

## Articles from Christian Workplace

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### LEADERS KNOW THE ART OF PIVOTAL PRAYING

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#### Leaders Know the Art of Pivotal Praying

Effective leaders don't pray the way most people do. The fact is, most Americans pray, but most pray selfishly. In 1993 a survey was conducted among 2,000 church attendees, asking questions about their prayer habits. If their answers are any reflection of the general population, we have a lot of room to grow. The top three prayer subjects of those surveyed were meals, personal and family safety, and personal blessings. For many, their prayer time didn't go beyond praying over their Cheerios at breakfast! The average person spent less than seven minutes a day in prayer.

I am not saying this is evil, only that it is limited in potential. God yearns to accomplish so much more through our prayers, if we can only get on the same page He's on. Based upon your prayer life today, how would you do if you faced a pivotal moment? Pivotal prayers come at pivotal moments. They produce pivotal decisions that result in pivotal consequences.

What does "pivotal praying" mean? It means perceiving key junctions in our life and praying wisely in those times. It means seeing beyond our own personal interests. There is nothing wrong with praying for our own needs or praying for immediate circumstances. However, when we forget the ultimate, we become a slave to the immediate.

#### Three Levels of Prayer

Over the last two years, the U.S. has been engaged in fighting in Afghanistan and Iraq. During that time we have heard the military terms: logistical, tactical and strategic initiatives. While these terms describe three levels of military operations, they also describe three levels of prayer.

Logistical Prayer focuses on my own personal needs. It is prayed from a temporal perspective. Imagine you and I gather to pray before we lead a Sunday morning worship service. If we pray a logistical prayer, we might say: "Lord, help us to do well this morning. Help us to get through our program on time, help the microphones to work and help us to be calm. Amen."

Tactical Prayer focuses on helping others, but is still prayed from a temporal perspective. If we were to pray this kind of prayer before our Sunday morning worship service, we might say: "Lord, please bless all who participate in the service today, and bless the people who attend. May it be inspiring to everyone. Amen." This prayer is better than the first one, but still doesn't fully capture God's heart and purposes for the world.

Strategic Prayer focuses on God's ultimate objectives for the world. It is prayed from an eternal perspective. It captures His heart and purpose rather than mere human purposes. If we were to pray strategically before our Sunday morning service, we might say: "Lord, raise up disciples from this service today. Regardless of what happens to the microphones, the musicians or anyone else on the platform, use this service to glorify Yourself and bring Your Kingdom more fully to this earth. Amen."

#### A Classic Example

II Kings 3:5-18 tells the story of the army of Israel, just before they faced the Moabites in battle. It was one more illustration of God's people missing a pivotal moment because they were caught up in themselves. The King of Moab had a much larger army and Israel's very freedom was at stake. Recognizing this, Israel's king rounded up two allies: Judah and Edom. The three

of them took their armies and livestock through the wilderness to face the Moabite army. After a week, however, they faced a crisis: they ran out of water.

They decided to go to the prophet Elisha to seek God's help. They begged for water. As the prophet sought the Lord, He responded through Elisha: I will give you water, but this is a small thing for Me. I will also give the Moabites into your hands!

In this pivotal moment, Israel asked for the wrong thing. They saw only the small picture. They sought only the solution to their immediate needs. They prayed a logistical prayer. They focused on the water, not the war. Hmm. How many times do we, as leaders, get caught up in the crisis of a moment, and miss God's ultimate purposes? We start playing defense: "God, help us survive!" May I encourage you to recognize pivotal moments this year, and pray strategically in those times. Ask yourself: What are God's ultimate purposes in this moment? Align yourself with Him and you'll do much more than survive! (An excerpt from: Pivotal Praying, by Tim Elmore and John Hull)