



Prayer and Evangelism

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Often we pray and then do the evangelism. We pray in our holy huddles in the church building for the people we're about to meet 'out there' and then go and do our evangelism. If we're really nervous as we walk up to someone, we'll pray silently 'Help me, Lord'. But by and large prayer and evangelism are seen as two separate activities.

Some Christians even go as far as thinking that prayer and evangelism are for different kinds of people. Evangelism is for the young people of the Church who are full of zeal for their faith. Prayer, on the other hand, is for those who are mature in their faith. If that's what you think, then can I suggest you have a closer look at the New Testament?

Throughout the gospels we see prayer and evangelism going hand in hand. For example, Jesus is approached by the 10 lepers, talks with them and then prays (Lk. 17:11-19). Then again in Acts we see time and again prayer and evangelism acting in tandem - Acts 4:31 for example.

Perhaps one of the essential and exciting lessons that we need to re-discover today is how to bring prayer into our evangelism.

One great place to start is to take the example of Jesus. As you read the gospels notice how many times Jesus met with people, spoke with them and prayed. Many of our evangelism courses show and teach us how to use various techniques in opening, guiding and closing conversations. But have you tried praying for the person?

The following suggestions are to help you reach out to people through and in prayer.

Praying with People

Offer to pray with the person. I can guarantee that over 90% will agree! They may have agreed to allow you to pray because they are embarrassed and hope that letting you pray will finish the conversation, or perhaps they haven't heard you right! Either way pray.

By taking this approach (whether in a good conversation or one that has gone round and round in circles for the last 3 hours), when you pray you are literally introducing them to Jesus there and then. You're sharing something personal and private which is yours with the person.

By praying in such a way the conversation will either finish or be taken onto a different level.

How to pray

I usually tell the person that I'm not going to close my eyes or kneel down on the pavement to pray. Rather, I'm going to pray and speak to Jesus now. I suggest you do not close your eyes because this actually helps take away some of the embarrassment the person may be feeling. After all, it's not everyday someone asks to pray with you in the street!

What to pray

- Use information the person has told you during the conversation.
- Ask Jesus to reveal himself to them over the next few days.
- It's important that you pray positively and not fill your prayer with negatives. One way of doing this is to use very little religious language. Remember, it's Jesus you're wanting to introduce them to, not a foreign language!

Prayer Mission

Another idea is to hold a Prayer Mission. This is an adaptation of the Prayer Triplets (see later), but in a Prayer Mission people meet together for 4 weeks and pray for non-Christians. Here's how to hold one.....

Form groups of three. Each member chooses three non-Christian friends to pray for. The first time they meet together they ask God that the people they are praying for will open a spiritual conversation about Jesus in the next seven days.

Each reports back on their conversations at their next meeting. Stop and give thanks for any answered prayer. Then, after discussing the issues raised by the conversations, the members pray this time asking God that they would have opportunity again to talk to their non-Christian friend. Pray again for those non-Christians who have not opened the conversation asking God for an opportunity to speak with them.

At the next meeting each member reports back on their conversations and once again thanks are offered to God for answered prayer. Issues raised are discussed again. This time the group prays that they will have opportunity to invite their non-Christian friends to a meeting or event in the next week.

The meeting or event. Have a well planned and prepared meeting when perhaps members can share testimony and their non-Christians friends can be challenged in some way to begin to look seriously at the claims of Jesus.

PRAYER MISSION

Form group of three;

- Each choose three non-Christian friends to pray for;
- Pray for opportunities to share Jesus with them in the next week;
- Seize those opportunities!
- Meet again to report back on conversations;
- Pray for an opportunity to speak again to them and invite them to an evangelistic event or meeting;
- Evangelistic meeting;
- Possibly meet again to report back and pray for them again.

Prayer Triplets

Prayer Triplets are...

Christians in groups of three committed to praying regularly together.

- *'Christians...'*
It doesn't matter what 'brand' of Christian you are, God is your Father and He wants to communicate with you. Some Christians have hang-ups about what they can talk to God about when in fact we can talk to God about anyone or anything.
- *'In groups of three...'*
We talk about groups of three because it is a size where people feel free to take part. People are not so nervous about saying the wrong thing in a small group of friends that they can trust. And besides, Jesus made some promises to pairs and triplets in prayer in Matthew 18:19-20. Three is a good number - small enough to be a real team and big enough to arrive at sensible conclusions.
- *'Committed to praying...'*
The groups which you help to create are asked to make an agreement together. Each member keeps the others to the promises made. They are coming together to pray. Not to watch TV, drink coffee and then pray for two minutes! The main job is to pray together.
- *'Regularly together...'*
The group should be expected to meet at least once a week. Meeting together often helps the group grow and mature in its praying. The group feels a togetherness and this is important for trust. Out of trust you can agree in prayer more easily.

What do Prayer Triplets Pray About?

1. Spiritual renewal for themselves and their churches.

The idea is that the group should be involved in praying that each member will grow to be more like Jesus and to experience him more and more. They will pray for the needs of each other. For their local Churches the group prays for vision and the leadership; for the worshippers to grow in worship, prayer, evangelism and service. Many triplets go on and pray for renewal in the Church in the nation.

2. Salvation for friends.

Each member is to pray for three non-Christian friends each - that's nine altogether. These prayers will focus on asking God what he wants to do in the lives of these nine friends. It means bringing our friends to God for salvation, healing, and all the needs they have.

3. Society and the community.

Triplets should be encouraged to take an active prayer interest in local community issues as well as national ones. Prayer for those in authority is a Biblical command (1 Tim 2:1-4) given by Paul and one that should be taken seriously.

How to organise a Prayer Triplet.

People may want to get involved in a prayer triplet, but if it's not practical they will not join in. Here are some practical things to consider:

- *Frequency:*
It is important that a clear proposal is made and accepted by the group. Ideally Prayer Triplets should meet weekly. This kind of frequency ensures continuity in learning and building trust.
- *Length:*
Create clear expectations about how long the triplet is expected to pray for. Since there are three main agenda items, each of these should receive a minimum of 5 minutes, together with another 5 minutes for getting your attention on God. So, that is at least 20 minutes for prayer. Sounds like a 30 minute commitment, including time for catching up on news. Thirty minutes will disappear very fast as triplet members pray through the agenda.
- *Timing:*
It is important for triplets to decide and choose a time to meet when members are not tired; a time that encourages total commitment; and a time when interruptions are likely to be minimised.
- *Place:*
People's circumstances will vary, but meet somewhere which is reasonably quiet; has good ventilation and a reasonable temperature; is not too comfortable; and is convenient to get to for each member.

Prayer Walking

Prayer walking is something the Church is re-discovering all over the world. The rise in interest and activity in the Praise March, or March for Jesus, is one factor, but prayer walking can go a lot further.

Prayer walking is good for:

- Preparation for outreach into a community;
- Information gathering - it helps to pray more intelligently about an area;
- Preparing for church planting;
- Confronting evil where it is known to be.

Prayer walking is:

Christians, either individually or in small groups, committed to regularly praying on the streets for the needs they see and hear of in the community.

Let's look at this definition a little closer....

- *Individuals or small groups...*

Prayer walking is not necessarily a spectacle for the community to see. I find that it is best done either individually or in small groups that are less obvious. In Matthew 6:5 Jesus did not mean that praying on the streets is wrong; rather he said do not be obvious about it. Don't seek Man's praises and admiration for being a 'Holy Joe' - that's hypocritical.

- *Committed to regularly praying on the streets...*

Prayer walking an estate or area does not have to be a one off event. Building up a strategy for prayer walking is really simple. In fact all you need is commitment from one or more people and somewhere to walk!

It could be members of the school or college CU walking round the campus; Mum's prayer walking to and from school; around the local shops, estate, or area where the Church building is.

Wherever it is, it's important that those concerned are committed to walk and pray regularly. Through committed prayer walking more of a spiritual picture and results can be measured.

Some Churches begin by prayer walking their local area and then after a while knock on people's doors telling them that they have been praying for their street and inviting people to give them any prayer requests.

- *For the needs they see and hear...*

Prayer walking can be very exciting and you'll probably see the streets in a very different way as a result. As you pass people silently pray for them and for God's will to be done in their lives. Pray for families, single people, the lonely, the old, those with disabilities, children and young people. You'll walk past homes with financial hardships, family tension, and sickness. Other homes will be happy places and full of joy; pray that they would acknowledge God for all their happiness. You may decide to prayer walk around the area and stop to pray at buildings with specific community functions. At the Police station or Court building you could pray for justice and those involved in law enforcement; stop and pray for local Christian unity at the Churches in the area; or perhaps you could stop and pray where the young people congregate at night.

Whichever form of prayer walking you choose, the important thing is to prayer and walk.

Selected handy hints:

- Keep your eyes open;
- Use different types of prayer - silent, conversational, liturgical, corporate etc. Don't shout!
- Debrief the group afterwards. Write down for future reference what was said and prayed.

I heard of two teenagers who read in their local free newspaper of a series of burglaries in a street near where they lived in Dorset. The Police were appealing for witnesses as none of the residents had seen anything.

Together the boys decided to prayer walk the street asking God to move in the lives of the inhabitants. One of the prayers they asked of God was to make the inhabitants more vigilant in reporting suspicious behaviour of strangers in the neighbourhood. By the time the lads had reached the end of the street a Police car was there to meet them. They were duly asked to get into the car and driven off to the local Police station. Here they learned that their prayer had been answered and that 4 residents had informed the Police of two young men acting suspiciously! It took sometime, but with their Youth Leader's and Pastor's help they were eventually released and were asked by one officer to keep praying as it certainly worked!

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