

# WALK, PRAY, TALK



## Who are we?

The Evangelical Alliance is the oldest and largest unity movement in the UK. Since 1846 we have been representing our members by speaking up on behalf of evangelicals in the government and the media. We exist to serve and strengthen the work of the church in our communities and throughout society.

We are an alliance of evangelicals, united by our basis of faith and the call in John 17 to be united for the sake of the gospel. We join together hundreds of organisations, thousands of churches and tens of thousands of individuals, from across nations, denominations, age groups and ethnicities, so that the UK might be transformed in Jesus' name.

## WALK, PRAY, TALK

*“If we are going to live as intended, which is, to the glory of God, we cannot do it abstractly or in general. We have to do it under the particularising conditions in which God works, namely – time and place – here and now.”*

– Eugene Peterson



## Who are you?

## Where are you?

## Why are you here?

**The experience of lockdown has prevented many of us from coming together at our churches for gathered worship. But it has caused many of us to inhabit the local area in a new way, either on our daily walk or by standing at our front gate for the ‘weekly clap’ for healthcare workers.**

Place is important to us as we seek to live sacrificial lives of worship. Too often we create barriers between the heavenly and earthly realms that we inhabit as God's people. We detach the two realities, forgetting that true spirituality is living our everyday lives as heavenly citizens (Philippians 3:20), seated in the heavenly realms in Christ (Ephesians 2:6) while we daily inhabit our earthly spaces and places.

Jesus travelled about to named towns and villages. He walked slowly and noticed things and people. He used the everyday to illustrate heavenly realities (see John 4 as one example). Jesus stood, surveyed and lamented over Jerusalem before entering the city (Matthew 23:37-39).

Paul spent time in the synagogue (Acts 13:13-42) and in the agora, the public square (Acts 17:17). He saw, listened, and engaged with the fabric of lives in the place around him (Acts 17). He drew the spiritual into the reality of people's everyday lives. The exiles without the spiritual structures of temple, land, law asked, how shall we worship? and were commanded to seek the welfare of the city (Jeremiah 29:17).

## Who?

This could be used for church small groups who live in a shared location. It may be used by Christian friends who are members of different churches but live in and care about a shared place.

## What?

This is a five-part resource that will help you to explore the connection between the place you inhabit in the everyday, your Christian faith and your God-given purpose as you follow Jesus into His world.

Through the five sessions you will explore prayer through themes of being people of God, present to God and people, participation, and caring for a place.

Each session repeats a set of liturgical prayers on these themes.

### Each session consists of:

- ➔ **Prepare:** Get ready for time together by reading the passage and prayer walking throughout the week.
- ➔ **Plug in:** Catch up about your prayer walk experience, anything new that has emerged and a question to get you thinking.
- ➔ **Passage to explore:** Choose a section of scripture to get you thinking about the theme.
- ➔ **Ponder & reflect:** Reflect on the passage and your prayer walking together.

## How?

Use this resource alongside the Walk & Pray resource. We suggest:

- each person prayer walking the shared area throughout the week.
- You can also prayer walk together as part of your weekly gathered session, at the beginning, to close or woven in between the sessions.

**In the simplest terms, we really want to encourage you to get out and about praying for your local community. We believe you will thrive as God's people, together, in your places, in a new way.**

And perhaps as you pray, imagine, and love your shared space, you might be creative in how you might move towards the people around you with word, prayer or act of kindness, in the places you are praying for.

### An example

How about sending a card and some biscuits to the local primary school or a closed business? You could write the appropriate prayer in the card. If you are praying for them, tell them.

What about inviting the young families in your street over for some tea and cake? You could tell them that you've been praying for them.

➔ **Idea:** Take photos, use a map, make a list of places surrounding you, and key people and places. Set up a WhatsApp group to keep sending pictures, prayers, news headlines. Keep this conversation live and growing throughout your week, and as you gather over the next five weeks.

# Week 1: Plug in

You will map out the shared space, get to know each other's connection to the place, share a God-directed vision for your shared place.

## ➔ Prepare

Read the creation passages in Genesis 1 and 2.  
Prayer walk the area throughout the week.

## ➔ Plug in

How vital to your quality of life are the place and the people around you?

## ➔ Passages to explore: Genesis 1:27a

Let's revisit Genesis to consider God's original ordered intention for the pinnacle of His creation, humanity, which is bound up in place and in our purpose, and frames our worship.

**Personhood:** "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created he Him." Genesis 1:27

**Place:** "The Lord God planted a garden in Eden and there He put man who He had formed." Genesis 2:8

**Purpose:** "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden to work it, keep it, to take care of it." Genesis 2:15

In the creation of human beings, Yahweh blends His divine image with soil. Humankind is formed from the earthy substance in the creation narratives. But in our everyday existence we are who we are because of the people, context, culture, opportunities, memories, and experiences – framed and permitted by the place we inhabit.

The creator places human creatures in the patch of creation He has just declared very good. They are a distinctive, unique part of creation, because of their image-bearing quality. The cosmic order is set up under the rule of the Lord God, and humankind is placed at the heart of it, as God's vice-regent. We are formed by the place we inhabit, but we are also called to form the same place in return as worship.

The very first act of worship recorded for us in scripture was for humankind to hear God's command to subdue their patch of earth and to respond in worship:

- To embrace the essence of their personhood as co-rulers
- To enter, to name, to own, and to love the place they were given
- To take up the image-bearing, priestly role between creator and creation
- To respond to Him in acts of worship by subduing and taking care of their place
- By making their patch of earth useful, safe and for the enjoyment of all, we reflect our creator.

# Reflect together: Be creative

## What is your place?

Within this framework of personhood, purpose, place, explore the patch of creation in which you have been placed, to share together as God's image bearers, to take care of – as an act of obedient worship.

## Name the space:

Where are you? Name the place, people, spaces.  
What is here? Do you know the place's history?

## Share the space:

As a group discuss your common belonging to each other and to the area: what brings you together to explore this place as God's people?

## Love the space:

What do you value here? Who is important to you? Who do you know and interact with? Share memories of being within the space together, as family, friends, in childhood, for special events.

## Care for the space:

What issues are emerging as you look ahead for this area?  
Who are the influencers/stakeholders in this space?

## Own the space:

How do you inhabit the space (children at school, work in the area, work that affects the area, shop/doctor/dentist/bank in the local area, support charity in the area, local clubs and interest groups)?

How do you inhabit this space as a divine image bearer, called to take care, to multiply, to ensure flourishing in this patch of creation? To use your divine authority and influence?

## Imagine the space:

What is your vision for the place and people? How is this reflected in your prayer, witness, action for the place and people?

How might your prayer-filled presence and participation with Jesus nudge you to be the answer to your prayers for the people in this place?



# Prayers:

## Pray as God's people

**Psalm 95: "Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our maker; for He is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care."**

We declare again that you are our God, we are your people. We worship you, with all our heart, all our mind all our strength.

We open our whole selves to receive again from overflowing life, mercy and goodness.

We offer ourselves as the people of God, that we might know you more deeply, love you more fully, serve you more freely.

We give ourselves to each other, as one body, one people, one mind, one spirit, united in your person Jesus Christ, our Lord.

*Pause to reflect.*

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## Prayer in God's presence

In this moment of stillness, though distracted by many things, we choose to make ourselves present, present to you and present to the world around us.

**"Surely you are in this place, and we have not known it."  
Genesis 28**

Standing as your people, your body, the sacred space where heaven and earth unite, we repent: "Surely you are in this place as we have not known it". Genesis 28.16

We believe you are present and working among these people, in this place.

Give us eyes to see what you see, to seek first your kingdom. Give us ears to hear your voice that roars like thunder yet whispers still and small. Give us hearts that break as yours did, that hate what is evil, and cling to what is good. Give us the mind of Christ, that we may understand the heart of God for this place and these people. Give us feet ready to go to where you are working.

*Pause to reflect.*

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## Pray in participation

We, your renewed people hear your voice calling us to look, and we see that you are making all things new – things in heaven and on earth through the blood of Jesus.

We, men and women reimagined, united and complete in you, want to join you as you work in this world.

As you poured out your life for the world, we offer ourselves and all that we have.

Lead us, fill us, send us out as your co-workers with you, to speak, to act, to pray in the fullness of Christ in this time, this place – that we would make you known.

*Pause to reflect.*

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## Prayer for place

You who formed humankind from the dust of the earth and placed in a garden, your same hands have placed us here, woven our lives into this place, among these people.

We receive the gift of this place, and we, your people, worship you by caring for the patch of creation that frames our life. We commit to seeking the welfare of this place. Show us where to plant the seeds of kingdom life.

Give us your Spirit-filled imagination as we pray together as you taught us; may your kingdom come in this place, just as it is in heaven.

*Pause to reflect.*

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## Parting prayer:

“May God be gracious to us and bless us and make His face shine on us, so that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations. May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you.” (Psalm 67:1-3)

Use alongside [Walk and Pray](#). Commit to prayer walk, individually, using the set prayers.

Ask God to inspire you to move into action (prayer, word, deed) in this place during the week.



# Week 2: Prayer that affirms us as God's people

You will dig into your identity together, as part of the worshipping people of God, and be formed as people for who worship is a distinctive whole life.

## ➔ Prepare

Read Psalm 95 and prayer walk the area during the week.

## ➔ Plug in

Catch up on any thoughts, experiences, witness, action experienced in the space you meet in since you last met together.

What groups of people do you belong to, identify with (social, national, age, leisure)? How does it feel to be a part of this group?

## ➔ Passages to explore: Psalm 95

Psalm 95 helps us to explore who the God is that we worship and what it means to be the people whose lives are shaped and formed by our sacrificial worship of this God. As we will see there is both privilege in being God's people and a responsibility.

At the heart of Psalm 95 is the phrase “for He is our God and we are the people of His pasture” (v.6). Throughout the Bible we find God calling out particular people for specific purposes, called to subdue and take care of the places they inhabit.

Psalm 95 identifies God as king (v.3), creator (v.4-5) and shepherd

(v.7). How might these three attributes of God's character provide insight of what it means to be the people of God?

### God as creator

Psalm 95 enlarges our picture of what it is to be the people of God, living whole lives of worship to God. Our worship is not limited to what we might think are the religious places or practices around us. We are the people of the God who owns the mountain peaks and holds the depths of the earth in His hand – including the street, town and city spaces we inhabit day to day. When we walk and pray in our patch of creation, we, His people, the temple of His Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19) are the scattered presence of God. This is a beautiful reality and can change things.

### God as shepherd

The second half of verse 6 in Psalm 95 affirms that, as His people, we are the flock under His care. It is a metaphor Jesus reflects on in John 10 where He refers to Himself as the good shepherd. In a beautiful passage, foreshadowing Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross, Jesus affirms that He is the good shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep. What does it mean to be the people of God? Part of being the particular people of God is that we are a known people, Jesus the good shepherd knows us, and we know Him. Furthermore, because we know Jesus as a good shepherd who will care for us, we listen to His voice. Our identity is established through our shared life in Christ and lived out as we seek His voice and purpose for the spaces and places that we inhabit.

### God as king

The beginning of Psalm 95 bursts with the declaration that God is the great king above all gods. The character of that king has ultimately been revealed to us in Christ. The famous hymn in Philippians 2 describes our humble king, who chose a thorn of crowns for the sake of His people and yet rose again and is seated

in His ascended place at the right hand of the Father. As the people of God, through the gift of the Spirit, we share in Jesus' reign at the right hand of the Father (Ephesians 2:6). We have become citizens of a new kingdom and, as such, we have been called to live out the ways of Jesus' kingdom in the places we inhabit.

As Paul encouraged the church in Rome as citizens of heaven, we have been set apart in order that we might offer our everyday, ordinary lives as a living sacrifice. It is through our whole lives of worship that we ever increasingly reflect the image of the king we follow. Our life together, as the people of God, is a witness to the watching world, a witness to the character of the king we love and serve.

## Ponder & Reflect

How does being part of the people of God impact the other identities you hold (age, gender, race, nationality)? Paul writes that as the people of God, whose first identity is 'in Christ', our other identities become secondary (Galatians 3:28). We are being made into a new people – the people of God.

Do you think of this identity more as a privilege or a responsibility? What does it look like to live with this privilege and responsibility in all the spaces you inhabit with one another?

What is Jesus, the good shepherd, saying to you individually and corporately, in your place? Why has He brought you together, and for what purpose?

What excites you most about what you could see God doing, by the power of His Spirit, within your community?

As you've continued to walk and pray around your spaces and places, what areas have you been drawn to? Why do you think that is? How might God as creator, shepherd, king be working in this place?

# Prayers:

## Pray as God's people

**Psalm 95: "Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our maker; for He is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under His care."**

We declare again that you are our God, we are your people. We worship you, with all our heart, all our mind all our strength.

We open our whole selves to receive again from overflowing life, mercy and goodness.

We offer ourselves as the people of God, that we might know you more deeply, love you more fully, serve you more freely.

We give ourselves to each other, as one body, one people, one mind, one spirit, united in your person Jesus Christ, our Lord.

*Pause to reflect.*

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## Prayer in God's presence

In this moment of stillness, though distracted by many things, we choose to make ourselves present – present to you and present to the world around us.

**"Surely you are in this place, and we have not known it."  
Genesis 28**

Standing as your people, your body, the sacred space where heaven and earth unite, we repent: "Surely you are in this place as we have not known it". Genesis 28:16

We believe you are present and working among these people, in this place.

Give us eyes to see what you see, to seek first your kingdom. Give us ears to hear your voice that roars like thunder yet whispers still and small. Give us hearts that break as yours did, that hate what is evil, and cling to what is good. Give us the mind of Christ, that we may understand the heart of God for this place and these people. Give us feet ready to go to where you are working.

*Pause to reflect.*

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## Pray in participation

We, your renewed people, hear your voice calling us to look and see that you are making all things new, things in heaven and on earth through the blood of Jesus.

We, men and women reimagined, united and complete in you, want to join you as you work in this world.

As you poured out your life for the world, we offer ourselves and all that we have.

Lead us, fill us, send us out as your co-workers with you, to speak, to act, to pray in the fullness of Christ in this time, this place, that we would make you known.

*Pause to reflect.*

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## Prayer for place

You who formed humankind from the dust of the earth and placed in a garden, your same hands have placed us here, woven our lives into this place, among these people.

We receive the gift of this place, and we, your people, worship you by caring for the patch of creation that frames our life. We commit to seeking the welfare of this place. Show us where to plant the seeds of kingdom life.

Give us your Spirit-filled imagination as we pray together as you taught us, may your kingdom come in this place, just as it is in heaven.

*Pause to reflect.*

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## Parting prayer:

“May God be gracious to us and bless us and make His face shine on us, so that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations. May the peoples praise You, O God; may all the peoples praise You.” (Psalm 67:1-3)

**Use alongside [Walk and Pray](#). Commit to prayer walk, individually, using the set prayers.**

**Ask God to inspire you to move into action (prayer, word, deed) in this place during the week.**



# Week 3: Choosing to be present to both God and people

You will be spiritually attentive to God and people as you pray for the kingdom to come in your earthy spaces as it is in heaven.

## ➔ Prepare

Read Genesis 28:10–22 and prayer walk the area during the week.

## ➔ Plug in

Catch up on any thoughts, experiences, witness, action experienced in the space you meet in and are praying for.

Describe a time this week when you have been intentionally attentive to someone or something?

## ➔ Passages to explore: Genesis 28:10–22

### Background

Jacob, having deceived Isaac and Esau to steal the covenant blessing, is now on the run from Esau. Jacob, the son of Isaac, is on a journey that forces him to leave the people of promise and the land of blessing. Travelling the 500 miles walk from Beer Sheva to Haran, the weary traveller pulls up a stone pillow at the city of Luz (v.19) and falls asleep.

God reveals Himself in the unexpected place, to the unexpected person, with an unexpected promise. Jacob sees a 'ladder', and the traffic of heaven's angels going between the realms of heaven and earth to fulfil God's will and work on earth, in that place.

The Lord God of His forefathers not only reveals Himself to this unexpected person, in this unexpected place, but miraculously in His grace, God now binds Himself to Jacob, the treacherous exile, re-enacting His promise that Jacob would be gifted with His presence and protection but that he would return to the promised land to become the people of God.

## Ponder & Reflect

How/Why did Jacob inhabit the city of Luz as he stopped there to sleep? Who was he? Why did he stop there? What did he expect from this passing through?

How did Jacob inhabit the same place after he woke? "Surely God is in this place, and I did not know it... how awesome is this place!" (v.16) What did he do?

Why did his encounter with God change the scope of how he saw the realities of the place?

How might you intentionally become present to God and present to people in your place, to open your vision to the overlapping realities of heaven and earth?

### Heaven is a place on earth.

The dream depicts a stairway that bridges the space between heaven and earth, the realm of God, and the realm of humankind. The whole story of scripture is a drama about the union, disconnection and reunion of these two realities. Scripture's story opens by declaring: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1.1) and draws to a close with a glimpse in Revelation 21 of recreation, the new heaven and new earth. We live in the shape and shadow of Genesis 3, where the earthly realm and heavenly realms have been separated, but for God's gracious movement towards us.

The person and work of Jesus Christ, Emmanuel, becomes the reconciling bridge between heaven and earth.

Colossians 1:19-20: “For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross.”

Before Jesus sends out His followers, He affirms they go in His dual authority: “All authority in heaven and earth has been given to me”. Matthew 28:16-20

Theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer writes, “There are not two realities, but one reality, and that is the reality of God, which has become manifest in Christ in the reality of the world. Sharing in Christ, we stand at once in both the reality of God and the reality of the world.”

Have you lived in two realities, a sacred-secular division? How can you live fully in the one real life, that is heaven and earth brought back together in Christ?

We, the body of Christ, are a people ‘in Christ’, sent out to perceive, speak and enact His kingdom reign on earth, as it is in heaven, in the spaces and places we inhabit day to day.

How can you lean into His dual authority over heavenly realms and the earthy patches you inhabit this week, to perceive, imagine, speak, act out His kingdom come on earth, just as it is in heaven? What might you do differently if you believe you have the resources of heaven behind you?

## Prayers:

### Pray as God’s people

**Psalm 95: “Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our maker; for He is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under His care.”**

We declare again that you are our God, we are your people. We worship you, with all our heart, all our mind all our strength.

We open our whole selves to receive again from overflowing life, mercy and goodness.

We offer ourselves as the people of God, that we might know you more deeply, love you more fully, serve you more freely.

We give ourselves to each other, as one body, one people, one mind, one spirit, united in your person Jesus Christ, our Lord.

*Pause to reflect.*

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### Prayer in God’s presence

In this moment of stillness, though distracted by many things, we choose to make ourselves present – present to you and present to the world around us.

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*Pause to reflect.*

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## Pray in participation

We, your renewed people, hear your voice calling us to look and see that you are making all things new, things in heaven and on earth through the blood of Jesus.

We, men and women reimagined, united and complete in you, want to join you as you work in this world.

As you poured out your life for the world, we offer ourselves and all that we have.

Lead us, fill us, send us out as your co-workers with you, to speak, to act, to pray in the fullness of Christ in this time, this place, that we would make you known.

*Pause to reflect.*

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## Prayer for place

You who formed humankind from the dust of the earth and placed in a garden, your same hands have placed us here, woven our lives into this place, among these people.

We receive the gift of this place, and we, your people, worship you by caring for the patch of creation that frames our life. We commit to seeking the welfare of this place. Show us where to plant the seeds of kingdom life.

Give us your Spirit-filled imagination as we pray together as you taught us, may your kingdom come in this place, just as it is in heaven.

*Pause to reflect.*

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## Parting prayer:

“May God be gracious to us and bless us and make His face shine on us, so that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations. May the peoples praise You, O God; may all the peoples praise You.” (Psalm 67:1-3)

Use alongside [Walk and Pray](#). Commit to prayer walk, individually, using the set prayers.

Ask God to inspire you to move into action (prayer, word, deed) in this place during the week.

# Week 4: Participating in and with the person of Jesus

You will be empowered and inspired to see your praying, speaking, acting as participation with the work of Jesus in His world.

## ➔ Prepare

Read John 17:20–26, John 15:1–11

## ➔ Plug in

Catch up on any thoughts, experiences, witness, action experienced in the space you meet in and are praying for.

## ➔ Passages to explore: John 17:20–26; John 15:1–11

At the end of John 17 we read a prayer that Jesus prayed for us, because we are people who have believed through the message of the disciples. The prayer has three main focuses:

- that we would be completely united with one another (in Philippians 2:2 Paul describes this unity as being “one in mind and spirit”).
- That we would share in the life and love of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
- That because we are now a part of the God’s life and love, our radical unity with one another in the name of Jesus would show the watching world who Jesus really is.

It is a quite extraordinary prayer.

The prayer links to Jesus’ teaching in John’s gospel around the idea of ‘participation’. In John 5 Jesus says that He only does what He sees the Father doing. Jesus gives a clear impression that His life is one that joins in or participates in fulfilling the Father’s will, through the Spirit in the places and spaces He inhabits.

In John 15 Jesus uses a vine and branches to help the disciples understand that they are called to a similar life of participation. As a branch is actually joined to, and derives its life from, the vine, so are we, by His Spirit in us, joined to and drawn into the life of Jesus. Just as the vine produces fruit through the branches, the life of Jesus within us through His Spirit, flows from us as we pray, act and speak about Him. We are called to witness to Him and to bear kingdom fruit in the spaces and places we inhabit.

Paul writes about Christians as being ‘in Christ’ (Ephesians 1:3-14); although we are human, we are now fully bound to the risen person of Jesus. We are knit together and united with Christ, and because God welcomes us and loves us, we are included ‘in His Son’; we are drawn into the very life of the God! We are seated with Him, ‘in Him’, at the right hand of the Father (Ephesians 2:6).

In the same way that Jesus only did what he saw the Father doing, we are now sent out as His witnesses, His ambassadors (2 Corinthians 5) to join in with the work of the Spirit in the spaces and places we inhabit.

By walking and praying, by speaking and acting, we get to participate in the activity of God’s Spirit as we make ourselves present to Him, and ask, what is He doing now (John 5:19)? And, how can I, as His witness, join in through prayer, words and actions?

## Ponder & Reflect

How does it make you feel to know Jesus prayed for you to be united with one another and that even now, we share in the Father's very love for His Son?

Jesus linked our unity with one another with being a witness to Himself; how could our life together be a witness in this way?

What does it look like for you to be a witness, an ambassador for Christ, in your roles and life in work, family, leisure, community?

Does praying in Jesus' name – Amen (let it be) – give you confidence in the power of the words of prayer that you utter?

Are there spaces and places where you struggle to see how God's Spirit might be at work?

As you've been walking and praying, have you experienced the idea of being led by the Spirit to witness to Him or to bear fruit in the spaces and places you inhabit?

## Prayers:

### Pray as God's people

**Psalm 95: "Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our maker; for He is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under His care."**

We declare again that you are our God, we are your people. We worship you, with all our heart, all our mind all our strength.

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*Pause to reflect.*

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We receive the gift of this place, and we, your people, worship you by caring for the patch of creation that frames our life. We commit to seeking the welfare of this place. Show us where to plant the seeds of kingdom life.

Give us your Spirit-filled imagination as we pray together as you taught us, may your kingdom come in this place, just as it is in heaven.

*Pause to reflect.*

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## Parting prayer:

“May God be gracious to us and bless us and make His face shine on us, so that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations. May the peoples praise You, O God; may all the peoples praise You.” (Psalm 67:1-3)

Use alongside [Walk and Pray](#). Commit to prayer walk, individually, using the set prayers.

Ask God to inspire you to move into action (prayer, word, deed) in this place during the week.



# Week 5: Caring for place and people as worship

**You will thrive, flourish and grow as you are sent out into God's plans and purpose for you in the place you inhabit and amongst the people who live there.**

## ➔ Prepare

Read Jeremiah 7:1–7, Jeremiah 29:1–14, Psalm 137, and prayer walk the area during the week.

## ➔ Plug in

Catch up on any thoughts, experiences, witness, action experienced in the space you meet in and for.

Describe what it might look like to live 'the good life' in this place (house, leisure, relationships, work, money).

## ➔ Passages to explore: Jeremiah 29:1–14

### Background

The people of God have always been embedded in a place. The land that was woven into the promise of God to Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3) was to be a place of blessing to Israel and to the rest of the world as Israel lived out God's law as a light to the nations (Isaiah 49:6).

God's people failed to heed the repeated warnings from prophets, and so God acted in judgement to refine His people, for their purpose in the world. In 587 BC, the Babylonian armies invaded

Jerusalem, destroying the temple and deporting Israel's key leaders, thinkers and influencers 700 miles across the Middle Eastern desert, back to Babylon in exile.

Uprooted from the place of their forefathers' faith, the location of blessing; removed from the structures of temple worship; displaced as strangers in a strange land, the people of God cried in confusion: "How can we sing the Lord's song – how can we worship, be God's people – in this strange land?!" (Psalm 137)

They inhabited the places and spaces of Babylon with disconnected negativity, as powerless victims, awaiting a future rescue and removal. Dreaming of imminent return to Zion (Jerusalem), they believed this was a short stay. Why bother investing in long-term projects if this place and these people do not matter in our future?

Jeremiah (still in Jerusalem) sent God's words to His exiled people in Babylon. The commands He gave them were not what they expected.

Live. Obey. Worship. Right here. Right Now.

I sent you here. This is what I command you. Your obedience and response will be your worship.

"Build houses, live in them. Plant gardens, enjoy the food you grow. Marry, create family – you will have grandchildren here. Work for the wellbeing of the towns, cities of this nation that took you captive. Pray to Yahweh for the welfare (shalom) of this place and its people. When this place thrives and flourishes, so too will you thrive and flourish." Jeremiah 29:4-7

He calls His people to obedient lives of worship in and through the new place and people they inhabit. Start living. Live deep and full lives. Cultivate. Construct. Develop. Multiply. Create. Mould.

Influence. Subdue. Does this remind you of the Genesis creation passages in week 1?

Being fully human as God intended is worked out in, through and with the people and places we find ourselves, wherever, whoever that may be. God calls each of us to live. Truly live. Deeply live with meaning and impact in the everyday places and spaces into which He has placed and sent us.

I have a purpose, a plan, for my people.

Twice, God tells them, they have been sent to this place, in this time, for a plan and a purpose (v.4,7). “He knows the plans He has for them. Plans to prosper...to give a hope and future.” (v.11). The covenant relationship is not forgotten: He is still their God, they are still His people – the purpose of this time is to refine, to restore the heart of the people towards their God.

The exiles relearn the heart of worship as God’s people who love the Lord God with all their heart, all their soul, all their strength (Deuteronomy 6:5). This is wellbeing. Welfare. Shalom.

Pray to me, says Yahweh – I am here!

Yahweh reminds His people that the land, the temple, the law were only earthly structures given to a fallen people that pointed to, but did not constrain, the presence and the power of the creator-God. God tells His people that He is not bound by national borders or temple buildings. They can and should worship Him in the earthy fabric of their everyday lives, as they seek flourishing, shalom and wellbeing for and among this foreign people.

## **Ponder & Reflect**

Have you/your church spoken or acted in a way that limits God’s presence, worship, promise, blessing to church building, programme, people?

Where are the people and places God has sent you to in your everyday? How can you, together, encourage one another to truly live full lives of worship in these places?

Where are the spaces in which you thrive, love life? How can you inhabit, engage, influence these spaces as an act of worship?

Tension. World or heaven?

The exiles were to influence their cities with everything they were and had become as leaders: the knowledge, skills and their understanding of Yahweh that they had inherited. They were to inhabit Babylon in a way that changed, shaped and influenced the people and culture – not in a way that they absorbed the melting pot of Babylonian values and beliefs.

The New Testament writers address the tension between our relationship as dual citizens – belonging to God but inhabiting all the systems and structures of the world. Peter refers to the churches he wrote to as “sojourners and exiles” (1 Peter 1:11); John speaks of “not belonging to this world” and of loving the things of the world (John 17:14-16, 1 John 2:15-17); Paul describes us as “citizens of heaven” who wait for rescue (Philippians 3:20).

In what ways do you experience life in your place, among your people as an exile, stranger, sojourner, not quite belonging? How can you inhabit, engage, influence in these spaces as an act of worship?

How are you drawn into the systems and values of the world?

Jeremiah 29:11 is a familiar verse. Do you read God’s promise of purpose and plans here in a new way? How might God be refining you, to find Him as the place of your flourishing and shalom?

# Prayers:

## Pray as God's people

**Psalm 95: "Come, let us bow down in worship, let us kneel before the Lord our maker; for He is our God and we are the people of his pasture, the flock under his care."**

We declare again that you are our God, we are your people. We worship you, with all our heart, all our mind all our strength.

We open our whole selves to receive again from overflowing life, mercy and goodness.

We offer ourselves as the people of God, that we might know you more deeply, love you more fully, serve you more freely.

We give ourselves to each other, as one body, one people, one mind, one spirit, united in your person Jesus Christ, our Lord.

*Pause to reflect.*

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## Prayer in God's presence

In this moment of stillness, though distracted by many things, we choose to make ourselves present, present to you and present to the world around us.

**"Surely you are in this place, and we have not known it."  
Genesis 28**

Standing as your people, your body, the sacred space where heaven and earth unite, we repent: "Surely you are in this place as we have not known it". Genesis 28.16

We believe you are present and working among these people, in this place.

Give us eyes to see what you see, to seek first your kingdom. Give us ears to hear your voice that roars like thunder yet whispers still and small. Give us hearts that break as yours did, that hate what is evil, and cling to what is good. Give us the mind of Christ, that we may understand the heart of God for this place and these people. Give us feet ready to go to where you are working.

*Pause to reflect.*

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## Pray in participation

We, your renewed people hear your voice calling us to look, and we see that you are making all things new – things in heaven and on earth through the blood of Jesus.

We, men and women reimagined, united and complete in you, want to join you as you work in this world.

As you poured out your life for the world, we offer ourselves and all that we have.

Lead us, fill us, send us out as your co-workers with you, to speak, to act, to pray in the fullness of Christ in this time, this place – that we would make you known.

*Pause to reflect.*

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## Prayer for place

You who formed humankind from the dust of the earth and placed in a garden, your same hands have placed us here, woven our lives into this place, among these people.

We receive the gift of this place, and we, your people, worship you by caring for the patch of creation that frames our life. We commit to seeking the welfare of this place. Show us where to plant the seeds of kingdom life.

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# The Evangelical Alliance hopes that our resources [Walk & Pray](#), and Walk, Pray, Talk have been helpful as you seek to follow Jesus in your everyday spaces and places.

The five sessions have come to an end, but we hope the themes on which you have reflected, and the journeys of prayer you have walked, can continue. Why not repeat the cycle, keep using the prayers together, and share the resource with other friends?

You have joined with many other individual Christians, groups, churches using the same prayers and reflections in their own area.

*Together, we are the people of God,  
reliant on His presence among us,  
as we are released among the people  
and places of our everyday,  
to participate in the work of Jesus in His world.*

*So, we pray Lord Jesus, may your  
kingdom come, your will be done,  
in our own patches of earth as it is in heaven.*

*In Jesus' name – amen.*

The Evangelical Alliance exists to unite and resource the UK church so that we can be effective in mission and advocacy for the people and places we love. By using our resources such as Walk & Pray, and Walk, Pray, Talk, you become part of something much bigger.

We would love to invite you to become a member of the Evangelical Alliance, for as little as £3 a month. By becoming a member, you will join thousands of individuals, churches and organisations with one common goal: to make Jesus known throughout the UK. [eauk.org/join](http://eauk.org/join)

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