

### Prayer

When ministering in a community-of-need, one never runs short of need. As Jesus said, “You will always have the poor among you . . .” (Matthew 26:11). If we believe His words, then the minister’s calling isn’t merely to respond to need. Instead, it is to respond to God—to be led by His Spirit. Whether beginning ministry, sustaining ministry, or enduring in ministry, prayer is essential.

Consider these Upside Down Principles from *Upside Down Leadership* by Taylor Field:

- **Stop Leading**—“*Is there a God? If you don’t think there is a God, [prayer] doesn’t make sense. Because if there isn’t a God, of course we will need to train and make our own plans to get along as best we can in this world [and] if there is no God, it doesn’t really matter what you do anyway. [...] If there is a God, or even if we think there might be a god, it would be good if we could find out if God is the type of God that has any plans for us and others. [...] Our puny little goals won’t matter much if there is something larger, or grander, or more complicated, or even smaller than we could imagine.*”
- **Get the First Button Right**—“*When you button your shirt, you must get the top button aligned properly. Otherwise all the other buttons, as you go down the line to button them, will be all messed up. When we talk about following rather than leading, in some ways this is the question we have to answer: Am I going to have that first button focus on God, or focus on my own plan.*”
- **Don’t Just Do Something, Stand There**—“*In the East, there is a saying: ‘muddy waters, when still, become clear.’ If there is a God [...] then being quiet may be the most important thing that a leader can do.*”

### Prayer-walking

Prayer-walking is an opportunity for ministers to talk with and listen to God while exploring a community-of-need. It is also an opportunity to invite others to join the minister in praying for a community.

The concept is simple. Walk around the neighborhood and pray. Here are some best-practices to keep in mind.

- Ministers that are rooted in a community may decide to do this on their own; however, if unfamiliar or new to a community, this is best done in groups of two or three.
- Allow the Holy Spirit to guide through your senses. Ask, *what do I see, hear, feel, smell, and taste?*
- The question at the heart of the prayer-walker is “Where is God working and how does He want me to join?”
- Consider the following two questions while prayer-walking: 1) How can I pray for people and things I see? 2) How can I pray for myself? Sometimes the prayer-walker’s attention is drawn to needs in the neighborhood, but sometimes the prayer-walker is drawn to needs within their own heart and soul.
- Prayer-walking in a group can take various forms. It may involve walking silently, sharing observations aloud in order to draw each other’s attention, or voicing prayers out loud as the group walks.

If leading others in prayer-walking, here are some best practices to keep in mind:

- Provide an orientation introducing the concept of prayer-walking. People may be unfamiliar with the idea or may approach it in a different way. Pay attention to the “**Prayer-walking is not**” section below.
- Consider providing a prayer-walking guide either on paper or electronically. This guide may include a map, areas of interest, questions to consider while prayer-walking, and emergency contact information.
- At the conclusion of the prayer-walk, debrief prayer-walkers to allow them to process what they experienced.

Whether prayer-walking individually or with a group, remember, **Prayer-walking is not . . .**

- **A neighborhood tour**—it's not ONLY an opportunity to explore a neighborhood. It is an opportunity to pray. If there is no prayer, there is no prayer-walk.
- **An attention-getter**—Jesus taught us to pray in private. Prayer-walking isn't an opportunity to draw attention to prayer. Therefore, it is generally not best to close eyes, hold hands, or gather in a group to pray. This can always be done at the end or the beginning of the prayer-walk, in the church or gathering place.
- **Evangelism**—The focus of prayer-walking is for the individual praying to draw near to God, not to draw others to God. Generally speaking, a prayer-walking event shouldn't focus on engaging others. Of course, follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. You may be led to share with a stranger, but be careful to know Who is prompting you.

### Ongoing Prayer

Prayer-walking is often scheduled as an event, but for the Christian, it should be our consistent posture wherever we go. We are to “pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:16). As ministers continue to walk their communities with an attitude of prayer, prayer provides an opportunity to hear what God is doing in another person's life. One question with six simple words often opens this door:

***“How can I pray for you?”***

Listen as the person shares. Also listen for the Holy Spirit, who may show you areas of prayer-need that you might never have considered. Your prayers might be the only ties between those needs and God's actions.

Then take an opportunity on the spot to pray with him or her.