisting at least two or more prayer partners. The relational comfortableness or availability of prayer partners in the workplace was not taken into consideration when setting the number. Originally, it was critical for participants to choose people they work with in order to experience focused prayer for their unique school and educator needs.

Another weakness of the project was that it did not include teachers new to the workforce. The age demographic should have been broader. The generational aspect would have been interesting to observe. This missing element could have demonstrated the gap of understanding of the various generations as well as the product of each educator's education.

¹Harvard Law Review Forum, "The Constitution Means What the Supreme Court Says It Means," accessed December 15, 2017, <https://harvardlawreview.org/2016/02/the-constitution-means-what-the-supreme-court-says-it-means/>.

The assumption that everyone wants to be prayed for was a weakness of the project. Some educators understood their faith to be both personal and private. The thought of asking someone to pray for them challenged their own faith and personal boundaries. Apparently, some educators did not see prayer partnerships as a vital need worth giving time for nor learning about.

The assumption that everyone wants to pray was another weakness. A lack of desire to pray was observed through some of the educators albeit a small number. For some, prayer did not correlate to the workplace, nor did it find a significant place in their understanding of being on mission.

What I Would Do Differently

Much was learned in the process of completing this project because many people were involved in its completion, and each one had different ideas about their religious liberties and praying in the workplace. I would have developed more ways of involving more people and helping them to see my vision for evangelizing our schools. I would spend more time in project development talking with educators about their perceived need to pray with peers and develop more specific ways to overcome their objections.

In my new location, I was able to discuss the project at length with school administrators. They have great insight into the needs of teachers and students. If starting over, I would include the public school administrator in the development of the assessments due to their vast experience in the public school classroom and with various aged educators.

Another thing I would do differently would be to begin with the video format making the project more accessible to the educators, and I would begin with more of a statewide group, if permitted, of perhaps fifty educators in order to allow for attrition and a greater reach into public schools in general when prayer partnerships were chosen and developed.

Another change would be start with a larger group. A larger group would limit the problem of drop outs from the project. When the first group lost interest, I had to start over in recruiting a group of twenty. If I had recruited a larger group to start with, then those who finished would have still provided a large enough sample to evaluate.

Another thing I would do differently would be to provide something to motivate participants and thank them for their input and completion of the project. Teachers could be given a copy of the book, *Navigating Public Schools* by Stephen and Sarah Williams, which provides instruction on religious liberties, and tells a personal story of a teacher standing for his faith while enduring injustice in a protracted lawsuit.

Consideration of the project's timing stood out as a hindrance. The summer months would be optimum for this project, given the time pressures experienced with educators during the school year. This would also allow the church gathering for prayer as a commissioning service as the new school year is approached. Time restraints would be more of a front-end consideration when beginning the project.

Relationships were key to the project. Beginning with educators in my relational sphere proved best. This seemed to be the biggest factor in completing the project once underway. Relationships were the basis for much of the project. Thus, I would start with forming a sample group out of existing relationships.

A church-wide commissioning of educators should be planned annually during the regularly scheduled worship gathering. Furthermore, it is valuable to allow the educator to work along their own relational lines to form sustaining prayer partnerships. The call to prayer partnerships were on target, but instead of arbitrating ten per educator, I would ask participants to choose a number based on the number of Christians they know in their workplaces with whom they would be comfortable praying together. Then, rather than planning for a separate prayer service of all the prayer partners, I would plan for educators to be prayed over by the entire congregation, including the selected prayer partners.

Theological Reflection

After the project was finalized, there were many “big picture” issues I thought about that were beyond the scope of a five-week session training. Because of time pressures and multiple demands put on teachers every day, they do not take time to meditate upon the eternal significance of teacher-student and teacher-teacher relationships. Understanding the Great Commission, Scripture’s warnings of dead works that are judged and do not remain, and final judgment that will come to teacher and student alike, are weightier subjects that emphasize the truth of the need for prayer partnerships. Everyone needs to be reminded of these subjects in the context of his work and life. If the project were longer or the teachers desired, these subjects could be explored in greater depth. Teachers must understand that God answers prayer, and that God through prayer changes the course of history. Spiritual warfare is an integral part of a Christian educator’s job. Corporate prayer is not emphasized nor practiced, especially in America’s culture of individualism. It is mostly foreign to people in affluent Western culture. Biblically, prayer cannot be fully understood or practiced without the concept of prayer partnerships and habitual gatherings for praise and petition.

There is a large gap between learning and doing. As a parent who has both homeschooled and experienced public schools, public schools answer to government standards and there are critical deficiencies in these standards of learning. It is incompatible to declare that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and then exclude the Lord from mention in core curricula. The importance of partnering in the gospel cannot be overstated nor can the development of prayer partners be underestimated. The church was birthed in a prayer meeting when believers gathered together to pray. The pattern of praying together is both theological and practical. Biblical examples of praying together are evident throughout the Scripture, but the actual formation of prayer partnerships is greatly lacking among public school educators who are the church’s representation in the nation’s largest mission field.

Personal Reflection

I am grateful for the time spent and lessons learned in working with public school educators to encourage them to pray and see God act on their behalf. It has also been valuable and motivating to learn and work with others in the doctoral program. My cohort group was very inspiring. I learned and benefited from each of them. It has been uncanny how often I have heard of a growing and even greater need for educators to pray and pray together. It is a timely topic from the political and religious scene in America. I observe this great need of prayer, especially for the educators, emerging in these days.

I have benefited from the relationships established and further education through books and speakers at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. The grace to continue my education and learning in ministry have been great life lessons not only for me but also for my family. The perseverance to finish what started surfaces time and time again.

I have been amazed at some of the educators who are already on mission in the public school setting. I have been just as amazed at how many have abandoned the mission or simply were not aware of the opportunity for mission in the public school setting.

Personal and vocational transitions have made this project a real challenge. However, the passion has come full circle as I am highly involved like never before in taking the gospel to the public school setting. The need is great regardless of geographic location, and the project can travel from school to school with ease.

I am more concerned than ever that the public school is a great mission field, that the public school educator is a strategic missionary, and that the church must equip and mobilize its members to be on mission beginning with the priority of prayer. The continual decline of the church and the heightened rise of violence in society further calls teachers and congregations to influence the lives of the next generation with the gospel through praying public school educators. The priority and power of praying to the one true God is so strategic that the enemy would target its dismissal from the public school setting. The biblical rightness of praying together and the result of prayerlessness ought

to give rise to the fulfillment of an urgent need to equip public school educators along with a plea to develop prayer partners.

Conclusion

This project is both timely and timeless in its design. It is timely considering the need and timeless in that it is based on Scripture while observing the legal right to form prayer partnerships even though in certain institutional settings it is limited or not permitted. The project targets both the largest and perhaps most influential mission field and missionary in the nation. The public school and the public school educator are strategic missional targets. The fact that prayer is oftentimes more taught than practiced gives this project an opportunity to positively reverse that trend in a simple and practical manner through developing prayer partnerships. The prayer partnerships can be formed both among educators on the field and with the other church members who help support those on the mission field of the public school. My hope is that God might somehow use this project to call again His people to pray together and cause a movement of God among educators, students, church, community, and state.

APPENDIX 1

PUBLIC EDUCATOR'S ASSESSMENT

The following survey was used to determine public school educators' level of knowledge of biblical models and methodologies of prayer, their understanding of their school campus as a mission field, and their awareness of their religious liberties within the public school system.

PUBLIC EDUCATOR'S ASSESSMENT

Agreement to Participate

The research in which you are about to participate is designed to identify the current understanding of religious liberties, models and methodologies of prayer, and the need for prayer on the school campus of each participant. This research is being conducted by Donnie B. Patrick for the purpose of collecting data for a ministry project. In this research, you will answer questions before the project and you will answer the same questions at the conclusion of the project. Any information you provide will be held strictly confidential, and at no time will your name be reported or identified with your responses. Participation is strictly voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time. By completion of this survey, you are giving informed consent for the use of your responses in this project.

Directions: Answer the following multiple-choice questions by placing a check next to the appropriate answer.

Part 1

1. I consider myself a Christian.
 A. Yes
 B. No
2. I have repented of my sin and trusted in Jesus Christ for salvation.
 A. Yes
 B. No
3. I believe prayer is crucial to living a vital Christian life.
 A. Yes
 B. No
4. I pray to God more than one time a week.
 A. Yes
 B. No
5. I believe God always answers prayer.
 A. Yes
 B. No
6. Jesus and other biblical leaders prayed with others.
 A. Yes
 B. No
7. Jesus and other biblical leaders taught others to pray.
 A. Yes
 B. No

8. I am comfortable praying aloud with others.
 A. Yes
 B. No

Part 2

Directions: Answer the following questions: (1) Place a check by the multiple-choice questions. (2) Some questions ask you to give your opinion using the following scale: SD = strongly disagree, D = disagree, DS = disagree somewhat, AS = agree somewhat, A = agree, SA = strongly agree; please circle the appropriate answer.

9. I believe it is imperative for Christ's followers to pray together.
SD D DS AS A SA
10. I feel it is my task to share Christ with others.
SD D DS AS A SA
11. I consider myself to be a missionary in the workplace.
SD D DS AS A SA
12. I believe there is a separation between my work life and religious life.
SD D DS AS A SA
13. Christian missionaries need more people praying for them than I do.
SD D DS AS A SA
14. How many years have you served as an educator? (check only one)
 A. 1-5
 B. 6-15
 C. 16-20
 D. 21-30
 E. 31 and over
15. What is your age in years? (check only one)
 A. 18-24
 B. 25-34
 C. 35-44
 D. 45-54
 E. 55 and over

Part 3

16. I am confident I know my religious liberties in the workplace.
SD D DS AS A SA
17. I cannot pray with those in my workplace unless they initiate the conversation.
SD D DS AS A SA

18. Separation of church and state prohibits me from forming a prayer group.

SD D DS AS A SA

19. Due to the removal of prayer in school, I believe there has been a negative impact on society.

SD D DS AS A SA

20. I believe only students can pray on a public school campus.

SD D DS AS A SA

21. I feel equipped to pray with a student.

SD D DS AS A SA

22. I feel I really do not know how to express my religious liberties.

SD D DS AS A SA

23. I feel I could lose my job if I invited others to pray with me on campus.

SD D DS AS A SA

24. I believe prayer was foundational in forming America's educational system.

SD D DS AS A SA

Personal Identification Number: _____

APPENDIX 2

CLASS EVALUATION RUBRIC

The following rubric was used by a panel consisting of three associate pastors and one Christian attorney to evaluate the biblical faithfulness, teaching methodology, and applicability of the class material.

CLASS EVALUATION RUBRIC

Directions: Answer the following criteria statements by placing a check in the appropriate box.

Prayer Partnership Class Evaluation Tool					
Lessons 1—Five Evaluation					
1= insufficient 2=requires attention 3= sufficient 4=exemplary					
Criteria	1	2	3	4	Comments
The lesson is clearly relevant to the issue of developing prayer partnerships.					
The material demonstrates a biblical undergirding for prayer partnerships.					
The material demonstrates the Bible as authoritative for praying together.					
The goal of the lesson is clearly stated.					
The points of the lesson clearly support the goal.					
The lesson format allows for participation from the audience.					
The lesson contains points of practical application.					
Overall, the material accomplishes the goal of developing prayer partnerships.					

APPENDIX 3

PRAYER PARTNER LIST

The following research instrument was used by the public school educators to identify their committed prayer partners by name and contact information.

PRAYER PARTNER LIST

1. Name:
Contact Information:
2. Name:
Contact Information:
3. Name:
Contact Information:
4. Name:
Contact Information:
5. Name:
Contact Information:
6. Name:
Contact Information:
7. Name:
Contact Information:
8. Name:
Contact Information:
9. Name:
Contact Information:
10. Name:
Contact Information:

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ABSTRACT

DEVELOPING A PLAN TO FACILITATE PRAYER PARTNERSHIPS AMONG PUBLIC SCHOOL EDUCATORS IN OLDHAM AND WHITLEY COUNTIES IN KENTUCKY

Donnie Bruce Patrick, D.Min.
The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 2018
Faculty Supervisor: Dr. Shane W. Parker

This dissertation delineates the plan and implementation of organized prayer partnerships among public school educators in Kentucky.

Chapter 1 presents the purpose to develop a plan to facilitate prayer partnerships among public school educators. The chapter also shares the goals, ministry context, rationale, definitions, limitations and delimitations, and research methodology for the project.

Chapter 2 presents the biblical and theological basis for developing a plan to facilitate prayer partnerships. The chapter further presents the fact that praying together is instructive, habitual, vital to the mission, and is crucial for the Christ follower.

Chapter 3 presents the theoretical and practical issues related to developing a plan to facilitate prayer partnerships among public school educators. The chapter also includes the basis for the plan requiring an awareness of the need for prayer, a supply of various models of prayer, the need for accountability, and information of religious liberties for the educator concerning prayer.

Chapter 4 presents the details and descriptions of the project. Week by week instructions explain the implementation of the project.

Chapter 5 presents the evaluation of the project. The evaluation covers the project's strengths and weaknesses, personal and theological reflections, and the assessment of the project's purpose and goals.

VITA

Donnie Bruce Patrick

EDUCATIONAL

B.A., University of the Cumberlands, 1992

M.Div., Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1997

MINISTERIAL

Mission Pastor, Community Fellowship Mission of Travis Avenue Baptist Church, Fort Worth, Texas, 1995-1997

Senior Pastor, First Baptist Church, Paintsville, Kentucky, 1998-2008

Senior Pastor, Crestwood Baptist Church, Crestwood, Kentucky, 2008-2017

Senior Pastor, Main Street Baptist church, Williamsburg, Kentucky, 2017-