

PRAYER on the STREETS

PRAYER ON THE STREETS

Our vision is to take Jesus, and his church, out into the streets to pray for members of the public so they can experience the compassion and power of the Lord Jesus Christ.

WHY?

Prayer on the Streets is a way to reach out to the lost and hurting on the streets of our town, allowing us to connect with our community and demonstrate God's love. If we are still there when the rain falls it's an eloquent testimony to the love of Christ that compels us.

Our motivation for taking church out onto the streets is the compelling love of Christ. We want people to know that God loves them, and that there are Christians willing to reach out to them with that love.

Matthew 9:36 *When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.*

Matthew 14:14 *When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, He had compassion on them and healed their sick.*

Mark 1:41 *Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out His hand and touched the man. "I am willing," He said, "Be clean."*

Romans 5:5 *And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out His love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom He has given us.*

2 Corinthians 5:14 *For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.*

Colossians 3:12 *Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.*

Ask the Holy Spirit to fill you with Jesus' love and compassion

AGAINST ALL ODDS

We believe God can heal every sickness, pain, disease, or deformity. He can create body parts, dissolve implanted objects and bring life to the dead.

But we acknowledge that not all our prayers are answered in the way we would like. Disease isn't banished, children still go to be hungry and afraid, debts aren't relieved and despair still grips the hearts of many. Evil is a present and apparently unmovable reality.

The world labours under three great burdens. First, it is full of people like us; frail, ignorant, powerless and sometimes bad. Then we recognise that Satan is at large. He is a fearsome enemy who delights in the confusion, discomfort and disobedience of mankind. Lastly, and perhaps most significantly, the world is under God's curse. This is a deep and troubling mystery. The sheer cussedness of life is quite literally that; cussed or cursed. Those three things mix up a dangerous cocktail or a perfect storm of trouble.

But the situation is far from hopeless. We know that God is working through Jesus and his Spirit to redeem mankind and that the whole of creation will share in that glory. A time is coming when disease, want and cruelty will be no more. In the meantime we can cry out to God for mercy and relief ...

And he hears our cries! God does listen when people pray. And he is so rich in mercy that he stoops to respond with comfort, healing, relief and resources. Using his immense power he changes lives! His gracious interventions are a powerful way of drawing peoples' attention to his divine character.

WHO?

The ministry involves local Christians. To be involved you must fulfil several criteria which are mostly about the nature of your Christian experience rather than your competence in this area of ministry. The criteria are:

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You have a credible testimony of a relationship with Jesus Christ and what the New Testament refers to as “new birth”

You are part of a local church and will be accountable to them as you undertake this ministry

You are approved for this ministry by the leadership of your church who are committed to your “spiritual covering”

You have recruited at least two prayer partners who are committed to praying for you in this ministry

Do you qualify? Here’s why it’s important.

Spiritual Responsibility

You are an ambassador of Jesus Christ; you act on his behalf. So it’s important to have a secure spiritual base; a good reputation with outsiders.

You are doing this on behalf of others; many of the Churches Together in Staines and Haleham and beyond have signalled their support for this ministry. You are their ambassador as well. If people come to faith in Christ as a result of your prayer ministry you could well be responsible for the follow-up and nurture of a new Christian, introducing them to a local church and ensuring that they grow in Christ. It’s awesome!

Spiritual Danger

There is an obvious spiritual danger in taking up a public ministry of prayer; *our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms ... pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests.*

Prayer is frontline spiritual warfare. A ministry like this will be of great interest to our sworn enemy, Satan. He is constant looking out for an advantage in his battle with Christ and the church; *your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.*

So people involved in this ministry will need support and covering; that means a secure church with supportive leaders and committed prayer partners.

The leader(s) who support me: _____

My prayer partners: _____

You will also need to pray regularly for yourself and think especially hard about things that could hinder your prayers; *if I had cherished sin in my heart the Lord would not have listened to my prayers.*

If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.

PRACTICAL

We think that Sundays afternoons by the “lino-men” statue in the High Street offers the best opportunity.

The High Street is a public thoroughfare and is generally busy on Sundays but there is no market to compete with.

Starting at 2.00 pm and finishing by 3.30 means that it will be daylight, even in the middle of winter

Weather

We will pray whatever the weather. You may get wet. A change of clothes might be useful.

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It could be cold so think about stout shoes, thick socks and a thermal vest

How?

We will identify ourselves as Christians with some appropriate ID badges to start with. We'll set up a flag banner which will simply say "Prayer." We will have a few chairs for people to sit on while we pray for them.

"Badged and bannered" members of the team will approach passers-by with invitation cards, offering to pray for them or to have another member of the team pray.

LEGAL

What we are doing is legal; take the time to read the briefings from the Christian Institute (which is used extensively by the Open Air Mission and others).

Breach of the Peace - if people start an argument about what we are doing we could have committed a breach of the peace and a police officer could stop us. However, the police cannot use this power as a cover to prevent what we are doing simply because they (or other people) don't agree. If a serious argument begins which we can't prayerfully diffuse we will reluctantly withdraw.

Freedom of Speech - We have the right to express our views. But this ministry is not primarily preaching or evangelistic. We will avoid going beyond our offer of prayer on the basis that God has the love, power and concern to make an effective intervention in people's lives.

We may not, and we wouldn't want to, say things that are likely to be offensive. There is a fine line to be drawn and we will need to be as shrewd as snakes and as innocent as doves.

Obstruction - As long as we don't physically obstruct the High Street we will not cause an obstruction. Our flag banner and chairs will take up very little room and can be easily moved aside.

Littering - although it is an offence to cause litter (by giving out flyers from a shop for instance, religious literature is specifically excluded).

But it is still possible that people just won't like what we do as we call upon the name of Jesus and defy the Enemy to his face. In this world you will have trouble!

AT THE SCENE

We will build a presence with our banner, our chairs, our being together. It is important that people can see something tangible rather than just encountering apparently random members.

Having done that you should stick pretty close so that you are identified with the group.

No think about what we are doing in these three parts; preparing ourselves, approaching passers-by, praying and after the prayer

Preparing ourselves

Prepare in prayer ... visit a chair if you want to draw on the presence and peace of God

Pray against fear. Break it down in prayer, sit on the chair in God's presence and enjoy your encounters!

Be alert to the Holy Spirit at all times and be ready to act on what the Holy Spirit is doing

Keep watching the faces of the passers-by; watch for his/her interest while listening to the Holy Spirit – keep talking to him. Better this than being in conversation with the other team member

Approaching Passers-by

Remember our goal is to show compassion in a loving, non-religious environment. We are providing a bridge so that people can find Jesus and see his work in their lives; our attitude should be marked with love, and the presence of the Holy Spirit.

People are ready for an encounter with you especially if they:

- have noticed the banner

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- watched what is going on at the chairs
- have sensed the presence of God

You could say:

- “Hi, how you doing today? Do you know what's happening here ?”
- Is there something you could comment on or compliment her/him on, is he leaning heavily on a stick or carrying lots of shopping; e.g.: “Oh my goodness, you're loaded up today” or “that's a fabulous scarf .. what a gorgeous colour!”
- “Hi, we're seeing God healing people today .. want to know more?”
- “Need healing from anything? It's free and takes only a minute”

But it is up to you. However, be active, don't wait for people to come over to you.

Try to avoid being a statue or gathering in a gaggle; don't chit-chat, focus on the task, be alert and alive to the Holy Spirit, lots of arrow prayers

Perhaps there will be a moment to do something that seems a bit bizarre ...

Is there someone who seems to be 'hanging around' can you to engage them?

If someone rejects you, maybe even speaks unkindly, bless them in words; “God bless you”.

Remember we are sowing seeds of the Spirit in people's hearts.

Keep close to the chairs and be associated with the banner and prayer; so that you can invite people in.

Note who been approached by other team members; people won't appreciate being badgered

It is OK to let some people walk on past you. There is no condemnation if they do not get offered a leaflet. We must give people space Pray that there will be another day.

Hold the invitation card out in front of you so the person can reach out and take it if they wish, never thrust it at them.

Taking the invitation card will, for some, be a tangible sign of the seed of the Spirit offered and sown into their lives.

Praying for others

If someone wants prayer bring them back to the chairs and banner; now you'll be glad you weren't more than 10 metres away

Although sitting isn't essential it could be an important act of faith and commitment. And if someone is sick or frail it could be very necessary!

Simply ask, “What do you want me to pray for?” “What would you like Jesus to do for you?”

You'll find that many people want to talk to you rather than get straight down to prayer.

That's OK but remember this is a prayer ministry, not a counselling session.

Get down on your knees if they sit; level or lower!

Listen carefully to what they are saying and to the Holy Spirit, let Him guide you.

Explain how you are going to pray

Invite the Holy Spirit; keep your eyes open as you invite the Holy Spirit's presence. The Holy Spirit may already be on the person. Watch for signs of His presence; trembling, fluttering eyelids, shaking, heat, tears, sheen to the face, laughter, deep sense of peace.

Pray with confidence; we believe deeply in the love, power and interest of God. Remember the boldness of people like Abraham, Moses, David and Paul as they prayed.

Prayer for peace and knowledge of God's love

You now have an opportunity to pray and share whatever the Holy Spirit is saying to this person. Keep in eye contact with other team members as they may have something more to pray or share.

After you have prayed ask person to describe any changes or to test out their healing

At this point you may want to pray for them some more if the Holy Spirit prompts you.

Thank God for what he is doing

After Praying

Explain what an answer to prayer is going to look like in their particular case

Ask them (if appropriate) if they can feel anything different

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Go through some options for referral to specialist services

Ask them if they would like the team to go on praying for them

Ask them to share their story with someone as a way of saying “thank you” to God. That could be a friend, someone they know from a church or us when we are back on the street

Tell them how to let us know about any change in their circumstance or condition. Contact details are on the card

Underline the need to continue with any medication or other treatment

Give them a “**Power Pack**” to take away

Do they want to know more? Consider:

- Telling your “two-minute-story”
- Answering some tough questions
- Introducing them to a local church close to where they live

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DON'T

Don't act weird!
Don't stretch out your hands like a traffic policeman
Don't flap like a penguin or make strange noises!
Don't use religious jargon - it may alienate people.
Don't accept money, gifts or donations but be gracious in declining
Don't wear sunglasses (your eyes are the windows to your soul, don't hide them!) or dress inappropriately
Don't put your hands on inappropriate places
Don't get in people's faces
Don't argue; love the Pharisees and ask God to open their eyes.
Don't unconditionally offer healing, wealth or a successful outcome.
Don't shout when you pray!
Don't pray or speak like you're in a Shakespeare play.
Don't use church style prayer with people on the streets.
Don't pray in tongues aloud ... people will think you're mad. if you want to pray in tongues, then pray quietly and unheard.
Don't use meaningless, repetitive phrases
Don't give words of knowledge, prophecy, pictures and so on. these are very sophisticated concepts that can trouble people who are unused to prayer
Don't give advice through your prayers
Don't intervene when people are already praying for someone
Don't ever advise a person to get out of their wheelchair, stop taking their medication or treatment.
Don't tell someone they lack faith
Don't counsel people, use referral
Don't lead people by your agenda or pressurise them into saying 'the prayer of faith.' If they have a true encounter with God the Holy Spirit will do his work.

DO

Do smile; your face gives a message about what you are doing
Do give people respect, dignity, gentleness, kindness and love.
Do say "we are praying for people today" or "God is working here, would you like us to pray for you?" rather than saying "have you got a problem?"
Do pay attention; be ready to welcome and pray for those taking a seat
Do look out for the opportunities that God will give us
Do encourage people to take a seat for prayer; if you are praying for someone who is standing, they may need support
Do always introduce yourself and those with you by name
Do ask the person for their name and use their name when talking to them, and as you pray.
Do ask for permission to pray and lay hands on a person.
Do have others with you when you pray for someone, don't pray alone.
Do only pray for people of the same sex although you may have a team member of the opposite sex with you.
Do thank God for His generous heart and explain God's gift of love to people.
Do pray for the Holy Spirit to touch lives, and for the increase of his presence through us.
Do control yourself; a few tears or some gentle trembling may be acceptable but nothing more.
Do keep your eyes open when you pray, and be aware of other team members who may have something to share, or who may be looking to you for support
Do ask permission to put your hands on someone before you pray
Do keep a record of the people we pray for.
Do focus on what God is doing rather than trying to explain what might not have happened happen
Do avoid saying "when I had that" or "I know what you mean," etc.