

## Guidelines for Prayer Ministry

(By Lyndall Bywater)

### Introduction

Prayer ministry is praying with and for another person:

'for them' – the emphasis is on them

'with them' – they are present at the time

There is no direct biblical example, but the early church prayed together and for one another all the time (Acts 1:14). Prayer was a foundational principle (Acts 2:42).

a) Why do we pray with and for others?

James 5:16a 'Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you will be healed.'

Being part of a body means we depend on each other and make ourselves vulnerable to one another. People who do prayer ministry best are those who are willing to be ministered to in prayer.

James 5:16b 'The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective.'

There is special power in this kind of prayer.

Certain blessings seem to only be unlocked when we get others to pray with us (Mat 18:18-20).

b) What are we actually doing in prayer ministry?

We are bringing people to Jesus.

John 6:68 'To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life.'

Jesus is the solution. Whatever style of praying you use, you must take the person to him.

Prayer ministry is not:

- Counselling
- Emotional manipulation
- Just positive thinking
- A problem-solving exercise

We need to be receptionists rather than managers. We don't sort the person out ourselves and only go to Jesus as a last resort. We take them straight to him.

We leave him space to work by his Spirit; we're not filing a complaint, we're entering his presence.

c) Who can do it?

Anyone. We all have equal access to God (Hebrews 10:19-22)

Different churches may have rules about who can practise prayer ministry in public situations. You must follow the rules of the place you're in.

As far as possible, we should only be ministering to people of the same gender as us (working in pairs with someone of the opposite sex can be useful).

d) How do we prepare?

- Clean heart: ask forgiveness and forgive outstanding grudges (Heb 12:15)
- Empty hands: lay down everything that's worrying you at the foot of the cross (1 Peter 5:7)
- Open mind: put your own agendas aside, especially if you know the person well (1 Thess 5:19)

## How do we do prayer ministry?

### 1. Distance and position

People remember their experiences of prayer ministry for the most mundane and unspiritual reasons. It's important to get it right.

What is appropriate in terms of physical distance/contact? An arm around the shoulders?

Don't put yourself directly opposite the person. They haven't come to see you, they've come to see Jesus.

Beside them and turning towards them is generally the best place to be.

Allow them privacy if they need it (let them look down/away from you).

Shield them from view if praying in a public place.

### 2. Be a blessing

Deodorant and breath-freshening mints are a gift of God!

### 3. Use touch wisely

Scripture advocates the 'laying on of hands'.

Physical touch can break down barriers and make people feel comforted and safe. (Jesus often touched those he healed, especially lepers, who were 'untouchable'.)

Always ask before you touch someone.

Put your hand on an appropriate part of their anatomy (arm, shoulder, back, etc.)

### 4. Ask what they want prayer for

Jesus asked people, even when the answer seemed blindingly obvious (Bartimaeus, etc.)

Never assume you know what people want/need.

### 5. React considerately to what they say

Try to avoid appearing shocked, even when people confess the most appalling things, or bring the weirdest requests.

Never trivialise what people bring – if it's a burden for them, then it's a burden worth praying for.

### 6. Get straight down to prayer

Don't start offering your own solutions or advice. If you have suggestions, introduce them later, when you've prayed.

### 7. Welcome the Holy Spirit

It's the Spirit of Jesus who will do the work, and it's important to invite him in.

As you start praying, set a calm, unhurried pace. People feel more valued if they don't think you're rushing them through a production line.

Give plenty of time and space for whatever God wants to do.

### 8. Be natural

Don't try and sound clever or theologically water-tight. Just be yourself. If your prayer sounds stupid, don't worry... it isn't.

Let the Holy Spirit work in you too – if you start crying, go with it. People are blessed when those praying for them are moved by what they're going through.

Don't try to make your prayers long. Just say what's on your heart to say.

Pray out of truth which you know in your own life ('Lord, thank you that I know you are loving and faithful').

Use loads of Scripture in your prayers.

### 9. Give silence and space for the Spirit to work

We need to stop talking to really let God speak and the Spirit move.

When you're about to go silent, tell the person what you're doing, so that he/she doesn't think you're waiting for something from him/her.

Remember, time passes slower for the pray-er than for the prayed-for.

If it feels uncomfortable, pray (perhaps in tongues) under your breath.

Use the silent times to listen to God.

### 10. Watch!

Don't shut your eyes. Keep alert to what is happening.

## What Next?

God is faithful. When you pray, you can expect him to do something. Jesus always did something for those who came to him, even if it wasn't what they wanted or expected.

Many of us struggle with feelings of inadequacy ('I'm not good enough to do this'). Ignore those feelings – they're not telling you the truth.

### 1. It seems like nothing is happening

Not everyone experiences God in an outward, visible way. Some people get stiller and quieter the more God is doing in them.

If in doubt, ask.

Don't write off the still, silent moments – they can be the deepest and most powerful.

### 2. The person starts to cry

Let it happen, and have some tissues to hand!

In most situations, it will be appropriate to give some physical comfort (an arm around the shoulders).

Sensitively ask why the person is crying.

If they are crying too hard to speak, carry on praying. Don't embarrass them by making them think you're waiting for them to say something.

### 3. There are physical signs of the Spirit

These may be: shaking, falling, groaning, jerking, crying, etc.

Don't be fazed, even if you've never seen it before. Go with the flow.

Ensure they are physically safe (fall into an open area, for example).

Put them at their ease. Explain what is happening, especially if they've never experienced these things before.

Ask them what is going on inside. Manifestations never just happen for the sake of it. God is always doing something.

If they don't know, don't worry. Just keep praying.

If ever you're concerned or anxious, feel free to close the session down (pray blessing and seal up what God is doing).

### 4. There are signs of demonic activity

Signs may include: physical pain, nausea, pressure or feelings of strangulation, hearing disturbing noises/voices, feeling cold or very fearful, etc.

You may also observe a reluctance to make eye-contact, or a very vacant expression in the eyes.

You may find that certain phrases you use trigger certain reactions (esp. the name of Jesus or phrases from Scripture).

Keep asking what's going on, and keep talking. The important thing is what's going on inside. The manifestations are just signposts.

Dealing with demonic activity:

Attack = oppression or harassment. Pray for protection.

Strongholds = things which have a strong hold; footholds which have become habits (Eph 4:27). Pray for healing of wounds, and ask the person to forgive and ask forgiveness.

Demonic presence = the presence of an evil spirit in someone's life. Pray for deliverance.

#### Deliverance guidelines:

- Work under authority, with permission from leaders
- Work in partnership; never do deliverance on your own.
- Choose a sensible time and place
- Know your identity in Christ (Mark 16:17). It's not an equal fight. You have the upper hand in Jesus.
- Get yourself right with God. The enemy doesn't play fair.
- Know what you're dealing with, if possible. Be specific about which spirit you're casting out.
- Make sure the person understands and wants deliverance
- Tell the evil spirit to leave; it will have to obey you.
- Be calm and don't shout; demons are not deaf.
- Keep explaining what you're doing.
- Be prepared: departing demons may make the person violent, convulse, vomit or speak in strange voices.
- When one has gone, it may be appropriate to ask if there are more.
- If you feel you can't do all that needs doing, don't be afraid to stop, and seal up what has already been done.
- After any deliverance, ask God to fill the person up with his Holy Spirit. Don't leave the house swept clean but with nothing to fill the gaps.

#### 5. The person needs healing

- Be sincere, honest and real
- Ask what the person wants healing for
- Lay on hands or anoint with oil if appropriate
- Clear everyone's agendas: invite the Holy Spirit to do whatever he wants.
- Pray in faith and expectancy.
- Pray boldly and specifically for what the person wants.
- Ask them if anything is happening.
- Go with the flow of whatever the Spirit is doing.
- Whatever happens in the end, leave it with God. (It's not your fault if healing doesn't happen there and then.)
- People are rarely prayed for and not blessed!

#### 6. It's finished and it's time to close up

Ask the person if there's anything else they want you to pray for.

Ask God to seal up what he's done, so that none of it is stolen or disturbed, and so that the work can be continued on another occasion.

Pray protection and blessing over the person.

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