

PRAYER STRATEGIES

Prayer is the exciting means God has given us to prepare hearts for His Spirit to work through His Word. If we are really serious about reaching our towns/cities/nation for Christ; **Prayer is the key.**

'After they (the disciples) had prayed the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.' (Acts 4:31)

Prayer and evangelism are inseparable, as was demonstrated by the early church. This is still true today. All evangelism needs to be saturated in believing prayer. Prayer is required to prepare hard ground for the seed of the Gospel to be sown, and for that seed to root and produce fruit.

There needs to be vision, an understanding of the principles of prayer and spiritual warfare (prayer warfare) and the motivation to put those principles into practice. A battle is not won by a single skirmish! Persistence over many weeks and months is required to break down the barriers that exist, to break through the spiritual darkness, and to soften hearts to enable people to respond to the gospel message.

There are many ways in which prayer can be put into effect in relation to evangelism. Prayer can be carried out in many places, indoors and out of doors, in a home, church or street, by several people together, in 2's or 3's, or by individuals. Denominational boundaries can be crossed by Christians praying together for outreach purposes.

Personal Prayer

A discipline of personal prayer and Bible study is essential. A Christ-centred lifestyle includes commitment to intercede for those in our own family and neighbourhood who are lost, hurting, yet hungry for spiritual reality.

Corporate prayer

Corporate prayer is a natural extension of a personal prayer discipline as the need to share in prayer with others grows. Alone we are vulnerable; together we are far stronger, and can protect and uphold each other in prayer, (see Ecclesiastes 4:12).

Corporate prayer can be put into practice in many different ways, from a large congregation to 2's and 3's. Prayer can be taken out on to the streets of a town, or round the town boundary. Prayer can take place in the country or on a local high point – a hill or multi-storey car park. Prayer can be carried out in a house or a church building. There is no limit to the extent of corporate prayer.

Find a **prayer partner** and together focus prayer on a specific situation or individual that one or both of you are involved with. One can be engaged in prayer at home whilst the other is actively in and evangelistic event or programme.

Form **prayer triplets** where a praying group of three Christians can each pray for three non-Christians (family, friends, or neighbours). Follow that by seeking to befriend and get alongside them to share your faith and invite them to a Christian event. Prayer triplet cards are available from Engage 2015.

Set up **street prayer groups** which can be particularly effective in praying for real change of spiritual climate. A prayer/social group can be set up to pray specifically for that street, and for those who live there. This can be combined with the prayer triplet scheme or with small group prayer if home groups are geographically based.

Use **house group/small group prayer** as another means to direct prayer to a particular locality or identifiable people group, and for individuals known to the group.

Set up a **7-11 Prayer Watch** where the day is divided into 64 x 15 minute slots between the hours of 7.00am and 11.00pm. People are encouraged to sign up for one of these so forming a continuous prayer chain throughout the day. This can also be carried out over a 6 hour or 24 hour period. This enables older folk, the housebound or parents with young families to participate. Prayer topics can be provided for folk to refer to.

Set aside **prayer days, prayer nights/half nights of prayer** to provide opportunities for larger prayer gatherings at a central venue for folk from a number of local churches who are seeking to work together in outreach. Have a programme arranged to allow the Spirit to move and direct. 'Ingredients' will include a Bible, the local paper, information about the local church situation, and participants who can provide input reflecting community needs. Effective use of worship/warfare songs can be integrated into the prayer programme.

Try **street prayer walking** a means of taking prayer out on to the streets of the neighbourhood. Firstly, a group in 2's or 3's, walking and praying through the main streets of a town or village, including those which contain civic buildings, the business community, the main shopping centre, market place, leisure activities, etc. Secondly the streets and venues for events/matches can be targeted separately or with another praying group. This includes prayer outside key community buildings like schools or community centres. Thirdly, the boundaries of a parish or catchment area can be the focus for a prayer walk, with folk setting off at intervals to walk the boundary.

What is most important is that the prayer input starts well before any event and continues long after its completion. There needs to be constant prayer/warfare for the spiritual climate of an area to begin to change, and for people to respond to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Remember: *'The one concern of the devil is to keep Christians from prayer. He feels nothing from prayerless studies, prayerless work and prayerless religion. He laughs at our toil, mocks at our wisdom, but trembles when we pray.'* Samuel Chadwick

