

*Community
Houses
of Prayer*

Ministry Manual

*reaching others for Christ
through strategic prayer*

Revised and Expanded

Stanley D. Gale

Stanley Gale, *Community Houses of Prayer: Ministry Manual*
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Community Houses of Prayer Introduction

God is doing a mighty work in our day to bring revitalization to His people for the work of outreach with the gospel of life in Jesus Christ. He is working in them a heart of humility and submission, and is stirring them up to prayer. Community Houses of Prayer (CHOP) is a resource to equip and engage believers in this commission of hope.

CHOP Vision

To see a developing network of committed communities of pray-ers around the world knowing God and seeking God for the souls of those around them

CHOP Mission

To mobilize Christ's disciples around the world where God has providentially placed them to reach others with the gospel through the intimacy and instrumentality of strategic prayer

CHOP Calling

Reaching Others for Christ through Strategic Prayer

Community Houses of Prayer is supported by a website that provides help in starting and leading a house of prayer, as well as other resources. The address is www.CHOPministry.net. Feedback is welcome and encouraged through this website. The author can be contacted at sdgale@chopministry.net.

The basic principles underlying the CHOP approach are laid out in *WARFARE WITNESS: Contending With Spiritual Opposition in Everyday Evangelism* (©2005, Christian Focus Publishing, Geanies House, Fearn, Ross-shire, IV20 1TW, Scotland).

Introduction to the Revised Edition

The second edition of the *CHOP Ministry Manual* reflects feedback gained from those using the first edition as well as general improvements. Some of the changes include: placement of the Basic Training Lessons in the body of the book, inclusion of a fuller presentation of the gospel as a training tool, incorporation of excerpts from *Warfare Witness* as part of the Daily Prayer Guide for introduction and reinforcement of principles and practices inherent in the CHOP approach, thorough revision of the Daily Prayer Guide to aid in strategic prayer, pre-CHOP and post-CHOP guidelines, and a number of stylistic and content changes throughout for ease of use.

What others say about Community Houses of Prayer

I have been humbled in seeing those whom I prayed for respond in a dramatic way to the leading of the Holy Spirit. I had always felt inadequate to be involved in evangelism but the CHOP experience was a blessing to me as I was able to reach out to those around me for Christ. Any Christian can participate in CHOP without having a special vocation for evangelism. **Larry Woodruff, educator and CHOP participant**

Prayer is the most characteristic, and arguably the most important, Christian discipline. No follower of Christ, and no community of His followers, can hope to know full and abundant life, or a bountiful mission and worship, apart from vital prayer together. The pastor who succeeds in leading his congregation to become a praying people has won half the battle in claiming his community for Christ. But the multitude of diversions, distractions, and other worthwhile activities makes getting a whole congregation organized and laboring together in prayer a difficult task. Now Stan Gale shows us how, and why, pastors must make community-wide prayer a major focus of their ministries. The CHOP manual can provide the vision, resources, and step-by-step guidance for any church to begin bathing its community in prayer. And this, in turn, can provide the context and catalyst for revival fires to fall. **T.M. Moore, Principal of The Fellowship of Ailbe and author of *The Psalms for Prayer, Celtic Flame* and numerous books on prayer and revival**

In this book Stan Gale guides us into real life evangelism and helps us to more effectively engage our spheres of influence with the gospel message. Herein we see a cord of three stands woven together: confidence that God will answer prayer for the lost; passion for the lost; thoughtful/practical insight as to interacting with the lost. These three strands woven together encourage and facilitate our mandate to be ambassadors for Christ. **Glenn P. Evans, Pastor**

Many evangelism tools speak of the importance of prayer for outreach - CHOP actually taught me to pray evangelistically. CHOP enabled me to develop: *Intimacy* with Christ through its daily devotions and prayer guide; *Strategy* to pray purposefully for unbelievers; *Community* by gath-

ering with fellow believers to pray for the spread of the Kingdom; and *Expectancy* by training me to watch for God's answers to prayer. CHOP will prosper your soul, focus your vision, and empower your outreach!

Dr. Dwight Dunn, PCA Pastor

CHOP is a most practical, teachable, and scriptural tool for personal evangelism. The central emphasis on prayer not only brings petitions before the Lord but also draws the participants into an active and growing community of real support, mutual accountability, and loving encouragement.

Bob Herrmann, Pastor

I've been looking for a way to guide our church into a period of intentional prayer, which would be sound theologically and warm-hearted devotionally, and Community Houses of Prayer meets both those criteria well. As I read through it, my heart was filled with hope at what God will do when the believers in our body begin to pray this way!

Dave Swavelly, Pastor and coauthor of *Life in the Father's House*.

The CHOP Ministry is a comprehensive approach to evangelism that helps to make you aware of opportunities that present themselves everyday by treating each individual contact as a person in need of God's grace, instead of as a number to tally into God's kingdom. It's amazing how vested you become in the lives of your friends, family members, colleagues... when you pray for them asking God to reveal himself to them through you.

Jeremy & Olivia Verrillo, CHOP participants

Using the CHOP Ministry Manual as a personal devotion guide really helped establish some of its guiding principles, including the strategic nature of prayer and the primary importance of the gospel being communicated in the context of relationship. It also greatly heightened my anticipation of using the Manual with others in a small group setting.

Steve Gentino, CHOP participant



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Dedication

To Linda, my ever-patient, ever-present wife of my youth

Acknowledgments

I would especially like to express my appreciation to three key figures God has raised up in my life who have contributed to the concept and form of this CHOP ministry tool: **T. M. Moore**, author, pastor and former seminary president for his encouragement and mentoring; **Phil Douglass**, professor at Covenant Theological Seminary, for his direction in exploring a biblically-balanced concept of spiritual warfare in outreach; **Archie Parrish**, founder of Serve, International, for his leadership to the church in understanding prayer as a weapon for outreach and means of spiritual renewal. I am also indebted to **John DeVries** and **Alvin Vander Griend** who planted the conceptual seed of CHOP through their “Neighborhood Houses of Prayer” ministry. I am grateful for the feedback provided by the many who have been involved in CHOP. Their input has contributed greatly to this revised Manual. Lastly, I want to thank **Larry Byars** of Deo Volente Publishing for tremendous help in the production of this manual and for his encouragement to me in the CHOP ministry.

The Author

Stanley D. Gale has been married to his wife, Linda, since 1975. They have four children. He holds Bachelor of Arts and Master of Education degrees from the University of Delaware, a Master of Divinity degree from Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, and a Doctor of Ministry degree from Covenant Theological Seminary in St. Louis. He is an ordained minister in the Presbyterian Church in America with 20 years of pastoral experience. He is also the author of *WARFARE WITNESS: Contending With Spiritual Opposition in Everyday Evangelism*, and *The Prayer of Jehoshaphat: Seeing Beyond Life's Storms*.

Outreach Orientation

Welcome to Community Houses of Prayer (CHOP), a ministry tool for reaching others for Christ through strategic prayer. As we begin, let's get our bearings. Enter a typical shopping mall and you'll find a large map that gives an overview of the various stores of the mall. On that map will be a little indicator saying, "You are here." As we speak of reaching others for Christ we would do well to step back and survey the bigger picture to identify where we are, how we came to be there and why. These redemptive bearings will orient us to what God has done in history and in our lives, and how He would use us in the lives of others.

Scouting Out the Land

Our Lord Jesus Christ has called us to Himself to belong to Him and to follow Him. He has rescued us from the kingdom of darkness that imprisoned us in sin's mastery, misery and condemnation. He has brought us into His kingdom of light and life, the very ground and reason for our worship (1 Pet. 2:9f.). Through Him we are sons and daughters of the living God, servants of the Most High.

Hope. To us belongs a hope, not a "hope-so" hope of wishful thinking but a hope of confident expectation, assured conviction and vibrant certainty. Ours is not futile hype, but a fertile hope grounded in the historical work of Jesus Christ. As the writer of Hebrews puts it: "We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner place behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf." (Heb. 6:19-20a). This hope points to the finished, victorious, redemptive work of Jesus on our behalf that secures our salvation and secures us as heirs of eternal life. The apostle Peter exclaims the praises of such a God who graciously gives us new birth into a living hope (1 Pet. 1:3), in which our inheritance is held for us (1 Pet. 1:4) and we are held in His mighty hand for our inheritance (1 Pet. 1:5). We live out our days in anticipation of the blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13). Every day of our lives we live as the redeemed of the Lord, children of hope (1 Thess. 5:5), different from those of the world who have no hope (1 Thess. 4:13). As we walk by faith, God fills our lives with faith, hope and love, causing us to overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:13).

Kingdom Ambassadors. As part of this new kingdom of hope, joy and peace, we enjoy not only the blessings of heavenly citizenship, we find ourselves as subjects and servants of a new King, workers in His vineyard, soldiers of His kingdom. No longer is this world our home. Rather

we are citizens of heaven, aliens and pilgrims in this world, not occupied with building our own kingdoms or enhancing our own reputations but concerned with Christ's kingdom priorities and values, seeking first His kingdom and His righteousness. In this sojourning our Lord calls us to be ambassadors of hope, declaring to those around us without God and without hope (Eph. 2:12), the sure hope of the gospel wherein a perfect righteousness is found in Christ apart from our own efforts at obedience to God's law (Rom 3:19-24).

Our lives bear witness to this God of hope both in word and in deed. The character of our lives is to point others not to how great we are but to how great is our God (1 Pet. 2:11). That our behavior might not point to us or to any notion that salvation is by our good behavior, we are to give *interpretation* to our deeds as the Lord provides opportunity by verbal explanation for the hope we have (1 Pet. 3:15). Our lives are governed by the reality that Christ bore our sins in His body on the tree, so that we might die to sin and live for righteousness; by His wounds we are healed. We were as sheep gone astray, but now by the grace of God we have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls. (1 Pet. 2: 24f; cf. Is. 53:4-6). Our lives are His and we live for Him.

The Glory of Grace. As we look to embark upon a ministry of reaching others for Christ what bearings are we given? The land we survey gives us a panorama of *grace*, a grace that has swept us up in its current, a grace that oxygenates and invigorates our existence in this world, and a grace that qualifies and empowers our role as ambassadors of Christ. We enjoy the standing we do only by the grace of God. His grace sustains us each and every day, leading us away from self-focus and self-dependence to find our strength and sufficiency in Christ (Titus 2:11-14; 3:4-7). His grace has given us new hope, a new identity and a new home and His grace will lead us home.

With these bearings, as ones who have received every spiritual blessing in Christ because of the grace of God and who are stationed as His witnesses in this world, we turn to how we can be faithful to carry out that role. CHOP is a tool designed to equip, engage and encourage us in faithful service to our Lord as instruments of grace in His hand for the spreading of the sure hope of the gospel.

Operation Outreach

The heart of the Community Houses of Prayer ministry approach to outreach is *prayer*. Our Lord Jesus has given us prayer not only for delight in fellowship with Him or for bringing our burdens to Him, but also as a *means* for the extension of His kingdom in this world. Each local church, as a house of prayer (Luke 19:46), is an outpost of His kingdom, established by Christ, for the strengthening and extension of His kingdom in the midst of this world. That kingdom is the redemptive rule of Jesus Christ in the hearts of those formerly without God and without hope in this world. It is a kingdom that cuts across national borders, encompassing a people from every tribe, language and nation. It is a counter-kingdom to that of the fallen world that imprisons its subjects in darkness, sin and death. This fallen kingdom is ruled over by Satan, who is called prince, ruler and even a god, as an idolatrous rival to Him who is the true Prince of peace, the true Ruler promised from the line of David, the true eternal and incarnate God. As part of His church, we are all agents of His kingdom, soldiers conscripted by His Spirit. Our Lord has equipped us with spiritual weapons suitable to carry out our work of pillaging the kingdom of this world for the cause of Christ. Those basic weapons are truth and prayer.

CHOP is a ministry tool that directs prayer as a means *to revive* (motivation) our hearts in grace as we draw near to the living God as our loving Father and *to involve* (participation) us in our everyday lives as active witnesses for Jesus Christ in dependence and expectation of His working. CHOP looks to cultivate in us a greater *awareness* of the evangelistic nature of ordinary life in which we find ourselves every day. It kindles in us an *attitude* of personal involvement and expectation as the witnesses for Christ we are by virtue of being His disciples. It involves us in the actual *activity* of bearing verbal witness to the glorious gospel of salvation bound up in Christ alone. We look to draw near to people for Christ and draw near to Christ for people. And we do it collectively, united with fellow believers for mutual encouragement in a common mission.

CHOP weaves together four strands: 1) lifestyle evangelism, 2) strategic prayer, 3) personal spiritual renewal, and 4) spiritual warfare. Your participation in CHOP will not only *involve* you in these four aspects, but will also *train* you in them through instruction, reinforcement and practice.

What are these four strands? *Lifestyle evangelism* looks to share the gospel in the context of those relationships at work or at home or wherever God has providentially placed us. *Strategic prayer* is kingdom prayer (i.e., prayer concerned with the matters, priorities and goals of Christ's kingdom) characterized by planning, intention, focus and direction. *Personal spiritual renewal* reaches to matters of motivation as we are invigorated with the scent of God's grace so richly, unexpectedly and undeservedly poured out upon us. It seeks to grow in intimate knowledge of God fueled by His revelation of Himself in His Word. Such prayer draws us near to God, cultivating in us *His* heart for the lost, compelling our witness by love and gratitude and not by sterile duty. *Spiritual warfare* takes into account the biblical data of the reality of spiritual opposition for our work of witness for the extension and strengthening of the kingdom of God against the kingdom of the prince of darkness. It is prayer aware and prayer against. This strand attempts to find firm footing on the foundation of God's written Word, while avoiding the pitfalls stemming from fanciful notions and excesses.

One of our goals will be to learn to use prayer as a *weapon* of the kingdom. We're not all that accustomed to wielding prayer in this way. One of the purposes of CHOP is to train you in *kingdom prayer, prayer that seeks God for His purposes and not merely for personal needs or wants*. As with any tool or weapon, the more we become familiar with the way it works the more adept we will become in its use.

CHOP involves a small group of two or more believers committing themselves to a 12-week period of *meeting together weekly and praying privately daily*. The mission of the group is the common goal and mutual support of reaching others for Christ, particularly through prayer. This sort of prayer will powerfully affect you as God's instrument and will carry out God's purposes in those around you. God actually uses your prayers to the accomplishment of His providential purposes.

The Community Houses of Prayer ministry approach is based on the following principles and precepts:

- ⌘ Personal evangelism belongs in some degree to the role of all who would call themselves disciples of Jesus Christ. God has designed it so that those captured by His grace would be called to His service as His instruments for the communication of the gospel.
- ⌘ Evangelism belongs to the realm of ordinary life and not only to

- those extraordinary opportunities afforded by a special visitation night or in being part of an evangelistic program of some sort.
- ⌘ Evangelism is best understood not as an event but as a process, where the role of the witness is to encounter someone for Jesus Christ to the advancement of the person's knowledge, agreement or trust in Christ as the source of spiritual, abundant and eternal life.
 - ⌘ The gospel is ordinarily communicated in parts and not in totality, or at least developed through a building process. God may use us to sow the seed, weed out error, or nourish through truth. These things are not necessarily all done in a single encounter, nor are they done necessarily just by us. God may raise up others to influence that person for Christ.
 - ⌘ While the gospel demands a response, a call to response at every encounter is not inherent to faithful evangelism. The presentation of truth in itself demands a response of stance on the part of the hearer. In God's design, it is better to see ourselves as spiritual midwives responding to and cooperating with the work of the Spirit, rather than as spiritual salesmen cajoling conversion.
 - ⌘ Faithfulness to the evangelistic enterprise is not measured by conversions but by our attitude, intent and activity in obedience to Christ in bearing witness to Him as Savior and Lord. God produces the fruit.
 - ⌘ The most natural and ordinary way for Christians to communicate the gospel authentically is through the relationships of their lives that serve as the contexts for that communication.
 - ⌘ God is sovereign and His providence governs all events and contingencies, both means and ends, for His purposes. For that reason it is assumed that we find ourselves in the life-spheres we do at the placement of our God and in service of His kingdom. He has established us as beacons of light in the midst of the darkness of sin and unbelief right where we live.
 - ⌘ It is only the Spirit of God who opens eyes and changes hearts to understand and embrace the gospel. The effectiveness of evangelism is utterly dependent on the sovereign, gracious working of the Holy Spirit in applying Christ's accomplished work of redemption.
 - ⌘ By its very character evangelism involves a spiritual dimension in the supernatural working of the Spirit of God for the redemptive kingdom of Christ against the fallen kingdom of darkness ruled by the devil and his demons. This spiritual dimension

must be taken into account and dealt with in the wisdom of God's Word and with the weapons of God's provision.

- ✠ Prayer is communication with the living God that will promote intimacy with Him. Prayerfulness is the privilege and responsibility of all Christians, useful for all levels of spiritual maturity.
- ✠ Prayer is a weapon of the kingdom of God ordained by Him as a means for His ends against spiritual opposition.
- ✠ Prayer is intended by God to enfold us into the accomplishment of His purposes for His glory. In the majesty and scope of God's design, in praying we can expect God to do something He would not have done had we not prayed—not to make God dependent on us but to the glory of His unfathomable greatness.
- ✠ Prayer is not merely for therapeutic value in which we unburden ourselves of sins or cares. Rather, prayer is eminently effective for the building and strengthening of the kingdom of God and for the accomplishment of His purposes.
- ✠ God has provided for special benefit and blessing in corporate prayer as opposed to private prayer alone.

Evangelism is a kingdom mission, declaring the glorious redemptive rule of the Savior, calling for the repentant faith of changed kingdom allegiance. It is a spiritual activity, contending with spiritual opposition, relying on God's wisdom and employing the weapons of God's design and with His power. The church is the kingdom's agent, local congregations outposts of the kingdom, the congregation its soldiers.

Community Houses of Prayer seeks to mobilize Christ's disciples for obedience to the Great Commission, emphasizing prayer that would shape us as God's instruments and accomplish His saving purposes in those around us. As soldiers of the cross, we fight not for victory but in victory. Nowadays military missions are dubbed with appropriate identification handles. Perhaps ours could best be captured with the title "Operation Outreach," as we enter the harvest of our worldly surroundings *as witnesses* for Christ intent on *bearing witness* to Him.

OPERATIONS MANUAL

A Community House of Prayer unfolds in three phases: group formation, the weekly meeting and daily private prayer.

Group Formation

From the planning room of prayer that pervades all phases, the first step in beginning a house of prayer is to gather together a group of two or more Christians willing to commit to the work of strategic prayer outreach. As with any aspect of discipleship there is cost, particularly cost of time and effort. A CHOP is very much task-oriented. Certainly, there are camaraderie and mutual care in Christian fellowship, but particularly there is a job to do in service to Christ. The work of CHOP is not unlike a team of people getting together for the common task of building a house. Workers enjoy one another and support one another in the tie that binds them together, but the task remains prominent. Only in the case of a CHOP, the Lord is the one who builds the house; we are His instruments for the work of kingdom witness.

Once a group is identified, things like time and place for the weekly meeting will need to be decided upon. The ministry is entitled “Community” Houses of Prayer, because it not only mobilizes the community of faith and builds community in the body, it takes place in the community of society. While the group can hold its weekly meetings in the church building, there is much advantage of warmth and worldly presence in meeting in the community, whether it be neighborhood, workplace, dormitory or some other agreed-upon location.

After reading this Outreach Orientation of the *CHOP Ministry Manual* all participants should complete the “Basic Training Lessons” found in the next section. These lessons serve to make them familiar with the four aspects of CHOP (i.e., lifestyle evangelism, strategic prayer, personal spiritual renewal, and spiritual warfare) and put everyone on the same page for the nature of the work to be done. Here, participants will complete life-sphere mapping which will provide their core prayer targets for the weeks ahead.

The actual CHOP takes place over a 12-week period. It involves meeting together once a week as well as engaging in daily private prayer between weekly meetings. Meeting weekly is best for continuity, but other group meeting schedules (e.g. biweekly) can be used as well. Enfolded the four basic training lessons into four meetings *preliminary* to the actual CHOP can enhance the time together. Although this stretches the 12-week commitment to 16 weeks, it does have several advantages, such as forming solidarity as a team and unity in a sense of mission, promoting clarity through discussion of basic concepts studied, and steeping the

ministry in expectant corporate prayer. A schedule that includes Pre-CHOP preparation can be found in Supplement B.

The Weekly Meeting

Each of the 12 group meetings of the CHOP follows the same basic agenda. The length of the meeting is typically between 60 and 90 minutes. A valuable discipline to establish from the outset is the discipline of punctuality, in which participants demonstrate good stewardship of time and respect for others as well as maximize the time together.

After gathering and convening the meeting in prayer, the agenda involves four basic elements: adoration, debriefing, intercession, and deployment. Approximate time frames for each are in parentheses in the box below.

CHOP Weekly Meeting Agenda (gathering and opening prayer)

1. Adoration (10-15 minutes)
2. Debriefing (10-15 minutes)
3. Intercession (30-40 minutes)
4. Deployment (10-20 minutes)

1. **Adoration** (10-15 minutes). Here the group lifts their hearts to God in whose name they meet and whose cause they serve. Time is spent exalting God for who He is and the great things He has done. Something learned about God through the daily devotions or experiences of the past week may well be fuel for exaltation. Other stimulants to such adoration could be songs, sung or read, or reading and responding to portions of God's Word that had a profound impact on those of the group. Stimulated by one another in conversational prayer (i.e., brief prayer, building on one another's prayers), the group can virtually meditate aloud in the unity of the Spirit to the praise of His name.
2. **Debriefing** (10-15 minutes). This portion involves reporting

on God's activity since the last meeting. We read of this practice in the book of Acts: "And when they arrived and gathered the church together, they declared all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith..." (Acts 14:27a). In addition to reports on the handiwork of God, the debriefing could include taking note of God's answers to prayer, in part or in whole. Debriefing provides focus, expectancy and accountability. We sharpen one another as we train our spiritual senses to be alert to God's workings. Other things that might be shared in keeping with the ministry of outreach are personal or circumstantial obstacles (e.g., increased busyness at work) and struggles encountered (e.g., unbelief or a wandering mind) so that the members can support one another in prayer.

3. **Intercession** (30-40 minutes). Depending on the size of the group, here the participants might divide into smaller units for prayer. Sometimes greater openness can result from same-gender groupings. In the prayer cells, updates might be given on those who have been targeted for prayer. After such sharing, intercession can be made for those prayer targets. Often it is easier if a person prays for his or her own prayer targets, but it is certainly appropriate to pray for one another's targets as the Lord leads. Other matters for prayer might be the CHOP ministry in general, the community in which the meeting is taking place, various ministries or needs or outreach events, as well as personal and circumstantial obstacles shared in debriefing. Again, conversational prayer is of great benefit. During this time of prayer, silence should not be seen as something undesirable to be overcome or as a problem to be solved, but as an opportunity to commune privately with the God who is present to receive the prayers of His children and servants. This silent meditation may well overflow into public expression for the benefit of the whole.
4. **Deployment** (10-20 minutes) As the meeting heads toward its conclusion, here the participants reconvene as a whole to lift their eyes to the harvest into which they will be heading in the days ahead as witnesses for Jesus Christ—the workplace, school, the marketplace, the neighborhood. They move from the barracks to the battlefield as soldiers of the cross. Goals for the coming days and expected opportunities in the week to come could be expressed and prayed for. Ideas and encouragement can be shared. Prayer can be offered for upcoming activities in the local church or ministry that seek to have an impact for

Christ. The meeting concludes with a season of prayer for the work and the workers of the vineyard, including prayer aware of and against the opposition of a spiritual enemy that will be faced. Expectant prayer will proceed from prayer rich in recognition of the character of the God we entreat, of the accomplished work of His Christ and of the assurance of His presence with us by His Spirit for His work in which He includes us.

While the daily private prayer can be carried out on an individual basis apart from involvement with others in a CHOP group, the weekly group meeting holds tremendous benefit for encouragement in that daily prayer. It's easier to stay consistent if we are accountable to others. In addition, it is important that the weekly meeting be preserved as a positive thing. Sometimes the enjoyment of one another can take precedence over dedication to the work of God the group has assembled to do. This can lead to shortchanging the time spent in prayer or to meetings that are excessively long or unproductive for the work of prayer at hand, which can discourage regular attendance and reduce expectations that should remain high.

Daily Prayer

In many ways the work of daily prayer is the backbone of the CHOP ministry. With it come the greatest demands of time, priority and effort. Prayer is difficult for a number of reasons, not the least of which is the spiritual opposition of our enemy with whom we contend for the work of outreach. The last place he would have us is on our knees before the throne of grace. He would dissuade us from the labor of prayer, convincing us of its ineffectiveness, in effect disarming us from the very weapon our Lord has placed in our hand as effective for His purposes. We may become easily discouraged in prayer, particularly since it speaks to our lack of ability and competency and to our absolute need for Christ and the work of His Spirit. Prayer is surely an activity of faith that leads away from self to Christ, a position vigorously resisted by pride, the flames of which are stoked by our enemy.

Another discouragement to prayer is that when we rise from our knees we don't have a finished product before us in which to find gratification and encouragement. Or, perhaps we do—a list of prayer items all checked off. But checklist prayer is not what we're after. We want to linger with our Father God in prayer, building intimacy, growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord, savoring His mercies, seeking His

face on behalf of others. Our prayer time is not to be seen as a business meeting. If our hearts would be warmed to the task of evangelism, we must grow to know our God whose work it is and grow to appreciate His amazing grace to us that we would be motivated by humble, loving, sacrificial service.

Our work of prayer is not merely to express our requests. Our challenge and call is to wrestle with God, not as a combatant but in dialog as we seek to conform to His will and take captive every thought to the obedience of Christ. Such prayer is indeed hard work, yet it is a labor of love, both for God and for neighbor. One of our greatest objectives as we would undertake a ministry of prayer is assigning it the importance, seriousness and effort it will require.

On that note, let's walk through a typical day of guided private prayer. You might turn to a page from the Daily Prayer Guide for reference as we review the format.

You'll notice at the top left of the page a reference to the week and day. The Daily Prayer Guide will direct you through 12 weeks of prayer. Your work of prayer will be six days a week, with general prayer guidelines provided for Sundays. So you will find 72 days of prayer spread over 12 weeks, days one through six for each week.

Begin your time in prayer, drawing near to God in delight, thanksgiving and expectation. Remember, you are actually meeting with the true and living God who is Creator and Redeemer, Sovereign Lord and your Heavenly Father by virtue of His adopting grace. Ask Him to help you to pray and to stay focused. Approach your time in a spirit of prayer, looking to commune and converse with your Heavenly Father.

Next, read the text at the top of the page to the right of the week and day. These are excerpts from *Warfare Witness: Contending with Spiritual Opposition in Everyday Evangelism*. These quotes are provided to introduce, reinforce and equip you in the CHOP principles of life-sphere witness, strategic prayer, personal spiritual renewal and spiritual warfare.

Your time of daily prayer is divided into four sections: Drawing Near, Reaching Out, Enemy Profile and Mutual Support. The first section, **Drawing Near**, is intended to help you to grow in intimacy with your Father in heaven. The idea here is to linger with God, to reflect and

meditate on His character as He reveals Himself in His Word. He is the God who, as the catechism puts it, is “infinite, eternal and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, justice, goodness and truth.” He is a God of mercy, grace and love. These attributes are communicated in His self-revelation, in His mighty works and in His Son, who is the image of the invisible God. That we might be refreshed in His grace and renewed in His service, we want to know Him and to remind ourselves of His astounding, incalculable blessings to us in Christ. For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things; to Him be the glory forever.

God reveals Himself in creation but especially in His Word. We want to learn to approach the text of the Bible attentive to what God is telling us about Himself. It is important that we give God our attention as we read His Word. It is so easy for our eyes to take in the print and even for our minds to grasp the content, but to miss the communication of God.

A Scripture passage is provided for each day’s prayer. The selections given expose you to a wide variety of God’s attributes. Turn in your Bible and read the full text listed. The bulleted questions following the reading are intended to help draw you into the text, giving ear particularly to the character of the Author, often challenging a response. You can use this Scripture reading *in addition to* or *in place of* your regular devotional reading. Whichever you chose, the key is to *linger* in communion with God and to *listen* to what He is revealing about Himself in the text. Ask yourself, “What is God telling me about Himself and what response does that revelation require of me?”

Following the reading and meditation on God’s communication in His Word, you will spend time in prayer *responding* to what He has told you, praising Him, thanking Him, confessing your sin—however the Spirit may lead you. If God’s Word is food for our soul, reflective and responsive prayer provides the spiritual digestive juices for assimilation of its nourishment to our growth in grace and strength for service. Our prayer life will be tremendously enriched as we learn to commune with God in response to the communication of His Word.

From communion with your Lord you move to the second section of the work of kingdom prayer, **Reaching Out**. It is here that you engage in strategic prayer for the sake of the kingdom. Your strategic prayer will be particularly concerned with those you have identified for prayer over the 12-week period of the CHOP. These prayer targets will be

determined by way of the life-sphere mapping from the first lesson of the Basic Training Lessons. Although you will major on these three persons for strategic prayer, it may well be that over the weeks ahead God will raise up others in your life-spheres for whom you are burdened to pray, particularly as you become more aware of and attentive to those in your life-spheres. Feel free to add them to your list, but be careful not to spread yourself too thin and so overextend yourself, particularly as you look to build relationship with those for whom you are praying.

In this section you look to intercede for those you are praying in respect to *their* relationship to God. You will notice that, though without explicit, biblical textual reference, most of the petitions are scripturally informed, as you employ the truth of God's Word through prayer. Although you will grow to know your contacts as you build relationship with them, God's Word already tells you a great deal about them in their created humanity and fallen condition. This prayer focus takes advantage of this inspired intelligence report.

The next segment leads you in prayer and preparation for God's use of you in the lives of your contacts. Prayer does not *preclude* action, but *presupposes* it to the extent of our opportunity. For example, we pray for our daily bread (Mt. 6:11), yet if we do not work we will not eat (2 Th. 3: 10). The book of Nehemiah gives us a concrete picture of such prayer for the sake of the kingdom, emphasizing faith founded on God and flowing out in activity. In the face of opposition to the work, we read: "But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat" (Neh. 4:9). As we prayerfully draw near to our contacts, we will look expectantly for God's providence for our involvement in their lives.

Be aware of the *cumulative* character of this segment. Although an item might be specifically mentioned only once as a matter for prayerful involvement in your contacts' lives, they are intended to introduce various ideas to you for involvement and to equip you in their use. For example, early on in the CHOP you might ask God for opportunities to build relationship with your contacts. Later, you might pray that a contact would take initiative to ask you something about your faith. Another time you might be directed to pray for opportunity to perform some act of kingdom kindness or to direct their attention to God through answered prayer. These various items build on one another, training you in the attitude of your mind for loving involvement in your contacts' lives for the sake of Christ. They should not be seen as an assignment for

the day at hand but as a repertoire for cultivating a practical mentality of mission in relating to others. Ask God to use you and to show you how you can be used.

In addition, this segment of Reaching Out will lead you in developing and using your personal testimony and will train you in learning a systematic presentation of the gospel for your own edification and for boldness and clarity in sharing the life of Christ with others. You may have worked on these tools for sharing your faith at some other point. In that case, you may want to review what you worked on previously or acquaint yourself with the materials in the supplements section of this manual. The point of these exercises is to equip you to reach out in word, as well as in deed and prayer.

The third section, **Enemy Profile**, brings to the fore the spiritual opposition to which God alerts us in His Word for the work of witness. As you take into account the reconnaissance report of your enemy provided by God in His Word, you can use this information as a basis for prayer on behalf of those contacts for whom you are praying. Bear in mind that your prayer is to your *Advocate*, not to your *adversary*. Scripture does not call us to speak to the devil by reprimand or some other communication. God's Word directs us not to rebuke the devil but to resist him, wielding the weapon of God's Word, through the hand of believing prayer. We resist by standing against our enemy, turning to our Lord Jesus for His protection, strength and working, strong in Him and in the power of His might.

The battle is the Lord's. You are instructed to stand firm in Him and in His mighty power, recognizing who the real enemy is and the conflict of kingdoms that is inherent in evangelism. Prayer that takes into account this spiritual opposition is prayer *aware* and *against* the intentions, activity, tactics, schemes and character of our adversary, as these are exposed to us by God in the pages of Scripture. The portion of the Bible text written out in the Enemy Profile directs our attention to the nature of our enemy through various intelligence data of names, titles, descriptions and tactics provided us by our Lord in His Word. The larger context of the profile entry is found in the Bible reference noted in the parentheses.

Following the Scripture text you will be directed to pray aware of something about the enemy introduced in that text and to pray against the enemy's hold or influence on your contacts in respect to that information.

For example, in taking the information from Ephesians 2:2 (Week One, Day One) into account we might pray for the mercy of God in delivering our contacts from their bondage to sin and the rule of the evil one as they are at home in a fallen world, subjects of his kingdom, and desperately in need of the deliverance of Jesus Christ. As we grow to know our contacts better we will likely see how they are driven by the world's principles and values, given over to gratifying the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh and the pride of life, oblivious to the condemnation of God that hangs over their heads. We intercede for them, not as ones better than they but as ones who have been delivered from that fallen kingdom and who know the mercy and power of God, asking that God would be merciful to them and rescue them from the dominion of the evil one.

In the final section, **Mutual Support**, you pray for *yourself* and your *colleagues* in the CHOP ministry. Here general and diverse petitions are provided for you over the 72 days ahead in which to bring yourself and those laboring with you before the throne of grace. In addition to these general petitions you can pray for specific and individual needs of which you become aware over the course of the CHOP. You will learn of these needs through the weekly meeting where you will interact with and come to know your co-workers.

At some point in your daily prayer, devote a few minutes to write in your **Prayer Journal**. You will find this journaling one of the blessings of your time, much like the psalmist must have experienced in putting his struggles, petitions and declarations about God into words. You may want to write out some of your prayers, record observations about yourself, or note something God has impressed on your heart. Dialog with God through your Prayer Journal. Record your responses and thoughts as a personal debriefing with God. Express to Him your doubts and your delights and your desires. Such activity will draw out your heart in a way that just thoughts or verbal prayer cannot.

You might also note requests from your life-sphere targets, your CHOP co-workers, your ministry context and your own needs. Included can be various needs that are shared with you or that you yourself have noticed. Pray not only for the need but for those kingdom concerns and purposes of God that have brought the need to the person's life. This broader perspective is illustrated in Deuteronomy 8:3: "And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live

on bread alone but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord.”

Keep your eyes open for God’s answers to your prayers, both for your own blessing and the group’s edification and for sharing with those for whom you are praying. You also want to be vigilant to God’s answers so that you can *respond* appropriately to Him, either by praise or thanks or confession or the new obedience of repentance. You might turn back to a previous page of the Prayer Journal and update a request with greater detail or an answer of God. Of course, God’s answers may be *in part*, such as provision of a job interview in response to a prayer for a needed car. He may answer “yes,” “no” or “not yet” or “not according to the way you have in mind.” Surely, God’s ways are not our ways; He is the all-wise God.

Don’t regard writing in your prayer journal as some formal report to be filed. View it simply as a place to chronicle in believing interaction and expectation your work of prayer in view of the dynamic hand of God who inclines His ear to you and responds to your petitions for the sake of His kingdom.

As you began in prayer at the start of your daily prayer, so wrap up your time in prayer, committing yourself and the day at hand to the end of glorifying and enjoying your God who is with you throughout it. Recognize that as you leave your time of directed prayer you do not leave the personal presence of your God, who is with you throughout the day and with whom you can commune moment by moment.

Approach each day of the Daily Prayer Guide with pen in hand. As you leave each day of prayer, leave the page well marked. Fill in the date at the top. If you’re using a portion of Scripture other than the one included in the Manual, make note of it. Mark the page up with prayers and notes and thoughts as you interact with God. Give expression to those things God impresses on your heart. Record the names of your prayer contacts each time before you pray for them. Write out the names of your CHOP co-laborers one by one as you lift them up in prayer. All these are ideas to help you to be active and attentive as you engage in the work of prayer.

As was mentioned above, the Daily Prayer Guide directs your work of prayer six days a week. For Sundays, as you rest from your regular

labors of strategic prayer outreach, you might give yourself to more general prayer, looking to the worship of God, the revival of His church and the extension of His kingdom in the world. The following chart gives some suggested items for such prayer.

Sunday Prayer Suggestions

- Pray that God would be glorified through the worship of His people this day.
- Pray that God would renew His people in the joy of their salvation and in awe of His grace and love.
- Pray that God would revive and strengthen His church for service in the world as the agent of His kingdom.
- Pray that God would enfold converts into His church as worshippers of Him in Spirit and truth.
- Pray that God would not allow Satan to rob Him of the glory due His name in the assembly of His saints for worship.

Different people are involved. Different group dynamics are at work. Different circumstances are in play. The Spirit of God is carrying out His purposes. All these mean that no two Community Houses of Prayer will be alike. One constant, however, is the promise of God to be at work in answer to prayer. You will be changed. Your faith will be focused. Your soul will be nourished. God's purposes will be accomplished through your prayers. As you set about your strategic prayer for the work of witness, you can say with the psalmist: "O Lord, in the morning you hear my voice; in the morning I direct my prayer to you *and watch*." (Psalm 5:3, italics added)

One last note to your CHOP experience. You don't want to think

that your ministry is limited to the 12 weeks of CHOP or that the effectiveness of what you do in CHOP expires with the end of CHOP. You are cultivating a mentality in yourself, a way of looking at life, a way of looking at God's Word, an expectation of prayer that will serve you in the days ahead. Also, you are preparing soil and sowing seed through what you do in CHOP that may well bear fruit in years to come. I have heard numerous examples of ones who have come to Christ and those praying for them realizing, "Hey, I just realized, those are people I was praying for when I was part of a CHOP."

On the one hand, avoid being outcome-oriented, preoccupied with results in your time. That runs contrary to the very nature of prayer qualified by "Your will be done." On the other hand, do not suppose that your prayers are pointless or ineffective. Faith informs you that you entreat a mighty God who inclines His ear to you and uses what you pray for His perfect purposes. Remember that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.