

Neighbourhood Prayer Triplets

This prayer guide is intended for people wanting to set up prayer triplets to pray for their neighbours. It is particularly aimed at people who want to improve their prayer life, and who have not in the past attended a regular prayer group, although many others will find it helpful too.

The guide lasts for twelve weeks and assumes that people meet once a week to pray. Each week has a theme, some Scripture about prayer and some prayer pointers relating to your neighbourhood. We encourage you to be flexible and creative in the way you use the guide. You may wish to read out the Scriptures and written prayers, or just read them in silence and use them as a springboard for your own prayers. Let this material inspire you rather than restrict you. You may also find it helpful to keep a prayer journal to record the prayers you pray and the answers you receive.

We hope that after using this guide you will feel able to confidently continue praying in your prayer triplet, if God leads you to do so.

This guide has been reviewed by many people, to ensure that the content is acceptable across a range of denominations. We have, at every opportunity, tried to let scripture speak for itself.

Why form a prayer triplet?

Throughout the Scriptures, we read of God calling his people to work together. Abraham, Isaac and Jacob travelled with their families; Moses worked with Aaron to lead the captive Israelites to freedom; the prophets worked in 'companies'; King David fought alongside his troop of mighty men ... and of course Jesus had 12 disciples. What's more, the imagery the New Testament writers use to describe the Church is always plural: parts of a body, soldiers in an army, members of a Family, ambassadors on a mission. Jesus sent his disciples out in twos, and Paul always travelled with companions when he planted churches. Though our own individual relationship with God is vitally important, when it comes to reaching the world around us, the single-handed approach isn't enough. We need each other, and we are at our most effective when we work together.

Praying for our neighbourhoods is likely to be a long journey, and like any journey, it is better travelled together:

- Companions encourage us when we get tired and discouraged
- They help us dream bigger dreams than we might on our own
- They help us hear God more clearly
- They help us turn our prayers into actions

In prayer, we're using the authority God has given us as his children and ambassadors to bring change to our communities. Jesus said that authority should be used in groups praying in agreement.

“Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there in the midst of them.” (Matthew 18:19-20)

Forming a Prayer Triplet

We suggest that a prayer triplet is formed representing, where possible, three different streets. You may choose to pray with people you already know in your church, or you may want to deliberately seek out people from other churches who live nearby. We don't believe any two groups will be the same!

At the start of a group, agree together a regular time when you are going to meet, and how long you're going to meet for. Also discuss how you would like to pray together. It is good to decide together how the meeting should run, so that while the theme may change, the format remains the same. This will help your group grow in confidence.

In an area with a particular problem such as high crime or antisocial behaviour, two or more triplets in the same church may want to meet together to pray. These gatherings will be less frequent than your weekly triplet meeting (perhaps once a month or once a quarter) and could happen in someone's home or in a church building.

Confidentiality, Safety and safeguarding

Please keep the prayers prayed in your group confidential, except in dialogue with your church leadership. Gossip spreads fast and can be destructive to the people you want to help.

Children and vulnerable adults:

This guide is not suitable for children or vulnerable adults to use because of its emphasis on getting to know neighbours. While the vast majority of people living on our streets would not harm a child or vulnerable adult, we are concerned about the growing issues surrounding abuse. We would ask you to be vigilant about this risk when interacting with your neighbours.

We strongly advise that, in getting to know your neighbours, you don't put yourself in a position where you are on your own with a child, vulnerable adult or someone of the opposite sex. We also ask that all adults adhere to the safeguarding policies of your local church, and inform your church leader that you are using this guide. Thank you

WEEK ONE

Conversations with our Heavenly Father

'For you formed my inward parts; you covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; marvellous are your works, and that my soul knows very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was made in secret, and skilfully wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when as yet there were none of them.' (Psalm 139:13-16)

“Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father’s will. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than many sparrows.” (Matthew 10:29-31)

‘Jesus said to him: “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except by me.” (John 14:6)

‘Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God – children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.’ (John 1:12-13 NIV)

‘For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.’ (Ephesians 2:18 NIV)

Conversations with each other:

In this first session of your prayer triplet, why not spend some time getting to know each other more. You could start by telling the story of what brought you to live in the neighbourhood, and then share one thing you love about where you live and one thing you dislike.

You are of infinite value to God. He loved you so much that he sent his son Jesus to die on a cross for you. His greatest longing was that you should ‘have access’ to him (Eph 2:18). He doesn’t want you to have to pray to him from afar, saying the right words, practising the right rituals and hoping for the best. He wants you to come right up close and talk to him, just as you’d talk to a friend.

God cares about every aspect of your life. While it is helpful to have structures for prayer, God loves to just talk with you about your day. If you didn’t speak to your husband, wife, children, parents, brothers, sisters or friends, your relationship with them would not be very good. The same is true with God. If all you do is speak and listen to him once a week at church on Sunday, then your relationship with him will be shallow and frustrating.

Prayer is simply listening and speaking to God. God has a vast number of ways to speak: he uses scripture, circumstances, dreams, visions, the words of other people; he sometimes puts a picture in your mind or causes a whole new idea to pop into your head; he stirs a feeling in you or causes you to see something in the world around you which reminds you of something. Never limit God by saying you can’t hear him. He can get through to you no matter who you are or how you tick. When praying together with others, often two or more people will have a similar thought. Usually, but not always, this is God speaking. Remember, God will never say anything that contradicts the Bible!

In this first prayer time, try to just speak to God as though He is physically there as a real person ... as the most important Person sitting with you. Don’t feel you have to use special language or complicated ideas. Just chat with him as you have been chatting with each other.

Praying for your triplet:

Spend some time thanking God for each other, and for bringing you together as a prayer triplet. Ask him to guide you as you pray together, and to use your prayers to make a powerful difference in your community.
(Remember there's no pressure to pray out loud).

Praying for your neighbours:

- Talk to God about the kind of community you'd like your neighbourhood to be.
- Talk to God about families and the struggles they face in today's world; tell him what you'd like him to do for families in your street.
- Talk to God about broken families, step-families and children who are separated from their parents; ask for his help and healing.
- As you think about what it means to be loved by God as a Father, ask him to bring everyone in your street to the place of knowing that he loves them completely and unconditionally.

Everyone in the prayer triplet: write the names down of three households each, commit to trying to get to know the people living in these houses and commit to praying for these people by name over the next year.

WEEK TWO

ACTS Prayer Model

'In this manner, therefore, pray: Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.' (Matthew 6:9-13)

There are many models for prayer, and today's Scripture shows us the one Jesus taught his disciples. You may be used to reciting the Lord's Prayer as a formal prayer, but you can also use it as a kind of template for praying, as it includes all the key elements of a prayer time (praising God, confessing our sins, asking for help etc). Another way to remember those elements is to use the word 'ACTS', which stands for Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, Supplication (asking)

Adoration:

Adoration is worship. It is taking time to stop and turn our thoughts and our hearts towards God. It is remembering and recognising what an amazing God he is. Some people like to listen to worship music, or to read out one of the psalms. Others may want to write down what God means to them, or talk about the good things he has done for them that week. Some may not want to pray aloud whereas others will. Please do what you find most comfortable in your group.

Confession:

Confession is being honest with God about the things we've done wrong, and asking his forgiveness.

You may find it helpful to read through the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20) and silently confess before God the times that you haven't lived up to them. Alternatively you might like to base your confession on this Scripture:

'Jesus answered him, "The first of all the commandments is: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.' This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these.'" (Mark 12:29-31, NKJV)

Prayer: Father God, I am truly sorry for the things I have done which have offended you or hurt those around me. I'm sorry too for the good things which I could have done, but which I chose to avoid. Please forgive me, and help me to live differently. Thank you for sending your Son, Jesus Christ, to die on a cross, so that my sins can be forgiven and I can speak with you without any barriers. I believe and accept Jesus as Lord and saviour in every area of my life, and reaffirm my commitment to you. Amen.

Thanksgiving:

Thanksgiving is the act of remembering the good things God has done for us, and expressing our gratitude to him. Thank God for all that you are grateful for, starting with the everyday things: A roof over your head, family, friends, food to eat, heating and running water ... and anything else God has done for you, or helped you through. Remember to thank him for the challenges as well as the blessings. Some people like to speak these prayers out, while others prefer to pray silently.

Supplication:

Supplication means asking. We ask because Jesus said we should, and because our Father in Heaven loves to hear our requests for help.

Using the Lord's Prayer as the template, here are some ideas of things you could pray for today. Use them as a springboard to get you started in praying for your neighbourhood.

- Father, we pray for ourselves and the things we need today. Please give us our 'daily bread'.
- Jesus, we pray for all our neighbours living on our streets, that they will come to know you. May your Kingdom come and your will be done here in our neighbourhood.
- Holy Spirit, Help us to be good neighbours in our streets. Set us free from evil and help us avoid temptation. Amen.

WEEK THREE

Forgiveness

'Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made. The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.' Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.'

“But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, ‘Pay me what you owe!’ So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?’ And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.

“So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses.” (Matthew 18:21-35)

“And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.” (Mark 11:25-26)

When we give our lives to Jesus, we open the door to forgiveness. His death on the cross means that every sin we have ever committed or will ever commit is cancelled out – the slate wiped clean. We choose to forgive others because we have been so completely and radically forgiven by God. When we choose not to forgive others, we keep hold of something destructive, which can leave us emotionally and even physically damaged. To receive the fullness of God’s forgiveness and healing in our own lives, we need to let go of past hurts, and let him help us move forward.

It’s important to remember that:

- Forgiveness is not pretending you’re not hurt.
- Forgiveness is not letting people off the hook.
- Forgiveness is not saying it doesn’t matter that you got hurt.
- Forgiveness is not excusing or justifying people because they had a good reason for what they did.
- Forgiveness is not necessarily a one-off thing ... we may need to keep forgiving the same person for the same thing for many years.
- Forgiveness is not easy, but it is possible with God.

Forgiveness is recognising that something wrong was done, feeling the pain and injustice of that wrong, but choosing to hand it over to God, so that he can be the judge.

Forgiving others:

First, ask the Holy Spirit to help you. Forgiveness is hard, and may even be impossible, without God’s help. Then bring to mind each person who has hurt or wronged you. As you think about each one, choose to hand them over to God for him to judge and put right. You may even find it helpful to visualise leaving them with Jesus at the cross.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I thank you that you know what being human is like, and you know what it’s like to be hurt by others. Thank you that you have set me free so that I can forgive just as you forgave. As I bring to you the people who have hurt me, I acknowledge the wrong they have done and the pain I’ve felt, but I refuse to be held captive by those things.

Today I choose to hand them over to you. You judge fairly and you know how to heal me. Jesus, heal my heart and set me free. Amen.

Forgiving yourself:

Sometimes we find it much easier to forgive others than ourselves. If that's where you are today, take some time in silence to speak to God about the things you feel you have done wrong which don't deserve forgiveness. Choose to accept that Jesus has already paid the price you're trying to pay by punishing yourself, and ask the Holy Spirit to help you forgive yourself.

Praying for forgiveness in our neighbourhoods:

Prayer: Lord, we pray for everyone living on our streets, that people will be able to forgive those who have hurt them in the past. Show them that you are a God who loves and forgives them. Give them a desire to leave their grudges behind.

We bring before you (names of neighbours or house numbers) and pray a blessing over their houses.

Help our street change in atmosphere as people let go of the past and move forward.

We especially pray for people who have been abused physically, spiritually, sexually or mentally (do not mention names). Please heal them and enable them to stay safe from danger, now and in the future. Amen.

Prayer requests:

Add any specific prayers for neighbours here, remembering to keep confidentiality.

WEEK FOUR

Love your Neighbour!

'Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

'Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.' (1 Corinthians 13:1-7)

"'You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.'" (Matthew 5:43-48)

The Bible makes it clear that love is both an attitude and an action. When we love in both those ways, something powerful is released, and neighbourhoods can totally change.

Loving attitude:

- Spend time in silence and ask God to show each of you where your attitude towards people in your neighbourhood is less than loving. Ask his forgiveness and invite the Holy Spirit to change your heart.
- Make a special commitment to pray for those you find it hardest to love. Praying for someone can be the quickest way to start loving them.
- Pray for situations in your neighbourhood where relationships are strained, where people are excluded or where people are treated with hostility (keep confidentiality).

Loving actions:

- Ask God to show you how you can love your neighbours more through your actions.
- Offering to pray for people is a sign of love. Think about giving out prayer cards in your streets, inviting people to write down anything they'd like you to pray for.
- Is there anything God is laying on your hearts as a prayer triplet which he wants you to do for your neighbours?

WEEK FIVE

Unity and the Prayer of Agreement

“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.” (John 17:20-21)

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:34-35)

‘How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron’s beard, down upon the collar of his robes. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the Lord bestows his blessing, even life forevermore.’ (Psalm 133:1-3 NIV 1984)

‘When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. They saw what seemed to be tongues of fire that separated and came to rest on each of them. 4 All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit enabled them.’ (Acts 2:1-4 NIV)

“Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, I am there in the midst of them.” (Matthew 18:19-20)

Praying for unity:

One of the things which confuses people most about the church is why it's in so many different pieces. Jesus prayed that we would 'be one', so we join in his prayer:

Prayer for the local church: Lord Jesus, we pray for all churches in this area, for unity in spirit and truth, within churches and between churches. Forgive us for the times when we have allowed our prejudices or preferences to divide us. Help us all to speak well of one another, and to work together for your Kingdom. May your people always look for the best in others, just as you did, and demonstrate your kingdom by loving one another. May the Christians in this area work and pray together for the good of our neighbourhood. Amen.

Could you think about holding a bigger prayer meeting for your neighbourhood, inviting Christians you know from different churches to get together?

Prayer of Agreement:

Jesus taught his disciples that there is power in agreement. Matthew 18:19-20 is about authority, and Jesus says that we use our God-given authority best and most effectively when we're praying in agreement. Praying in agreement involves getting together with others and tuning our hearts and our prayers to one another and to God. When what I'm praying for lines up with what you're praying for and what God wants to do, then we're all in agreement and something very powerful is released. When that agreement is between people of different churches, different generations or different races, it can have an even greater impact. God loves to hear his people praying together with one heart.

Remember though: prayers of agreement must always line up with Scripture and the values of the Kingdom; prayers of agreement should be prayers of blessing, not moaning or criticising, because God's heart is to bless our neighbourhoods with good things.

Now that you've been meeting for several weeks, is there a particular social problem or difficult situation in your neighbourhood which you all feel strongly about and which you believe God wants to change? Spend some time today praying together in agreement, asking God to bring breakthrough.

Here are some suggestions to give you an idea of what you might choose:

- crime rates to fall
- a family with a particular problem/crisis (be aware of confidentiality)
- an area nearby where there have been a lot of problems lately

WEEK SIX

Prayer of Faith

'So Jesus answered and said to them, "Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them.'" (Mark 11:22-23)

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. And whatever you ask in my name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in my name, I will do it.” (John 14:12-14)

‘But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.’ (Hebrews 11:6)

Praying in faith is asking God for the things he has promised, and believing that he will fulfil those promises because he is faithful. Praying in faith doesn't mean we never have questions or never feel unsure; it simply means that, in spite of our questions or uncertainties, we choose to believe what God says, and trust him to keep his word.

When praying in faith, the following things are vital:

- Check your heart first: get right with God if there's anything you need to forgive or confess.
- Check your prayers for selfish motives ... the prayer of faith is about God's Kingdom rather than our own needs and wants.
- Make sure your prayers are in line with Scripture.
- When something isn't specifically mentioned in Scripture ('should I pray for my neighbour to pass their exams?'), ask yourself whether it's in line with the sort of things Jesus valued and lived for in the Gospels. Praying in Jesus' name means praying for the things He would pray for.
- Make your prayers specific ... it's harder to celebrate the answers if the requests are too vague.

Praying for impossible situations

What are the impossible situations in your street? Are crime levels high? Is there antisocial behaviour? Are you concerned about the behaviour of children, or worried about the elderly lady who never leaves the house? Do people know each other, or are they afraid to get to know each other? Does someone have an illness for which there is no cure?

List the things that you want to see change on your street, along with any prayer requests from your neighbours. Pray a prayer of faith together today to see each of these things begin to change. Don't forget to be specific!

Suggested prayer: Lord, thank you that you hear our prayers when we come to you. Forgive us where we have chosen not to believe you in the past; forgive us where we have allowed our doubts to diminish our prayers. Thank you that you are a God who is true to your word. Give us faith to believe that you will do what seems impossible to us. We pray for ..., that you will ... Amen.

WEEK SEVEN

Keep Praying

‘Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. He said: “In a certain town there was a judge who neither feared God nor cared what people thought. And there was a widow in that town who kept coming to him with the plea, ‘Grant me justice against my adversary.’

“For some time he refused. But finally he said to himself, ‘Even though I don’t fear God or care what people think, yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will see that she gets justice, so that she won’t eventually come and attack me!’”

And the Lord said, “Listen to what the unjust judge says. And will not God bring about justice for his chosen ones, who cry out to him day and night? Will he keep putting them off? I tell you, he will see that they get justice, and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:1-8 NIV)

‘And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord’s people.’ (Ephesians 6:18 NIV)

You have been praying together for a while now, so make a list of the prayers you’ve prayed which God has already answered. Then list the prayers you are still waiting to receive answers to.

If a prayer is worth praying, it is worth praying many times. Some prayers may not be answered for several years. Have you got the stamina to keep going even when you don’t get the answer you are waiting patiently for? Some people give up, not knowing how close they are to an answer. Keep going, God will reward your faithfulness and determination.

Persevering for each other:

Spend some time this week praying for each other, that you will have the strength to keep going in prayer for the long haul. If you feel able to, why not share some of the things you’ve been praying for in your own personal life for many years, and get your prayer triplet friends to pray with you for those things today.

Persevering for your neighbourhood:

When prayer takes a long time to be answered, discouragement can step in. The best way to deal with discouragement is to worship God and read his word. As you pray for your neighbours today, punctuate your praying with plenty of worship (speaking out the goodness of God), and read plenty of Scriptures out loud to encourage each other.

WEEK EIGHT

Praying with Humility & without Judgment

“Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye’; and look, a plank is in your own eye?” (Matthew 7:1-4)

‘Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: “Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’ And the tax collector, standing afar off,

would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!' I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.' (Luke 18:9-14 NIV)

'For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.' (Romans 12:3)

Prayer for humility: Lord, thank you that you love us completely, just as we are, and that you're at work to make us more and more like Jesus. Please help us to be humble and not to be proud, not thinking we are better than we actually are. Help us not to judge people, and forgive us where we have judged those who have lifestyles which are different to ours. Help us to show love to all people, even when we dislike things about the way they live. Help us to see people as you see them, and not to be blind to the needs they have. Amen.

Praying for Your Neighbours

- Pray for people who may be struggling with addictions to alcohol, nicotine or drugs, that God will help them get free of what holds them.
- Pray for people on your street who are unemployed, sick or on benefits, that God will supply all their physical and financial needs.
- Pray for single mothers and fathers, and those who are divorced or bereaved, that God will put supportive friends and family around them.
- Pray for those living in homosexual relationships, that God will bring loving, non-judgemental friends into their lives.
- Pray for families where someone has a criminal record, that they will be treated fairly and justly.
- Pray for families affected by domestic violence or abuse, that God will rescue and heal them.
- Pray for those who may be sleeping on friend's couches because they are homeless, that they will be able to break out of the poverty cycle and find work and housing.
- Pray that all of these people will feel loved by others, have healing where it is needed, find acceptance in the local community and local churches, and come to know God as their loving Father.

WEEK NINE

Praying for the Holy Spirit

"So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" (Luke 11:9-13)

'But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.' (Galatians 5:22-25)

'There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.' (Romans 12:4-11 NIV)

God is looking for people who will pray for their neighbourhoods, but he's also looking for people who will go out and be the answer to their own prayers. He wants to equip us with his Holy Spirit so that we can make a difference through our day-to-day lives as well as through our prayers.

Welcoming the Holy Spirit: Father, we thank you that you are the giver of good gifts. Today we welcome the fresh flow of your Holy Spirit in our lives. We put aside the things which block that flow – our sins, our fears and our hard-heartedness – and we invite you to have free rein in our lives. Father, help us to keep pushing our roots down deep in you, so that our lives produce the fruits of your Spirit, and we become a living demonstration of your Kingdom here in our neighbourhood.

Lord, help us to understand the gifts you have given to each one of us, so that we can use them more and more effectively. Give us boldness to use our gifts as we interact with our neighbours. We thank you that you have a purpose for all our lives, help us to walk in your ways, so we can accomplish what You are asking us to do. Holy Spirit, we invite you to come into our lives in power so that we can be all You have called us to be. Amen.

Sometimes our many words of prayer can get in the way of what God's Spirit wants to do or say. Pray the above prayer together, then spend 10 minutes or more in silence, allowing the Holy Spirit to work in each of you. Perhaps he will speak, or perhaps he will stir a feeling or an image in your mind. Whatever he does, try not to fight him or to make something happen ... just rest in God and trust him to work in you.

After this time, share with one another what God's Spirit was saying to you or doing in you. If you're not sure or you didn't 'feel' anything don't feel guilty! Just share what those moments of quiet were like for you.

Sometimes God communicates to a whole group by giving each person one part of a bigger picture – like a piece of a jigsaw puzzle; sometimes He communicates what He wants to say by saying the same thing to everyone. The key is to let God be God.

And if you've heard something clear from God, make sure you talk together about how you can act on what he's said.

'Obey the Word of God. If you hear only and do not act, you are only fooling yourself.' (James 1:22 NLV)

Praying for neighbours

- Pray for your prayer triplet, that you will be guided more and more by God's Spirit as you pray together for your neighbours.
- Ask God's Spirit to give you specific names of people in your street who he wants you to help this week.

WEEK TEN

Praying in Times of Difficulty

'But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed. And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself. But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here."

Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. 33 And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized. Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.' (Acts 16:25-34)

'And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.' (Romans 8:28 NIV)

Praying about difficult areas of your life:

- Take some time to praise God for all the good things He has done in your life: for giving you family, friends, accommodation, food; for saving you from hell and setting you free from the past; for giving you hope and an eternal future with him.
- Tell the rest of the group some of the promises God has made to you over the years.
- Pray about the situation you find yourself in, and even though you may not understand why certain things have happened, choose to ask God to help you and choose to trust him.
- Pray a prayer of agreement with your group over those situations you want to change, asking God for faith to believe it will happen.
- Ask God for the resources you need to keep going until that change comes (patience, grace or hope for instance).
- Ask God to show you what you can do in those situations, that will help show others something about Him.
- Ask God to use the situation you are in to bring people closer to Him and to help them.

Praying for Neighbours:

God intervenes in other people's lives in answer to prayer. Many have no-one who ever prays for them. As you pray for your neighbours going through difficult times, you give God's Spirit freedom to intervene and change things for them.

- List some of the difficult situations your neighbours are in at present (keeping confidentiality).
- Pray together that God will intervene to change those situations.
- Think about the resources they will need at present to keep going, and pray that those resources will be poured out on them today.

Prayer: Lord, we pray for our neighbours (list their names) going through difficult times. Please touch their lives with Your power: Your power to heal, Your power to release finances, Your power to bring reconciliation, Your power to bring lonely people into relationship with others, Your power to bring forgiveness, Your power to restore. Please move powerfully in all of our streets. Amen.

WEEK ELEVEN

Praying with the armour of God & for Evangelism

'Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole armour of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.'

'Stand therefore, having girded your waist with truth, having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints – and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.' (Ephesians 6:10-20)

'For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.' (Hebrews 4:12 NIV)

Paul describes prayer and evangelism as like being in a battle. He explains that there is armour to wear and a weapon to pick up. When we talk about putting on the armour in prayer, it's not about saying a special set of 'magic' prayers to protect us. Each piece of armour is a lifestyle choice – a value we choose to live by every day.

Putting on the armour:

Take some time to pray through the passage from Ephesians 6. Read each item of armour, then pray together that God will help you 'put on' that value in your daily life.

Taking up the Sword of the Spirit:

- Ask God to give you a verse from the Bible which you can pray over each of your neighbours (it may be the same verse for all of them or a different one for each person). Say a prayer for each neighbour based on that verse.
- Ask God to give you an opportunity to speak his word into the life of one of your neighbours this week.

Prayer: Lord, help us to be soldiers who never go to battle without our armour. Give us the courage to pick up the Sword of the Spirit and speak your truth wherever we go, no matter how unpopular that may be. We pray for protection for every follower of Jesus in our neighbourhood, that we will be able to share our faith freely. We pray that every person in our neighbourhood will hear your truth and come to faith. Lord, raise up evangelists in our neighbourhood we pray. Amen.

Praying for Neighbours:

Pray a prayer of agreement that your neighbours will hear the good news and want to give their lives to Jesus. Be specific – pray for them by name.
Pray especially for children in your street to come to know Jesus.
Pray for churches doing outreach in your community.

Perhaps you could start thinking of ways you as a prayer triplet could take the good news of Jesus to your neighbours ...

WEEK TWELVE

Praying Blessing

‘And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying: “Speak to Aaron and his sons, saying, ‘This is the way you shall bless the children of Israel. Say to them:

“The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make His face shine upon you, and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up His countenance upon you, and give you peace.’

“So they shall put My name on the children of Israel, and I will bless them.” (Numbers 6:22-27)

“But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you. To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either. Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back. And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.

“But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward

will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.” (Luke 6:27-36)

Blessing is a powerful concept in Scripture. As we speak good things over people in God’s name, He responds by doing good things for them. Blessing can lift burdens, break strongholds, release prisoners and comfort those in grief and pain. It’s a privilege God gives his people, to do good to those around them by blessing them.

And Jesus says there is particular power in blessing those who aren’t blessing us ...

Blessing your neighbours:

As you pray for each of your neighbours, think of one good thing you want to see them blessed with, then pray it:

In the name of Jesus I bless ... with ... today.

Praying for those causing problems in your neighbourhood:

- Pray a blessing over each person in your streets who makes life difficult for others in some way (parking badly, making excessive noise, getting into arguments with other neighbours etc). Think of the most amazing blessing you could pray for them today, and speak it over them. Remember, blessing is not about getting them to do what we want, it’s about speaking the good things of God into their lives.

Give them to God and give him permission to resolve the situation in whatever way he sees best.

- Pray for yourself, that God will give you grace to keep being kind to them, even when their behaviour causes you problems. Pray you will have wisdom to know how to relate to them.
- Also ask God to reveal if there is anything you might be doing that is annoying to your neighbours on your street.

Hopefully after completing this 12 week prayer guide, you are now ready to pray on your own. Please keep praying together, and keep praying even when you do not get an answer. It is our hope that you are more confident to pray together as a group without the need for more prayer guides. However if you need more resources, they can be found on the www.neighbourhoodprayer.net website.

Week 13: Devise a week as a trial. Look back over the guide and reflect on the areas previously covered. You may want to do more prayer around a particular topic, or think of something new. Please tell us of any new sessions you devise, so we can share them with others in future editions of this guide on our website.