

The Ministry of the Pew

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THE PEW PRAYER

To most people, walking into church might appear to be a rather basic accomplishment requiring no training. Perhaps a family with five toddlers would appreciate some advice, but most of us would never give it a thought. But have you considered praying about where you sit?

Of all the things to pray about, why be concerned with seating position?

Well, if you have a particular view of church, you see it as a place where **Christians go to work.**

Scripture consistently teaches that growth comes when every member works. (*Eph 4; 1 Cor 12-14*).

Because of this, we aren't to see ourselves merely as part of an organization called Christian Life Church, but as servants of God's people, **eager to meet the needs of others even if it means sacrificing our own.**

With this perspective, prayer about where to sit makes perfect sense. If at church we are working to strengthen our fellow believers, where we sit becomes important since **part of our work will be talking to our neighbor in the pew**, welcoming people, helping each other understand God's word and praying with each other.

"PEOPLE WORK"

One of the obvious ways we can build the church is to **invite others.** The pastor only has limited opportunities to attract people, but all the members are in touch with hundreds of people in the community. However, the ministry of the pew goes far beyond advertising and inviting people to hear the gospel. Once we make the attitude shift from being passive pew sitters and receivers to active workers and givers, there is no end to the difference we can make to others and to the running of the meeting.

All of the suggestions below are of the informal type—things we can do at our own initiative. They are the types of involvement that every congregation member can have. **The key to people work is to observe what happens around you and respond to people's needs.** Think through your church meeting chronologically. What can we do before, during and after the meeting?

BEFORE CHURCH

The preacher should not be the only one preparing for church. We prepare by praying for the people leading, attending, and through reading the upcoming passage. By preparing, we are better equipped to enter into discussion with others if we have looked at the passage beforehand.

WELCOMING VISITORS

We enjoy meeting our friends at church, but we need to **develop a nose for new people.** We should greet the non-Christian friends of other members and introduce our friends to others. It's all about genuine hospitality. **The way we welcome and look after people when they visit our homes should be a model for the household of God.**

ARRIVE EARLY

All of this requires that we arrive not on time or late, but early. That may be the greatest miracle of all.

LISTEN ACTIVELY

People in the pews have an enormous impact on those who are teaching and leading.

Communication is always a two way process. Our active listening will also infect others with enthusiasm for learning, just as our fidgeting will discourage them. ***Unbelievers will also pick up that these ideas are worth listening to if they see rows of regulars eagerly soaking up the Bible.***

SINGING

It is everyone's responsibility to share in the corporate singing of the congregation. Our enthusiasm and gusto in singing is of great help to those around us and those leading the music, even if we can barely hold a tune.

LOGISTICS

The devil will use anything to distract people from hearing the word of God. Are chairs running out? Scoot to make room and/or grab some more.

AFTER WORSHIP

We have just heard the word of God and we spend all of Sunday lunch talking about the movie we saw the night before. It isn't right and we know it, but many of us are just uncomfortable starting up 'spiritual' conversations. ***If you get the ball rolling, others will pick it up.*** Asking "What did you think of the sermon?" will usually put your neighbor into a coma, but making a specific comment like "I didn't know Abel was a prophet. What makes someone a prophet?" may generate a fruitful conversation. Even if the conversations don't always get off the ground, your enthusiasm for learning the Bible will be contagious.

PRAY WITH OTHERS

Use the prayer time to meet others and find out their concerns and pray quietly with them. This will look a bit weird to newcomers with pairs of bowed heads all around the building, but they will know that we love each other and trust God.

CATCH VISITORS

Newcomers tend to leave fairly quickly so we have to move fast by identifying the visitor in our pew and offering them conversation immediately after the service ends. ***You may have to postpone catching your friends until after the newcomers have been cared for.***

STAY LATE

Once you catch this vision of church, you are always the last to leave because the opportunities to minister don't end until the last person leaves. *Gone are the days of fitting church in between breakfast and brunch. Ministry of the pew takes time.*