

# Corporate prayer essential to 'abiding' churches

*By Chloe Newton*

*Staff Writer*

*Nathan Lino, Pastor of First Church, Forney, Texas, joined "Around the Table" hosts Tanner Cade, MBCB Director of Communication Services, and Jon Martin, MBCB Chief Strategy Officer. Lino imparted his experiences and wisdom on the importance of a healthy prayer ministry and properly equipping church members to evangelize.*

Though a native of South Africa, Nathan Lino has been involved in Southern Baptist Life for over two decades. In addition to pastoring two churches in Texas – Northeast Houston Church and First Church, Forney – Lino has served as the President of the Texas Baptist Convention, as the Vice President for the Southern Baptist Convention, and on the board of the International Mission Board.

In 2002, Lino and his wife Nicole were called to plant Northeast Houston Church. After 18 years, the church had become everything a church plant ought to become.

"It became a church planting church. People were being discipled and sent out to the nations as missionaries," Lino said.

At the same time, however, Lino experienced a personal crisis that brought him to his knees. Through his personal time of weakness and brokenness, the Lord worked mightily in the pastor's life, revealing to him that he had not truly been abiding in Christ.

"That experience central to the Christian life is seeking a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit in an ongoing way. And that

what you and I need at the core of who we are in our hearts is the revealed presence of Jesus.”

As the Lord opened Lino’s eyes, he came to realize his church was struggling with the same things.

“The church had become the church at Laodicea, and we were just busy for Jesus with good intentions with Christ-honoring intentions, but Jesus was on the outside knocking, asking to be let in,” Lino said.

In 2020, Lino was called to First Church, Forney, and immediately began to prioritize the qualities of an “abiding church.” An abiding church is one that prioritizes corporate prayer equally with the teaching of the Word. Weekly, Lino leads the congregation through the model laid out in The Lord’s Prayer.

“[First,] you want to seek renewed personal intimacy with the Father. That’s abiding. You want to pray your way to a place where the God of heaven and earth and you are back in this intimate father-child relationship... Phase two, talk to the Father about what’s on his heart first, not yours... Phase three, talk to the Father about what’s on your heart.”

“It’s just super cool when you start seeing a culture of prayer and becoming a house of prayer actually happening. It’s one of the coolest things in the world.”

Over the years, Lino has learned that prayer and evangelism are directly related. An abiding life leads to an evangelizing one. Every three months, members are invited to a hands-on evangelism training. For two hours, members are taught how to share the Gospel in one minute. Members are then taken out into the community and do door-to-door evangelism with a leader of the church. The ultimate goal is to teach members how to evangelize in their everyday lives.

“The only way people in America are going to get saved is lay

people sharing the Gospel where they live, work and play.”

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