

# ***The Strategic Prayer Initiative™***

## ***In Alliance With Harvest Prayer Ministries***

### **What The Strategic Prayer Initiative can do for you and your church:**

- Strongly increase the personal prayer shield of the Pastor(s) or Priest(s)
- Take a large portion of your congregation to a much higher satisfaction level concerning their prayer lives
- Lay a foundation of spiritual disciplines that will facilitate growth in your church body
- Give the leadership a way to know how well their people are doing in key elements of fighting the spiritual battle.

### **Who should be involved in The Strategic Prayer Initiative:**

Any church that feels Christians are truly in a spiritual battle and would welcome a way to help their people to be more effective in the battle.

Any church that feels its members are already stretched too thin with all of the time demands that are on their lives but would truly welcome a time efficient way to help them be more effective for the Lord's work, in the nation and the world.

### **What is The Strategic Prayer Initiative and how does it work?**

The foundations of The Initiative can be traced back to the underground war rooms, in London where Winston Churchill (England's Prime Minister at that time) and his staff, tracked the strategy and logistics of the British elements of the Second World War. In 1984, a few weeks after these rooms were made available for the first time as a public museum; the founder of The Initiative was sovereignly led to these underground rooms. While the tour guide explained how pin pricks on the great world map came from tracking supply convoys and escort ships across the Atlantic, an intense thought came into this young man's head "we (the Christian church) believe that we are in a spiritual war, yet we don't fight it this way!"

During World War II, a war in which 40 million to 50 million people lost their lives, Churchill's cabinet addressed their circumstances with the utmost seriousness and focus. They planned extensively concerning their offensive as well as their defensive positions. As little as possible was left to chance. They spent thousands of untold hours systematically and strategically laying out their courses of action. Contrary to taking the fighting of the spiritual war very seriously, the average American Christian spends only a very modest amount of time strategically shouldering some of the responsibility for the battle that is currently raging in the spiritual world. Independent research of more than 3,600 individuals strongly indicates that the preponderance of American Christians are unsatisfied with their present prayer lives. They want to improve, but cannot handle a burdensome commitment or another guilt trip.

## What will be asked of us if we choose to launch SPI™ with our church or group?

There are a number of ways to implement SPI. It can be done church-wide, with a sub-group of your church, within existing small groups, or as a grassroots launch. As a starter, we always recommend that you begin with one of SPI's two diagnostic surveys. If you are launching church-wide the (completely anonymous) survey needs to be filled out during the Sunday morning service. Since SPI's mission is targeted at the average American Christian, having information on the “*whole*” congregation is extremely important, so it must be gathered Sunday morning. Doing one of these surveys on a Sunday morning is viewed as an act of worship; the reason it is regarded as worship is that with a relatively short amount of time we can better equip a group of believers to have a deeper relationship with Christ and to be more effective for His kingdom.

In some of the survey questions there are overlaps, and trends that exist with most churches; however, in other areas addressed by the surveys, different congregations can and do have significant differences from each other. Consequently, for the purposes of moving *your congregation or group forward*, your peoples' actual responses, views, and current practices, are the ones that really matter. People are more easily moved by information that comes directly from them, concerning themselves, versus various national averages, which may or may not be perceived to reflect the thoughts or actions of their local congregation, or of themselves. Once the survey results are in hand, your leaders will be in a much better position to decide if they want to move forward with SPI, and what type of implementation approach they feel would be best for your church or group.

A church-wide launch can be done as a hard launch or a soft launch. A hard launch is when the church uses its local survey results to make a presentation to the entire congregation, encouraging them to sign up to be part of a PrayerCord. Depending on a number of variables, you should expect between 25% and 50% of the congregation to sign up the day of the presentation. Even though the entry level for the PrayerCords™ is a pretty low bar, most of those signing on will not actually get their Cord formed and operating, unless the church is committed to helping them to get started; in some ways this is like starting a mini-small group ministry, where one didn't exist before. Those who sign up to be in a PrayerCord will be committing to the following:

- two minutes per day of additional prayer (there are ways to accomplish this almost effortlessly)
- one extra minute a day of Scripture reading (if they are not already in the Word daily)
- prayerfully forming an accountability Cord (Ecclesiastes 4:12) with two other people of their gender, and
- on a monthly basis, meeting with the other two members of their Cord concerning three to five fundamental questions of accountability, and a time of mutual support, prayer, and encouragement

A softer launch approach would consist of presenting the PrayerCords to the congregation as an available tool, versus striving to persuade them to sign up the day of the presentation. Other softer approaches are also possible, such as working with an Adult Bible Fellowship, a youth group, small groups, Life Groups, or a Sunday school class to get started with, instead of the entire congregation. However, when SPI is launched with a congregation or reasonably large group (say 20 to 50) those leading the effort are strongly advised to use the QuickCheck Card™ for Group Assessment. This tool has been designed to work in tandem with the PrayerCords System. The QuickCheck Card has been successfully used, with other tools, to double the number of individuals reporting a “Good Prayer Life” in just four months. If you or some of the people at your church want to launch SPI with the church, it is imperative that the Senior Pastor is totally behind it. If this is not the case, it will be substantially more difficult to be effective on a group or congregational level.

Nevertheless, if your church is not interested in formally launching SPI you still have the option of moving forward with a Grassroots Launch, which sometimes is preferable to a group or church wide launch. The survey data has convinced us that the prayer life of the average American Christian is a sleeping giant in the American church. Do consider being part of awakening this giant. Whatever approach is ultimately decided upon, there is no substitute for actually getting started. The needs at this time in history are very great, but the power of the fervent righteous prayers of God's people is also very great...

# The Strategic Prayer Initiative™

## Original/Longer Mission Statement

*To mobilize millions of members of Christ's body (the Church) by helping them to make long-term changes to their prayer practices and spiritual foundations, enabling them to be more effectively engaged in the spiritual battle for the country, the world, and the souls of hundreds of millions. Essentially, we are attempting to wake a sleeping giant, the prayer lives of average American Christians,*

***If this giant could be awakened, vast spiritual resources could be mobilized for the Lord's kingdom!***

### Executive Summary:

Although the prayer movement has made *great* strides in the past 30 years, it has still been ineffective in reaching and motivating the average American believer. The Strategic Prayer Initiative™ is committed to using all (appropriate) means possible to help the average American believer become more effectively engaged in the spiritual battle. The Initiative has worked to create basic models that can duplicate easily in many churches. Our methodology for building models has been based on a blend of four key components: Scripture, divine guidance, many counselors, and experimentation. We believe the prayer life of the average Christian is a sleeping giant in the American church. The spiritual battle ramifications of releasing this latent potential are enormous.

The prototyping work has had the following seven foundation stones:

- Broad biblically-strategic subject matter (consolidated from a number of major sources)
- Easy access to the above information
- Reasonable expectations of the participants
- Caring accountability via relationship
- Daily personal prayer for all PrayerCord and SPI Small Group members' growth in prayer
- Simple but effective tracking (and communication) of the congregation's forward progress
- Documenting (and communicating) answers to prayer, as an aid in motivating more prayer

Our research indicates that the average American Christian feels their prayer life is lacking. In other words, a large amount would like to rate their prayer life as "mature or good" however the reality for most is that it can only be rated "fair or poor." The Initiative exists to help those that are sincere brothers and sisters in Christ to be able to effectively rise above their circumstances, be satisfied with their prayer lives, and to become a man or women whose prayers shape the country and the world, without neglecting their other obligations.

Some reasons we believe The Strategic Prayer Initiative approaches have a greater potential for large scale success are that:

1. We survey the congregations before we work with them, allowing for a good indication of where they are presently in their prayer lives. Information from the group's survey can be incorporated into a SPI™ PowerPoint presentation, significantly aiding its persuasiveness.
2. We have seriously taken into account the major obstacles (i.e. root causes) congregations or individuals have said are interfering with their prayer lives and have developed strategies that help alleviate each of these obstacles.
3. We consolidate information from many different prayer sources and prayer ministries allowing the participants to have maximum reach without having to manage multiple pieces of material. (We believe one of the reasons American Christians feel overwhelmed is the huge amount of information bombarding them on an almost daily basis. It is very difficult to address all of this information, including legitimate prayer options. However, by consolidating many important/strategic sources onto one monthly Strategic Prayer Data Sheet (other wise known as a Pink Sheet™), participants feel a true sense of accomplishment versus a feeling of failure. We are realistically setting them up to succeed, not setting them up for failure.)
4. Finally, we have built SPI tools to be part of a process not a program. If the body of Christ grows in prayer for a short period of time, and then drops it for the next program, we would consider our efforts an overall failure. Consequently SPI's careful, prayerful, analytical methodology of building frameworks and systems has been intended to help it not be just another flavor-of-the-month type program. Instead The Strategic Prayer Initiative has been built as a long-term tool for the mobilization of multitudes of new warriors who will be used of God to help break down the gates of hell. However, SPI does have a semi-short term goal of having 80% of the true Christians in the USA either developing or maintaining a "Good Prayer Life" and sustaining it for five (5) years and seeing how the Lord might answer our prayers. This goal or objective is known as **5Y80™**.

## Some Key Quotes Which Pertain To The Work Of The Strategic Prayer Initiative™

*“The church is not praying.”* Face-to-face quote stated by David Bryant (Founder of Concerts of Prayer International) David Bryant is one of the most knowledgeable people in the country concerning the state of the American church regarding prayer.

*There is no accountability in the American church. People thought it would come through small groups, but they have only been able to address the soft issues.* Stated by George Barna as a verbal addendum to previously produced seminar material.

*If you can get men to start meeting together, that would be really beneficial. No one is getting that done, not even Promise Keepers.* Paraphrase of a face-to-face statement made by Dr. Cornell Haan (Co-founder of The Presidential Prayer Team).

*As I have traveled the country speaking on the subject of prayer, I have been shocked by how many people have said to me that they did not know how to pray.* Paraphrase of a face-to-face statement made by Jonathan Graf (Founder and former Sr. Editor of Pray! Magazine, Founder, Publisher/Editor-in-Chief Prayer Connect magazine and current President of the Church Prayer Leaders Network).

*“Pastors and churches have to get uncomfortable enough to say, ‘We are not New Testament Christians if we don’t have a prayer life.’ This conviction makes us squirm a little, but how else will there be a breakthrough with God?”* Jim Cymbala in his book, Fresh Wind Fresh Fire p.51

### Some Core Principles Of The Strategic Prayer Initiative Models

Principle One – It is very very foolish for the majority of the U.S. church to continue having weak or feeble prayer lives in light of the spiritual battle that America and the world are engaged in.

Principle Two – Most of these people know their prayer life is lacking, and sincerely want to get better.

Principle Three -- Without accountability, it is highly unlikely most will be able to stay the course.

Principle Four – If the requirements that people are accountable to are overly burdensome, many people will drop out of the accountability system.

Principle Five – If the elements people are accountable for are fundamental to Christian life and discipleship, peoples’ likelihood of staying the course goes up significantly. This is due to the fact that they understand these activities are foundational to a healthy Christian life.

Principle Six – By asking for very modest levels of commitment, we do not believe all will stay at those levels. We believe we are strategically “priming the pump” for greater fruitfulness ahead. Tools such as Pink Sheet™ Expanders, Yellow Sheets, the One Cry Revival Prayer guides, Silver Bullets Prayer Teams, as well as other Cord options, can help participants keep advancing in strategic and effective prayer, if they desire to.

Principle Seven – The crown jewel of The Strategic Prayer Initiative is the daily prayer for prayer being lifted up by name for each and every SPI participant who is in a PrayerCord™ or SPI™ Small Group. Having daily prayer for growth in prayer is a long overdue strategy in a war that is fought, to a significant degree, on a spiritual level. *PrayerCord members of one of our pilot churches (after starting at a 25% level) have actually achieved a level of 80% reporting good prayer lives (GPLs), and this 80% number came from a three month average. The daily prayers for growth in prayer are considered a critical element contributing to this remarkable growth.*

Principle Eight -- Just because “all” prayer motivation efforts in the United States have failed to impact the middle of the bell curve (i.e. the average American Christian) does not mean we shouldn’t keep trying. Let us never forget, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."