

Lessons from the Biggest Church in the World

It's bigger than any church you have ever been part of. The Yoido Full Gospel Church in Korea boasts 700,000 members! No, that's not a denomination, it's just one church. (Now that's a potluck!) Yes, it's hard to imagine. Harder to imagine is that all those people are networked in personal friendships and formed into accountable evangelistic units called "cells."

The Yoido Full Gospel Church began in 1958 and is now associated with the Assemblies of God. The founder, David Yongi Cho, revealed the master plan for his church growth in an interview with Adventist doctoral student Craig Dossman. When Dossman asked Pastor Yongi Cho the secret of his phenomenal church growth, Yongi Cho walked to his shelf, pulled out two books, and laid them before the speechless Dossman. They were *Christian Service and Gospel Workers*.

Much has been said and written in analysis of the amazing growth of the Yoido church. Cell groups are lauded and the ministry format applauded. However, in the testimonies of his members there seems to be another unavoidable theme. See if you can deduce this secret from analyzing their church order of service:

Silent Prayer, Reading of Psalm followed by Silent Prayer, Doxology, The Apostles Creed, Hymn, Prayer, Scripture, Choir, Prayer, Sermon, Guided Concert of Prayer, Appeal to Nonbelievers and Prayer, Prayer of Application, Prayer for the Sick, Hymn, Prayer for the Offering, Announcements, Singing of the Lord's Prayer, Prayer of Benediction.

Wow! Perhaps what this Pentecostal pastor read in *Gospel Workers* was, "Prayer is the breath of the soul. It is the secret of spiritual power. No other means of grace can be substituted, and the health of the soul be preserved" (p. 254). We don't know what Ellen White wrote that inspired pastor Yongi Cho. But we do know the world's largest church prays!

Of course, I know that big doesn't mean right. And rapid growth doesn't equate to truth. So this article isn't scrutinizing doctrine or methodology. However, a doctrine of community and an emphasis on cell groups has given the Yoido church something special—cell groups facilitate more prayer!

Regardless of their theology, here is the mighty

truth that the Yoido church seems to have hit on: Prayer sets God about His business. Though it might be easier to study church growth or buy new technology for the church or have a slick song service, Yoido members simply pray.

Both ministers and members have seized three principles of prayer that have built their church. 1) Prayer is a lifestyle. 2) Prayer is active. 3) The Trinity is invited. How are these three implemented?

Communication with God is a lifestyle among the Yoido church. This is clearly seen in the attitudes of the members. No less than 25,000 people often attend the all-night prayer vigils. A "prayer mountain" has been set up for constant 24-hour year-round intercession. As the workers at the Yoido church vacuum and dust, you can see their lips moving in prayer. Early morning prayer services begin at 5 A.M. Cell leaders and members pray specifically for one another and have special prayers at significant moments in one another's lives. When prayer becomes a lifestyle, it means that God is invited to intervene in all areas of life, at all times. For example, all Yoido staff spend up to three hours a day in their offices praying, an acknowledgment that they and God can do their jobs better together than they can alone. This is a recipe for the miraculous.

Secondly, prayer at the world's largest church is understood to be more than a mind game. Members pray with repentance, pure hearts, and carefully monitored motives. Whether healing is requested or a piece of land is being purchased, supplicants always consider their own motives and surrender the spiritual condition of their hearts. This is the inner aspect. The outer aspect involves acting upon the prayers. House-to-house visitation, literature distribution, acts of kindness, and public testimonies are all ways that Yoido members act on their prayers. Concepts like Jericho praying, where groups go and pray for a person seven days in a row, are examples of this.

Thirdly, prayer at the Yoido church engages all members of the Trinity.

It's settled. After studying the Yoido church's spiritual habits, I surrender all. I'm gonna pray more. How about you? 