

Neighbourhood Prayer - Getting started

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1. Define your territory

- How many houses should you pray for? 20 houses is around 60-70 people
- Walk around - be open to the Spirit giving you a sense of what you can 'carry'.

(It could be where you work. Or some people have a burden for a school. A friend told me about someone she knew who prayed for a school. After a while her group asked if they could come and pray IN the school to bless it when it was empty. This was permitted, and the effect was so noticeable that the head teacher asked them to come and pray for the staff regularly!)

2. Ask for partners

- Ask the Lord to connect you to two or three kindred spirits who can agree with you about praying in your area. Think of fishing with a net, rather than a fishing rod! But you can get started, even if they have not yet appeared.

3. Gather understanding

- Find out more about who lives there and what their lives are about. Be subtle about this.
- Compile names and any information you glean.
- Begin to ask the Lord for Scripture or prayer promises or 'words' for them as you pray. You could write them on a card and give them to them if appropriate.
- Search out about the spiritual heritage of places and people you are praying for. Sometimes we need to pray for a heritage to be 'cut off' as it blocks them from God; sometimes it needs to be 'revived' as there was once a living faith.
- You may need to pray for people to be released from hurt - or pray to break occult bondages or dismiss an evil presence.

4. Prepare for seekers

- Get your resources ready for sharing with a seeker
- Have a place in your home where you could talk privately and pray with a seeker
- Have things to give them, like the Jesus video, a New Testament, tracts etc.

B. Developing Prayer

1. Prayer Patterns

Don't set yourself up for failure. If you are a systematic type of person, then find times and patterns that suit your life. If you are a more spontaneous type of pray-er, then let things trigger your prayer for your neighbours – e.g. hanging out the washing – looking out the window while doing the dishes – when you hear their car go out.....

- You could have a certain time each week to pray as a household, and then other individual times that suit.
- You could have a time regularly to prayer walk – and pray with other believers in your street.

Don't feel guilty if you miss your pattern. You will be prone to give up. Give yourself a break when life is tough. But be determined to keep on praying somehow.....

2. 'All kinds of prayer'

Ephes.6:18 *"And pray in the Spirit on all occasions, with all kinds of prayers and requests."*

The Scripture describes a great diversity in prayer. Don't limit yourself to one or two ways.

- To God... for him. This is worship and adoration; praise and thanksgiving.
- For ourselves – petition, processing our challenges and needs.
- For others on their behalf – intercession, standing in the gap.
- Against the enemy – against the things that 'raise themselves up against the knowledge of God.' Resisting his schemes.
- Over people – when we pray blessing, or lay hands on them for healing.
- With fasting – going without something for a period. It may be without TV, or the internet or cellphone. It may be without one, or two meals a day, or certain foods. It may be a full fast, only having liquids. You need to explore this, and talk to people who are experienced.

3. Praying with others

Praying together with others who share the same burden can be very moving and meaningful and effective. We can have a heightened sense of the Lord's presence, and we can experience his leading as we each share what he gives us. There can be a synergy, a new energy, and an increase in faith as we harmonise in prayer together. And our united prayer can change situations.

But we can also find praying together really difficult. The prayer style of the other people can be very jarring, or we can feel unsettled by the things they pray, or one person can pray long, long prayers and the others all switch off! What do we do if these things are happening? Below are some simple suggestions.

- a) Be courageous enough to discuss how you pray together, and come to some agreement about it.
- b) As you begin to pray, seek to welcome the Lord's presence through thankfulness and praise. You may read a Psalm, or play music that inspires worship. Notice how many of the Psalms start with declarations of praise, then state the problem, then cry out for God's help, and then express trust. This is a good pattern to follow.
- c) Make it an 'equal opportunities' group, where each has equal opportunity to pray. If you are prone to pray a long prayer with four different topics one after the other, confine yourself to praying for one person or situation, then allow others to 'add to the conversation' you are having with God together.
- d) It is really helpful to take one topic or name and a number of people add a prayer on that topic, and then together listen for any words, pictures or impressions that the Spirit may give to assist your prayers. It's OK to stop and talk then start again. It helps to have a leader facilitate this.
- e) Be aware that some people need quietness first, before they can pray. They formulate it within, and then bring it out. Leave space for silence, for waiting, so they don't feel pressured.

- f) Keep your language fairly simple and direct when praying with others. God asks for our thankfulness for what he is doing, our praise for who he is, and our requests for him to act. Anyone can pray these kinds of prayers if not intimidated by the elaborate style of others.
- g) Try different postures... sitting, standing, kneeling, walking about – sitting hunched over is not the best way to sustain prayer!
- h) Sometimes people are overcome with the Lord's compassion, and may weep or groan in prayer. Have tissues ready! This is very precious to God and often has power to bring a break-through. Don't be alarmed by emotion.
- i) Some pray 'in the Spirit', using their prayer language. This is like 'tuning in' to the Lord. It opens their heart to what he may be saying, it stirs faith and an overflow of prayer. Don't be intimidated by this if you don't pray in this way. Be thankful for these 'tools' given to aid our praying and responding to God. Focus on the Lord and be thankful and give praise and you also will be stirred in faith.
- j) At other times someone will begin to pray 'warfare prayer'. That is – taking authority over the works of darkness and commanding them in Jesus' name to go. If you do not understand this kind of prayer, ask your friend to teach you, or loan you a book. It can radically change a situation and let in the light of God.
- k) A really good way of praying together is to use the Scriptures as a framework or a springboard for prayer. Often much faith is stirred, and great insight can come through the Word as the Spirit applies it to the situation you are praying for.
- l) As you get to know each other and pray together more often, your styles will adjust and blend together. This is not about personal satisfaction, but about bringing the presence of Jesus into our neighbourhood and workplace through praise, and being priests for others in prayer.

4. Prayer Walking

Prayer can happen anywhere, in many different ways. Walking and praying has been done for thousands of years. Why is it helpful?

If we are believers in Jesus, we carry his presence with us wherever we go - so walking our street while talking to him will bring an extra dimension of this presence into our streets. Imagine you are carrying a light (which spiritually you are) or a wonderful fragrance. Both will spread wherever you go. So - walk as if you are carrying the precious and life-giving presence of Jesus. It may help you to praise him before you go - delighting in him and giving thanks for his reality in your life.

As you walk, and pass different houses or buildings, the Spirit can give you insight into the spiritual condition of these places - through a sense of peace, or confusion, or danger etc. It may be helpful to walk past a place more than once to confirm what you feel He is showing you. This then gives you the ability to pray more accurately. It may be best to take this insight home and pray further there.

Speaking blessing over places and people very specifically is like aiming water from a hose. It has an ability to get to the heart of things. Praying regularly for the Lord's presence, peace, power, love, or healing over a troubled home can have a profound effect.

The Lord may lead you to encounter someone who lives there as you walk - and the contact and conversation can be a 'divine meeting' that leads to him revealing himself to them. Expect these 'divine appointments.' Ask for them!

How do we do it?

- Ask the Lord to clarify your territory - and your time. Where are you to walk and pray, and how often?
- Do you do this alone - or with others? Jesus sent his disciples out in 2s. We would recommend you have others (1 or 2) so you can confirm your sense of the Lord's leading, and agree in prayer together, but it is not essential.
- Pray before you go, for a few minutes - to get a sense of agreement, and his presence, and perhaps a word or Scripture you could pray as you walk.
- Don't carry a big bible or notebook. If you need anything, have it small so it can fit in your pocket. Write a verse on a piece of paper if you are praying it. Carry paper and a pen in case you need to write something.
- Walk slowly, like strolling in a park. Pause now and then. Pray as if you are having a quiet conversation, with your eyes open.
- Don't raise your arms or draw attention to yourself in any way - the work is done 'in the Spirit' and will affect the atmosphere.
- Pronounce the Lord's favour on the people, their homes and their honest work. He loves them, and desires their good and their redemption and has not sent us to judge them. 'We wrestle not against flesh and blood.....' "He desires that all are saved....."
- If you sense evil powers, or know of a history of sin or brokenness, you can take authority over the stronghold and imagine that as you pray the wall is crumbling. You may need to do this a number of times. Declare the blood of Jesus over the people and the place. Declare the rule of God over all he has made. Proclaim the power of the cross and the resurrection to destroy all the works of the devil. Declare the name of Jesus, before whom all must bow.
- If you have to do battle, be sure you are protected yourself. The enemy will seek to undermine you at any weak place in your life. So be committed to being clean before God, in harmony with others, and in tune with the Spirit. You may even ask others to pray for you, as you do this work of prayer.
- Keep a notebook so you can record Scripture or ways you prayed.

What will happen?

Things can happen 'in the heavenlies' and on earth in people's hearts and lives that you are not aware of at the time. Our task is to declare his rule and his love, and push back the darkness in prayer and good deeds *as he leads us*. Without prayer, God cannot work. He has bound himself to our prayer in this world.

You may have a delightful sense of progress, or a real sense of being up against something big or heavy. Learn to discern what you must do. Sometimes fasting for a while is necessary. Other times lots of praise is the key. Obviously, for God to keep acting in your street there will need to be long term, regular prayer.

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