

# GROWING A CHURCH

SEVEN  
APOSTOLIC  
PRINCIPLES

DAVID K. BERNARD

# Growing a Church

by David K. Bernard

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## CHAPTER ONE

# PRAYER

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*Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men (I Timothy 2:1).*

*Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints; and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel (Ephesians 6:18-19).*

### APOSTOLIC PRAYER

**T**he apostolic church was born in prayer. On the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit fell upon 120 disciples as they waited in united prayer for ten days (Acts 1:14; 2:1). The early church maintained

the habit of prayer (Acts 2:42). The first miraculous healing of the New Testament church occurred when Peter and John went to the Temple for their daily time of prayer (Acts 3:1). When the believers faced opposition and persecution, their response was to pray for boldness to witness and to see miracles take place by the power of God (Acts 4:24-31). The result of the prayer, witnessing, and miracles was spectacular church growth (Acts 4:4; 5:14).

Since God is the one who causes the church to grow, we can only expect genuine growth as we maintain a daily relationship with Him and depend upon His power to accomplish the task. The chief means of doing so is prayer. For this reason, prayer should be the first item on our agenda—"first of all" we should pray in every situation (I Timothy 2:1). We should maintain a constant attitude of prayer and a daily habit of prayer. We should be "praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints" (Ephesians 6:18). "Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving" (Colossians 4:2). "Pray without ceasing" (I Thessalonians 5:17).

We must pray specifically for (1) the *opportunity* and (2) the *ability* to proclaim the gospel effectively. Paul requested, "[Pray] for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel" (Ephesians 6:19). "[Pray] for us, that God would

open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ” (Colossians 4:3). Clearly, prayer is essential for effective ministry and church growth.

## **PURPOSE OF PRAYER**

As discussed in the preface and the introduction, through prayer we receive the divine call for Christian service as well as divine direction. Furthermore, through prayer we receive the desire and power to do God’s will.

Prayer is not a mechanical process whereby we earn favors from God. Rather, it is the means of communing with God and maintaining our relationship with Him. We do not purchase power from God by so many hours of prayer and so many days of fasting. Rather, prayer and fasting are the means by which we conform our minds and bodies to God’s will.

In prayer, we submit to God and make His priorities our priorities. Jesus taught us to pray, “Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:9-10). Prayer does not convince a reluctant God to act on our behalf, but it gives God permission to work in our lives as He already desires. Since He has given us freedom of choice, He does not force His will on us, nor can we assume that He will automatically act on our behalf in the absence of our invitation.

Prayer does not change God’s attitude, but it