

Practical input

Ideas for praying for your local area

The Sanctuary has been involved in helping to organise a special season of united 24:7 prayer with other Christians in our local area. As part of resourcing this, we produced a sheet with some ideas to help the pray-ers who are each spending at least an hour a week for the next three months specifically praying for local people to come to know Jesus, and to speak blessing over all that is in line with God's kingdom and purposes.

This resource is an adaptation of the original sheet for use in any area, made available in the hope that it might encourage your heart to pray for your own area, and perhaps equip you with some new ideas to bring freshness as you engage in this.

Before you start

Take some time to put aside worries and distractions and engage with God for who he is. Take some time to praise and give thanks for all he has done, and declare the truth that he is Lord over your life, and your area. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal his heart for the people in your area to you; to give you his compassion; and to bring to mind anything specific for you to pray about.

Praying for a ripple effect

You might like to use the established approach of praying in outwardly moving circles during each prayer time, or picking a different focus each time – i.e. pray for:

- the people who live in and come into your home, for those who aren't Christians to come to know God and for those who are (including yourself!) to be salt and light in their community (Matthew 5:13).
- the spheres of influence that you, or other Christian friends and family, have in the area.
- your neighbours and immediate surroundings.
- your church and all the churches in your town or village.
- your city, town or village, including specific places that act as focal points (e.g. schools, libraries, doctors surgeries, shops, sports facilities), and of course, all the churches there and their links with the community.
- any particular areas of need, disadvantage, or opposition to the gospel.
- (It's up to you how far you stretch the boundaries – but you might like to consider praying for towns and cities further afield that people in your community have a connection with through work, leisure or influence as well!)

Using holistic blessings

Focus on one particular area of life after another to pray blessing, and an increase of God's will and work, in individuals and communities' lives:

- B** – Body – Health, Protection, Strength
- L** – Labour – Work, Reward, Security
- E** – Emotions – Joy, Peace, Hope, Love
- S** – Social – Marriage, Family, Friends, Community
- S** – Spiritual – Salvation, Faith, Growth

Praying into special themes or for particular groups of people

It might be that you have a specific theme or group of people on your heart that you want to focus on consistently, or you might want to pray for a range of different groups, even focusing on one per prayer time. You could focus on:

- Commuters to neighbouring cities and centres of influence or Christians who work in particularly central, or caring, roles in our community – such as teachers, health professionals, and clergy.
- Local businesses, or national businesses based in your locality, and the people who work for them - particularly Christian ones.
- All who work in positions of influence – in government, business or standing up for people's rights.
- Elderly people
- Young people (both now, and in the future)
- Young families
- Singles who feel isolated.
- Those who are particularly in need of knowing God's love and saving grace because of depression, desperate circumstances financially or relationally, addiction, loneliness or rejection.
- Tourists, or others visiting your area.

Depending on your exact location, or how wide an area you want to pray for, you will find lists of all state primary and secondary schools; hospitals; and some other public services on your local and county/metropolitan council sites. Getting hold of these, printing them out, and keeping them to hand, can be a useful prompt to prayer.

Where to pray

You can pray anywhere you like, but here are a few ideas to help you try different things:

- **At home** – You might already have a preferred location to pray at home. However, you could also consider dedicating an area of a room – or even just a notice-board on the kitchen wall – to use. Stick up pictures of where you live; churches; shops and key meeting places and/or neighbours. And have space to display scriptures, thoughts or insights that strike you.
- **In your neighbourhood** – You might like to gather two or three other people who live very close to you to pray together for your immediate neighbourhood – in your homes, or at a local coffee shop.
- **At your church** – Ask your church leader or warden/caretaker if you can use your church, or a space in it.
- **In a prayer room** – if you have one locally.
- **On prayer walks** – Consider walking around your area, lifting to God the places, people and things that you see, as you walk. You might like to do this with a friend – and pray silently, or out loud.
- **At key view points** – Do you have strategic view points in your area where you can see key buildings, or even the whole of your area. If so, you might find it useful to go to these and pray over what you see.

How to pray

It's could to try different ways of praying, particularly if you are wanting to pray for your area regularly and for a significant amount of time. Some things you may like to consider are:

- Using maps of the area to pray over specific sites and areas – you could even mark specific things as you go.
- Using your local paper to pray for key issues that matter to local people, or that deal with issues of justice, or faith.
- Using art, music, writing, or other forms of creativity while you pray. For example you might like to write your own psalm, bringing in thanks and intercession for your area and community.

- Fasting on a particular day which you set aside as a time to particularly focus on your area in your devotional time.
- Trying a variety of different postures to help you express the nature of your prayers at particular times (and to help you focus). You might stand to declare blessings; kneel when you are petitioning for God's mercy on people, situations and places; and sit when you are trusting situations to him.
- Using some creative ways to pray – for example praying for specific people or areas whilst you carry out acts of service for them (e.g. litter-picking or baking a cake!). You can find more ideas at www.thesanctuarycentre.org/resources/creative-prayer-ideas-bringing-outward-focus-to-personal-devotions.pdf
- Making a list of all the names and character attributes of God that you can think of and use different ones to inspire, focus and fuel your prayers for the people in your community.

Using scriptures to pray

Praying around scriptures, and applying them in detail to our locality and our role to reach out with God's love – in prayer and in action – can be really helpful and empowering. Here are a few to start with that you might find particularly helpful:

2 Chronicles 7:14

Psalms 21

Matthew 7:7-8

Matthew 6:9-13 and 21:22

Matthew 18:19-20

Romans 8:26-27

Ephesians 3:12

Ephesians 6:18-20

Philippians 4:6-7

Colossians 4:2

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18

2 Thessalonians 3:1

1 Timothy 2:1

James 5:15-16