

AMCF Reference Manual ANNEX K

PRAY AND PLAN BACKGROUND¹

1. Consider these scriptures in preparation for participation in The Pray and Plan Process⁶:

For where two or three have gathered together in My name, there I am in their midst. Matthew 18:20

If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him? Luke 11:13

And in the same way the Spirit also helps our weaknesses; for we do not know how to pray as we should, but the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. Romans 8:26

But when He, the Spirit of Truth comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come. John 16:13

But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. James 1:5

“For I know the plans that I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans for welfare and not for calamity to give you a future and a hope.” Jeremiah 29:11

WHY PRAY AND PLAN?

2. When God indicates a special need to us, either as individuals or as a group, and we are required to organize some special work for Him - then we need to find out how He wants us to do it. At the basis of all this is communication with God – Prayer.

3. The following classic passage provides the biblical foundation for Pray and Plan.

Now there were at Antioch, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers; Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. Acts 13:1-3

UNITING TO PRAY

4. After Jesus had ascended into Heaven the disciples frequently united in prayer – and what an effect it had on their ministry! The scriptures already quoted bear out the effectiveness of united prayer.

¹ ⁶ This Annex focuses on Pray and Plan as used in the context of a Military Christian Fellowship but Pray and Plan “... is a universal principle, so it can be used worldwide. Pray and Plan will keep you in touch with your Living God.” Tom Capps – The Pray and Plan Process

PRAYING AND PLANNING

5. Before forming a Pray and Plan team there must be a clear need or area of concern that God has indicated to a group. Once this has been made clear, and it might be a new program for an MCF or a specific activity or event that the Fellowship feels led to hold,

God expects us to use all our resources to ensure that each activity we are running for Him is organized to the best of our ability. He does not expect us merely to pray and then suppose that everything else will happen by divine intervention. The Pray and Plan team forms the central planning committee, and supporting groups need to be enlisted to give as wide prayer support as possible. For a major project (e.g., international conferences, etc.) it may be desirable to set up subordinate Pray and Plan teams to work on certain aspects. This too is a good means of training Pray and Plan team leaders.

THE PRAY AND PLAN TEAM LEADER

6. As with all teams, in the Pray and Plan team there must be a leader. However, the leader is not necessarily the one who prays the "best" prayers, nor necessarily the senior Christian. The leader must, however, be a mature Christian, a capable organizer, and readily accepted as the leader. The leader is the one who is required to oversee the translation from prayer to workable plan, and should therefore be a person who has a gift for organizing.

SIZE OF THE TEAM

7. The size of a Pray and Plan team depends on the size of the task, the availability of team members, etc. All that can be said is that the minimum number is 2 and the team should be no larger than necessary.

TEAM MEMBERS

8. There are no special qualifications for the other members of a Pray and Plan team. Obviously they must be Christians willing to share in open, extempore or conversational prayer. Also they need to be willing to be available to the Team Leader at all times when required during the preparatory stages for any event being planned.

TEAM PREPARATION

9. Having formed a team, the first priority is for all the team members to prepare themselves for the task of praying and planning. This is particularly important because if the Pray and Plan team members are shaky, so too will be the final plan. The members of the team must be receptive to the Holy Spirit and have a clear conscience before God. The team members should read and satisfy the requirements of Rom.12:1-8 "... to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship ..." and should do this before each Pray and Plan meeting.

FREQUENCY OF MEETINGS

10. How often the Pray and Plan team meets is the responsibility of the team leader. The leader must call additional meetings whenever they are required. When an event is being planned the frequency of meeting will probably increase nearer the date of the activity. Meetings should continue up to the moment of the event and then after especially for praise and thanks as follow up and for the evaluation of lessons learned.

THE PROCESS

11. The essential start point for a Pray and Plan is prayer and praise. It is often helpful to start the Pray and Plan meeting with a reading from God's Word, for example a Psalm (e.g. Psalm 63 or the praise Psalms 148 -150) and to spend the first few minutes in Praise and Worship. The object of this time is to "... take every thought captive to obey Christ". 2 Cor.10:5

12. The team leader should then mention the subjects for which prayer is needed and explain a bit of background where necessary. If there is much to be covered this should be a few subjects at a time rather than single points or a long list. Time is then spent in prayer for each subject mentioned. Some Prayer Hints are given at the end of this Annex.

DISCERNING THE PLAN

13. How does the Lord actually reveal His plan to the team? The discussion should not be dominated by any one member, but rather the team should be a group of sharing and expectant Christians who are sensitive to the Lord's leading. When there is no agreement on an issue the group should turn to specific prayer and then try again to discern by discussion what the Lord is saying. The characteristic of Pray and Plan should be consensus, but sometimes when seeking to undertake a new initiative a group will have to meet three or four times before the Lord will reveal the fundamental issue, such as the essential aim of the undertaking from which all else depends^{2,7} The Lord can as easily reveal detail to a Pray and Plan team as He can reveal principles. There are countless examples of the Lord's leading a team to derive meticulously crafted programs for conferences. In short, the Lord can reveal His perfect plan to any group of believing Christians if they are willing to offer heartfelt prayer and praise and then to enter into expectant, dependent planning.

14. At the start of the planning process the team must ask: What is God's Purpose? Is it outreach and evangelism, is it deeper spiritual teaching, is it a need to unite the local Christian group or what? Until God's purpose is revealed, an aim or objective cannot effectively be stated.

² Just this happened when a Pray and Plan team was assembled in the UK MOD to consider a program of activity in London. The team met three times without being confident that they had discerned the Lord's leading. On the fourth occasion the excited group quickly came to a plan which included among its initiatives the organizing of an annual carol service in the nearby Guards Chapel to include an evangelical address; sixteen years later this event still attracts a vast and enthusiastic congregation every year.

The team should not be afraid to pause either for further prayer, for silent reflection or for listening to the Lord if His purpose is not readily apparent after some discussion. Determining the need will determine the format of the activity.

15. Then the relevant factors that are likely to affect the planning of the activity must be assessed by the team. The Annex in this manual on planning an event provides comprehensive guidance on likely factors. This is the largest area of concern for the Pray and Plan team and the team leader should make a note of all the factors when they arise in prayer and discussion. It is particularly important when, say, the development of an MCF is being planned, that each factor is weighed prayerfully. This means that each option that follows from each factor is considered before a course of action is adopted.

THE PLAN

16. By this stage an outline plan should be emerging and there should be a clear consensus (if not, more prayer is needed). It should then be committed in prayer and recorded, subsequently to be reproduced in the minutes of the meeting. This is important because Satan will continually seek to undermine the team's confidence; they will need to be reminded that the plan now has scriptural significance (see Matthew 18:9). The record of the plan should also be issued in the form of minutes as soon as possible so that coherent work may proceed before the next meeting of the Pray and Plan team.

PRAISE AND THANKSGIVING

17. The Pray and Plan team should close each meeting with a time of praise and thanksgiving that the Lord has given the team His wisdom and discernment.

CONCLUSION

18. There is no undertaking which is beyond a properly prepared Pray and Plan team - only a lack of faith will limit the full potential of the Holy Spirit at work: "...if you have faith as small as a mustard seed you can say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you" Matthew 17:20