

A Prayer Culture

It will transform your organization.

OUR SINGLE MOST IMPORTANT PRIORITY as leaders is to hear the voice of God for ourselves and for our organizations. This should be our most defining characteristic as Christian leaders. If there is anything that should be said of us, it should be said that we hear the voice of our Father and obey his leading. We are called to be leaders who don't run ahead of Jesus, but seek his instruction.

So how do you do this? How do you develop a lifestyle and culture of prayer in your organization? What can you do practically as a leader? I'm afraid we won't like the answer. There's no formula. There is no secret sauce. There is one very simple answer. **Pray.**

You cannot cultivate a culture of prayer unless you actually pray. It sounds simple but we all know it's easier said than done! God has a plan unique to your ministry that can only be unveiled in the secret place of prayer. It is found in the place of intimacy with him. It is the place where he tells his friends secrets (paraphrase of Psalm 25:14). He unveils his plans and the steps he wants you to take in the secret place.

Prayer is our stethoscope. It helps us hear the heart of God.

At IJM, one of our core values is cultivating a lifestyle of prayer. So we set rhythms in place to help facilitate prayer. Here are a few of these rhythms:

- **Personal Stillness:** At the start of each work day, for 30 minutes, you will find the IJM office silent. We call it "stillness," a set aside time to be still, listen and remember that the work belongs to God, not us. It's just between you and God (no, there's not a "stillness" patrol!).
- **Corporate Daily Prayer:** At 11 a.m. every morning, we gather corporately in a conference room and pray for our most pressing needs.
- **Corporate Prayer Retreats:** Once a quarter, we gather as a community for a full day of personal and corporate reflection.
- **Personal Day of Solitude:** Annually, each IJM staff member receives a "Solitude Day." It is essentially time off to spend a day, of your own choosing, alone with Jesus.

But all of the rhythms, structures and right environment can be in place — and still nothing happens unless you actually pray. Prayer is an act of personal will.

So, step one — **PRAY.** There is no other solution. Here's how:

- **Prioritize Prayer.** We must intentionally create time and space to pray individually and corporately. It is where we hear the voice of God, receive his instruction and get the courage to step out and do what he says. We must talk less and listen more for God's voice.
- **Endure the Wait.** We must be patient to wait for God's instruction. This requires trust. Can we be courageous enough to ask him to speak and then wait for his voice? It takes trust and vulnerability with the Lord (and with others!) to believe that he will actually respond to our voices, with his own. Don't move forward until you know where he's asking you to go.
- **Recalculate.** What do you do when you've stepped out in front of God's instruction? You return to the place of prayer and get your encouragement and direction from his voice, again.

Any work to which God has called us as his children is meant to be fueled and instructed in prayer. In my role leading IJM's Global Prayer Gathering, my greatest challenge is to wait for God's instruction and not move ahead with planning before hearing his voice. Our very first step of preparation for the Global Prayer Gathering is a discernment process — to pray and ask God: "What should we pray for?" That is always the first step in prayer personally and corporately — listening for what is on the heart of God and then talking to him about it. **Pray it!**

The work that God has placed in our hands should drive us to our knees. It is God's grace and kindness to us that we would find him through prayer and hear his invitation to join him in his work, instead of our instructing him in ours. The work God has for your organization to do is his work. Prayer helps us all to remember that. ●

CONSTANCE PADMORE is the director of prayer at International Justice Mission (IJM), a global organization that protects the poor from violence. Constance develops programs to engage thousands of intercessors in the work of justice through prayer. She directs the Global Prayer Gathering, IJM's annual flagship event dedicated to prayer and worship.

Want to learn more? Don't miss the address by **CONSTANCE PADMORE** at The Outcomes Conference: CLA Dallas 2016, April 19–21. (OutcomesConference.org)

