

trypraying.

THE MORNING OF A JOB INTERVIEW. THE NIGHT WHEN A FAMILY MEMBER WAS SICK. THE FIVE MINUTES BEFORE AN EXAM. MOST PEOPLE HAVE PRAYED IN MOMENTS OF DESPERATION. WAS SOMEONE LISTENING? WAS THE PRAYER ANSWERED? PEOPLE FIND PRAYING HELPS AND HAVE HAD ANSWERS. THIS WEEK YOU CAN FIND OUT IF SOMEONE DOES LISTEN AND CARE.



Produced by There Is Hope (SC013251)
In partnership with HOPE Together www.hopetogether.org.uk.
Email booklets@trypraying.co.uk for more copies
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Designed by teviotcreative.com

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100 MILLION ADULTS

IN THE U.S. PRAY.

73 MILLION PRAY AT LEAST

ONCE A MONTH AND 58

MILLION EVERY DAY.

ONE IN THREE PEOPLE

BELIEVES GOD WILL ANSWER

THEIR PRAYERS.

A woman with short dark hair, wearing a white and black striped short-sleeved dress and black boots, stands with her back to the camera against a large, textured stone wall. She is holding a black leash that extends to the right, where the rear end of a dark-colored dog is visible. The scene is lit from the side, creating strong shadows and highlights on the stone wall and the woman's dress. The overall mood is contemplative and quiet.

TRY PRAYING

Use your own words, or you could say this: 'God, if you are there – and I am not sure you are – but if you are, I want to know you. I don't want to fool myself; I really want to know you. So as I pray this week please make yourself known to me.'

PRAYER IS CONVERSATION WITH GOD. YOU DON'T NEED TO USE SPECIAL WORDS OR A SPECIAL VOICE. YOU CAN PRAY OUT LOUD OR SILENTLY. GOD KNOWS WHAT YOU THINK AND IS AWARE OF ALL YOU DO. YOU CAN TALK TO HIM ABOUT ANYTHING.

Something missing?

Even with a full life we can feel empty inside. Yet some people face health scares, get stressed about money or worry about relationships. Others suffer from depression. Whatever it is, you know you could do with some help. God is good and often meets us when we reach out to him.

This week you could find the help that's been missing.

Open minded?

You don't have to have a problem to pray. Many people simply want to know if there is something that can make sense of life. You are open minded and willing to check things out. Pray for seven days and discover the adventure of a lifetime: getting to know God!

This week could open your mind to new possibilities.

A photograph of a woman with long dark hair, wearing a dark dress with large white polka dots. She is sitting on a light-colored sofa, and her right hand is raised towards her face. The background is softly blurred, showing what appears to be a brick wall. The overall lighting is warm and natural.

YOUR
SEVEN
DAY
PLAN

Getting started

What to do

Find a time and a place that will suit you. Read this booklet one day at a time. Try to keep going for a week, but don't feel guilty if you miss a day. You might like to tell a friend you are doing this and talk about how it is going.

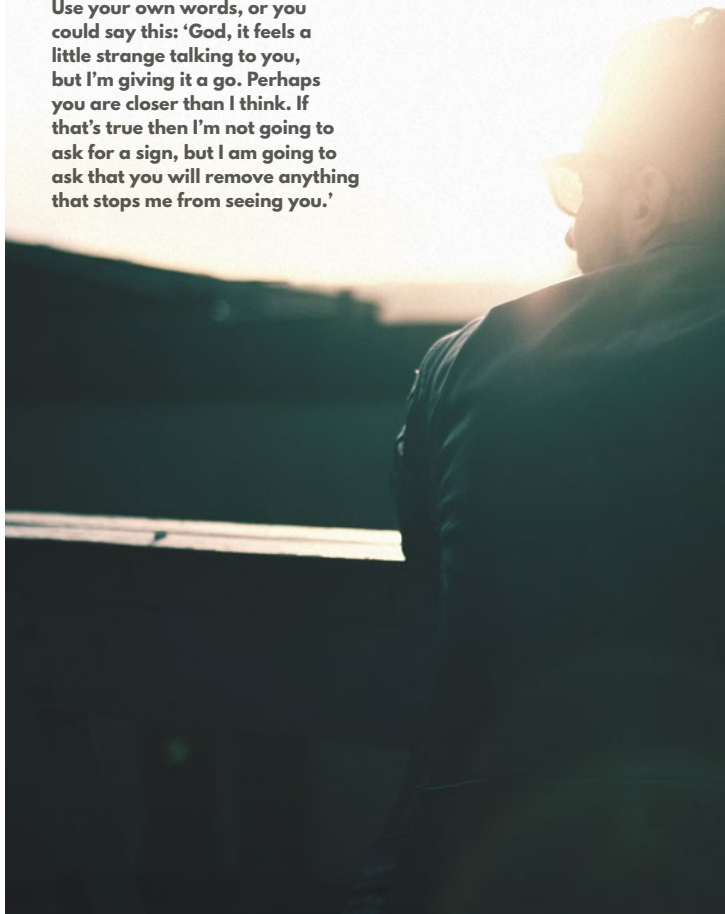
Big issue?

Do you have a 'big issue?' This is something that you really want God to do something about. Pray about this each day and see what happens. Is there someone you're concerned about? Why not pray for them – or with them – during this week?

Your big issue

TRY PRAYING

Ask God to help you believe. Use your own words, or you could say this: 'God, it feels a little strange talking to you, but I'm giving it a go. Perhaps you are closer than I think. If that's true then I'm not going to ask for a sign, but I am going to ask that you will remove anything that stops me from seeing you.'



Impossible

DAY 1

Anyone there?

Maybe God is closer than you think. Imagine a conversation between twins in the womb. Stupid idea, because they can't talk. But go with it for a minute:

One says, 'We've got a mother who has made us and is all around us. One day we will meet her.'

The other says, 'I'm not so sure about this idea of a mother. I don't think there is anything outside this life. We've got all we need and we've got each other. There is nothing more than we can see and feel here. I find the idea of having 'a mother' rather unscientific, amusing in fact.'

Whether they believe in a mother or not their world will soon be shaken by enormous contractions.

Ok, illustrations are limited, but the point is someone is closer than you think. There's an old saying that 'In him (God) we live and move and have our being.'

People often struggle to find God in their lives, but the truth is he's all around us. We can reach out for him and find him because, in fact, he is not far from anyone.

God is interested in us and we are in some way made like him – in his image. It makes knowing him a genuine option.



WISE WORDS

HERE'S A PIECE OF A CONVERSATION BETWEEN JESUS AND A MAN WHO WANTED HIS SON TO BE HEALED – ENCOURAGEMENT FROM JESUS AND HONESTY FROM THE FATHER. JESUS SAID,

'EVERYTHING IS POSSIBLE FOR ONE WHO BELIEVES.' IMMEDIATELY THE BOY'S FATHER EXCLAIMED, **'I DO BELIEVE; HELP ME OVERCOME MY UNBELIEF.'**²



TRY THIS

Something you can do today...

Phone

Every time you pick up your phone pray, 'God, I need communication with you.'

Your big issue

- If you have an issue in your life in which you need God to make a difference, pray about it. Ask him about it right now. Be encouraged – all things are possible with God.
- Have you a friend or family member who needs help? Why not pray for them each day this week as well?

Something happened

DAY 1

David Hill, husband and father

I was a student studying math in college. I would have described myself as an agnostic and happily so. But I was provoked by the confidence of some Christians I met and argued with them over many months. I gradually became persuaded there was more evidence for the life of Jesus than I had thought.

Slowly the issue changed. I was not being asked to trust something rather flaky but to trust something that was really quite convincing. It seemed there was good evidence. Maybe Jesus had lived. Maybe Jesus really had risen from the dead. But as yet I was not sure.

Months passed but eventually I got to the point of giving it a go. With math books in front of me in the university library, I prayed asking Jesus to make himself real to me. It was an important decision and

I expected something to happen. But nothing did. Two weeks later I prayed again having decided that I would count on God making himself known to me throughout the course of my life. I suppose that was when I trusted him.

The next day something unusual happened. Alone in my room I experienced a quiet and undeniable assurance that Jesus was alive and that his Spirit was in my life. The experience became overwhelming lasting several hours. I hadn't known feelings like it. It was from then on that life began to change. God had begun to answer my prayer.





TRY PRAYING

Pray in your own words or use the following prayer. 'God I want to understand this idea of persistence. I need you to do something in a number of areas of my life. So I'm asking you to give answers. And I'm choosing to believe you are good and you only give good things.'

Nerve

DAY 2

Imagine what would happen if you went to a friend in the middle of the night and said, 'Can you lend me some bread. Someone has just turned up and I don't have anything to give him.' But your friend answers, 'Don't bother me; we're all in bed. The door is locked, the children are asleep; I can't get up and give you anything.'

But if you show some nerve and keep knocking, risking waking the neighbours, even if he won't get up because he is your friend, he'll finally get up and give you whatever you need because of your persistence.

This scene was described by Jesus centuries ago. He was really talking about prayer: 'Here's what I am saying: Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened.'

Jesus then went on to say this: 'Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!'

When we find ourselves in a tight spot we should keep on praying believing God gives good things. So ask!



WISE WORDS

WE DON'T HAVE TO BE IN A MESS TO ASK FOR HELP BUT SO OFTEN IT'S WHEN WE REALLY CALL OUT TO GOD THAT HE MEETS US.

I WAS A NOBODY, BUT I PRAYED, AND THE LORD SAVED ME FROM ALL MY TROUBLES.⁴



TRY THIS

Something you can do today...

Stone

Carry a stone with you and every time you put your hand on it pray, 'God, I want you to be the solid thing in my life.'

Keep praying for

- Your big issue – the area in your life where you most want God to work.
- Others – your friend or family member who needs help – perhaps especially with the idea of finding meaning to life.



Something happened

DAY 2

Julia Clapp, Youth worker

On a trip to Ibiza I fell into conversation with a tourist who was limping. He happened to be a doctor. As we talked he said he wasn't sure whether or not he believed in God; more particularly he didn't think God was concerned about him. But he told me he had really hurt his foot that day and was finding it difficult to walk. He thought he had broken his toes and as he was a doctor he probably had quite a good idea.

I summoned my courage and asked him if I could pray with him for God to heal his foot. He kept saying he was unsure about that because God had bigger things to deal with. Nevertheless I told him that I thought God would love to heal him and that I would pray for him later, which I did.

About an hour later that same night I saw him again. He made a point of coming over to talk. He told me something had happened. Quite incredibly, his foot had got much better which he demonstrated by standing on tip toe – quite a difference from earlier! He was astounded and even went as far as to say it was miracle. He said he would have to 'look into God' when he got home.

I learned a lot from this. I've gone from thinking God might heal to knowing he can.



A person wearing a dark hoodie is seen from behind, standing in a dense forest. Sunlight filters through the tall trees, creating a dappled light effect. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

TRY PRAYING

God, I recognize that the world has gone wrong in many ways and I want to be part of something better. I'm sorry for my own part in making things go wrong and I ask you to make me someone who is connected with heaven.

There's got to be something better

We live in a rich country but we are not happy. We have accumulated unsustainable levels of debt. Sexual freedom has brought about the disintegration of family life. We are eating and drinking ourselves to death. Depression and despair drive suicide. And politicians and community workers are searching for answers.

Are we missing something?
Is there another way of living life?

20 centuries ago Jesus' first words were an invitation to live life differently. He invited people to change their thinking because there was a new world order about to break in. He said that heaven was going to come to earth – in fact had already come. It was going to begin with him and would roll down the centuries through the lives of people.

It is estimated that there are 2.2 billion people who have some loyalty towards Christ today – more than any other world religion and still increasing. But becoming religious is not the point. Many so called religious people miss the point. What matters is that we become part of this movement for change.

Jesus had a manifesto (printed on page 18). It was what he wanted to do for people. Heaven was poised to affect human lives – positively. Jesus' invitation to 'change our lives because God's kingdom is here' remains as contemporary and relevant as ever.

Heaven is knocking at your door, not to condemn you, but to give you a new quality of life!



WISE WORDS

THIS IS WHAT JESUS SAID HE CAME TO DO. IT'S HIS MANIFESTO:

THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS ON ME, BECAUSE HE HAS ANOINTED ME TO PREACH GOOD NEWS TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM FREEDOM FOR THE PRISONERS AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT FOR THE BLIND, TO RELEASE THE OPPRESSED, TO PROCLAIM THE YEAR OF GOD'S FAVOUR.⁵



TRY THIS

Something you can do today...

Key

Every time you use a key today pray, 'God, unlock my life to your influence.'

Keep praying for

- Your big issue – the area in your life where you most want God to work.
- Others – your friend or family member who needs help.

Something happened

DAY 3

East Germany

1989 was the year that the Berlin wall came down and 10 East European nations were released from communist rule. Historians will cite many reasons for this change. However one factor is often overlooked: a prayer meeting in Leipzig.

For 40 years the church in East Germany had been seeking to be good citizens while praying for better things. They had cared for the poor and met every Monday to pray and worship. Since 1982 Pastor Christian Fuehrer had been gathering a few dozen people in his church to pray. Seven years later four churches were holding weekly prayer meetings, and the numbers began to grow attracting ordinary citizens. After the meetings candlelit peace marches through the city took place.

The media in the West picked it up and the communist authorities debated how they could stamp it out. The secret police issued death threats and roughed up some of the marchers. But the crowds kept coming. Eventually as many as 50,000 came.

On 9th October 1989 police and army units moved into Leipzig. People feared a massacre and hospital emergency rooms were cleared. Honecker, the East German leader, gave permission to use force, but the prayer meeting and the march went ahead. 70,000 people marched, the following Monday 120,000, and a week later 500,000 were on the streets. By November one million people marched in East Berlin.

Then something amazing happened. People started crossing to West Berlin and the police stood by without a shot being fired. The Berlin Wall and all it symbolized had just crumbled.



TRY PRAYING

Jesus, there's something about you and what you say that challenges me. Now I'm invited to put my faith in you. I don't find that easy. I'm on the fence and I want to get off on the right side. But what I know of you I like, so perhaps I can trust you.

Faith

DAY 4

There was a woman who had been ill for ages. She had tried all the help the doctors could offer and spent all her money in the process. But this particular gynaecological problem was not going away. She had one last hope. Jesus had been healing all sorts of people from all sorts of problems. Perhaps, she thought, he could sort her condition.

So she mingled with the crowds around Jesus as he was going to see someone. There were many people and she didn't want to draw attention to herself, but she pushed through the crowds, reached out and caught Jesus' cloak. Suddenly she knew she wasn't ill any more.

Jesus said it was her faith that healed her.

She believed he could make the difference in her life. But she had to do something. She showed her faith by going to him and touching him. That was when power came out of him to heal her. She knew she had been healed. ⁶

Faith is what makes the difference between the many that just hang around and the one who really connects.



WISE WORDS

THERE ARE NO REQUIREMENTS TO COMING TO GOD. WE DO NOT NEED TO BE SQUEAKY CLEAN. GOD ACCEPTS US AS WE ARE – ALL WE NEED TO DO IS TO BELIEVE:

AND WITHOUT FAITH IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO PLEASE GOD BECAUSE ANYONE WHO COMES TO HIM MUST BELIEVE HE EXISTS AND THAT HE REWARDS THOSE WHO EARNESTLY SEEK HIM.⁷



TRY THIS

Something you can do today...

Walk

As soon as you start walking from your home pray, 'God, please walk through the day with me.'

Keep praying for

- Your big issue – the area in your life where you most want God to work.
- Others – your friend or family member who needs help.



Something happened

DAY 4

Jason Cruisey, Builder

For some years I had a very unhealthy lifestyle through drink and heavy drug use. It had brought on an ache-like pain in my kidneys for about five years. I began going to the doctor with it, and he said that there was nothing they could do. So for another eighteen months I struggled with the pain, and regularly went to the doctor for it.

I decided to attend an Alpha course⁸, because I was investigating Christianity for myself. During the course there was an opportunity for prayer for healing. So I was prayed for. I experienced something for the first time ever. I felt the tangible power of God on my body. From the next day onwards I never again experienced that sort of pain.

That happened some years ago, and I am still healed: praise God!



Are you noticing anything happening in your life as you pray?



TRY PRAYING

God, there's a mystery here. But if you really did die for me then the least I can say is thank you. I'm sorry for my failure to do what's right. Thank you for your love for me and for forgiving me.

People make a lot about Jesus dying on the cross. So a good man dies a horrible death. That's happened to many others. What's so special about him?

The reason it was special is because Jesus died for a purpose. Most people know they will die, but hardly any say they are dying for the sake of others. Yet Jesus said this many times. He would lay down his life because of his love for people. In an unusual way his death was like paying a ransom to get people out of a fix.

The 'fix' is serious. People are loved by God but are not living the way he intended. As a result we have run out of credit and are in significant moral debt – with eternal consequences.

So Jesus' death was a way of writing off our debt. God himself – in the person of Jesus – paid the ultimate price to set people free.

How does it work? It is something of a mystery. But as Jesus was a perfect human – the God/man – he entered death on behalf of the human race and emerged from it alive again. Like a football team or an athlete representing a nation, Jesus represented the human race. He endured and defeated the worst thing imaginable, the judgement hanging over us, so we can be free.

It was so impressive that those who witnessed him dying said this man really was the Son of God. A writer at the time explained it saying 'God proves his love for us in that while we were still sinners Christ died for us.'⁹

The result of it all is astounding. Instead of being condemned and in debt we are freed, forgiven and in credit. People have been in awe of this demonstration of God's love ever since.



WISE WORDS

FROM AN ANCIENT PRAYER HERE'S A RICH STATEMENT OF WHAT GOD IS LIKE:

BUT YOU, O LORD, ARE A COMPASSIONATE AND GRACIOUS GOD, SLOW TO ANGER, ABOUNDING IN LOVE AND FAITHFULNESS. TURN TO ME...¹⁰

AND HERE IS WHAT JESUS TAUGHT US TO PRAY:

FORGIVE US OUR SINS, AS WE ALSO FORGIVE EVERYONE WHO SINS AGAINST US.¹¹



TRY THIS

Something you can do today...

Draw

Take a piece of paper and write on it anything you feel ashamed about. Then draw a cross over all you have written and thank Jesus for paying your debt. (When you have finished shred the paper!).

Keep praying for

- Your big issue – the area in your life where you most want God to work.
- Others – your friend or family member who needs help.



Something happened

DAY 5

Bonny, Social worker

As a child I suffered years of abuse. Even into my thirties I had flashbacks of the terrible things I suffered. Years of hating people who had hurt me left me with a very bitter heart. I was often ill and in complete distress with physical and mental pain. Having become a Christian at the age of 31 the issue of forgiving those who hurt me reared its head. I did not want to do this. I recall banging my fists on the floor and telling God in no uncertain terms that I would not and could not forgive.

But as time went on I began to realize forgiveness was not about those who had hurt me. It was about the damage that not forgiving was doing to me. I learned that forgiving is a decision I could make, not a feeling I should feel. So I said these words, 'God I do not feel like forgiving but as an act of my will I choose to forgive. I ask that you forgive the people who hurt me and forgive me for all the wrong things I have done.'

An amazing thing then happened. As I forgave, God took away the dreadful flashbacks and pain I had felt all those years. The flashbacks began to get less and less and the physical pain in my body began to heal.

I now know that God can rewrite a life no matter how sad or painful it has been.

A person with short dark hair, wearing a red jacket, is shown in profile from the back of the head, looking out over a city. In the background, a large, ornate building with a prominent dome is visible, likely a government or institutional building. The scene is captured in a soft, slightly desaturated light, possibly during dawn or dusk. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

TRY PRAYING

God, I'm sorry for things that have spoiled my life. I must have offended you in it all as well. Please forgive me and help me to forgive myself. I ask that you would come into my life right now through your Spirit and make me the kind of person you want me to be. Turn on the ignition and let me really live as you want me to.

The ignition spark on the oven just wasn't doing anything. It was supposed to deliver the spark to the gas and then we could get cooking. But nothing. All the hardware was there. The oven, the gas rings, the gas connected. But no spark. It had become clogged with years of dirt and grease. It needed a clean.

Life. It's all there, but the spark is missing. As far as human beings are concerned we are not fully alive until we have the 'spark' of God's Holy Spirit in our lives. We were never meant to live life without him. It's as senseless as trying to cook without power. How do we get the spark?

Become religious? No. Pray hard? No. Go to church? No. None of these deal with the issue. We need to get rid of the dirt and press the 'ignition' button.

How? Don't cover up the dirt, but get rid of it. There's stuff that has spoiled your life – the grime and dirt has built up. You can be clean by asking God to forgive you for the wrong you have done. Admit it and say sorry.

Then ask for God's Spirit to come to your life to make you what you were meant to be. He comes to live in us empowering us to be what we should be. He makes us truly alive.



WISE WORDS

THESE WORDS HAVE BEEN THE INVITATION TO WHICH MILLIONS HAVE RESPONDED THROUGH THE CENTURIES. THEY COME DIRECTLY FROM JESUS AND ARE AN ASTONISHING OFFER TO GET TO KNOW HIM:

HERE I AM! I STAND AT THE DOOR AND KNOCK. IF ANYONE HEARS MY VOICE AND OPENS THE DOOR, I WILL COME IN AND EAT WITH THEM AND THEY WITH ME.¹²



TRY THIS

Something you can do today...

Door

Go to your front door and say to Jesus,
'Please enter my life today. You are welcome.'

Keep praying for

- Your big issue – the area in your life where you most want God to work.
- Others – your friend or family member who needs help.



Something happened

DAY 6

Julie Hartingdon, Children's worker

Some years ago I found a lump on my breast. Because I had already had to have one lump removed through surgery, I was very worried about it, and checked it out with the doctor; I was told that it was a tumour, and that they would continue to monitor it.



As each month went past I could feel this hard lump getting larger, and it became harder to trust God. On the day of my hospital appointment, the tumour was still there, and as my husband and I sat waiting for our appointment, I said to Chris, 'God didn't heal me then?' But Chris replied: 'Keep trusting God.'

I prayed to God once more, and went in to be examined. Within a short time, the consultant said in surprise: 'Are you sure it's the left breast?' He looked at my notes and examined me again, confirming that there was nothing there.

Finally, I checked for myself, and he was right: the tumour had gone!

TRY PRAYING

God I would like to have
an experience of your love.
I want to live my life with
you, trusting your love and
knowing that you are holy.



When God breaks through, people are awestruck. Life is never the same again. They see something that was always there, but they had never noticed. A process of change begins which affects how they think and what they do.

The Bible is full of stories of people who had experiences of God. One man describes what he saw and heard. It was so profound and real that the doorposts of the building shook and the place was filled with smoke. He writes, 'I saw God, seated on a throne – high, exalted.' He saw other beings and heard words being called out, 'Holy, holy, holy, is God almighty, the whole earth is full of his glory.' He realized that God was holy and that, in stark contrast, he and his society were foul mouthed and sinful.¹³

Another man describes a common experience: being overwhelmed by love.

He writes, 'Hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.'¹⁴

Many people think that the consequence of following Jesus is a life that is boring and dull. So they are stunned by his words when he said he had come to give life and life to the full.¹⁵

We may not have a dramatic experience of God. We certainly cannot demand it. But knowing that he loves us and that he is holy have a profound effect on us. They are the foundation of a relationship with him that changes our whole life now – and for eternity.



WISE WORDS

THIS LIFE IS NOT ALL THERE IS AND A BRIGHT FUTURE AWAITS THOSE WHO BELIEVE. THESE WORDS GIVE US A GLIMPSE OF THINGS TO COME:

**NO EYE HAS SEEN, NO EAR HAS HEARD,
NO MIND HAS CONCEIVED WHAT GOD HAS
PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM.** ¹⁶



TRY THIS

Something you can do today...

Look

Go to a place where you can see a view and pray, 'God you are bigger than this world and bigger than my biggest thought of you. So I want you to be the biggest thing in my life.'

Keep praying for

- Your big issue – the area in your life where you most want God to work
- Others – your friend or family member who needs help.

Something happened

DAY 7

Overflowing

Soon after the beginning of the Welsh Revival in 1904, a man called Joseph Kemp from Edinburgh went to Wales, where he spent a couple of weeks observing and experiencing the work and power of the Holy Spirit there.

On his return he attended a large meeting in Charlotte Chapel, one of Edinburgh's churches. As he recounted his experiences there was an eager response to his story. A man asked for prayer and was the first of hundreds who became Christians during the subsequent revival. For a whole year, prayer meetings were held, increasing in number and intensity, and characterised by passionate praying.

An account of one meeting reports that the fire of God fell. 'A sudden overwhelming sense of the reality and awfulness of his presence and of eternal things was experienced. Prayer and weeping began, and

gained in intensity every moment. Friends who were gathered sang on their knees. Each seemed to sing, and each seemed to pray, oblivious of one another.'

'Then the prayer broke out again, waves and waves of prayer, and the midnight hour was reached. The hours had passed like minutes. It is useless being a spectator looking on, or praying for it in order to catch its spirit and breath. It is necessary to be in it, praying in it, part of it, caught by the same power, swept by the same wind.'

One who was present says: 'I cannot tell you what Christ was to me last night. My heart was full to overflowing. If ever my God was near to me, it was last night.'

Questions?

How to pray?

Praying isn't just for the religious. Most people admit to praying at some time in their life even if they have given up on it later.

Jesus prayed. He seemed to have access to God like no one else. He was always doing miracles and teaching about life. But he also spent much time in prayer and taught about it. What did he say?

He said that faith was a crucial ingredient. He always responded to faith. On one occasion he said, 'Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it and it will be yours.'¹⁷ Prayer is not simply about the words we say it's about what we are thinking on the inside.

Jesus also said that forgiveness was important. 'And whenever you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive them so that your Father in heaven may forgive you'¹⁸ Forgiveness is a kind of currency. If we use it in our relationship with others then we will have it in our relationship with God.

Another ingredient is to keep going. He gave many illustrations about this: a woman keeping on at a magistrate until he granted her request¹⁹; a friend banging on the door at midnight until he got what he needed.²⁰ It seems that praying for something until we get it is what God invites us to do. Giving up at the first set back is not an option.



We have to be willing to accept God's answers when they come which of course can be 'yes', 'no' or 'wait'. Submitting our lives to his will is really the best thing for us. Praying with others and in harmony with them are other principles.

Perhaps we should check that there is nothing in our lives which offends God. If we cling to wrong doing in an area of our life then he will not hear our prayer.²¹ We can't claim to know God and live a life which is inconsistent with that relationship.

But the foundation for all prayer is knowing God in a personal way. That is what Jesus has made possible.

Ask and it will be given to you.

Questions?

Suffering?

War. Oppression. Earthquakes. HIV. Malaria. Cancer. Poverty. Death. Where is the good news in the midst of all this suffering?

There is a prayer which has come to us from the first century. It was taught by Jesus to his followers and became known as the Lord's prayer (printed opposite). A phrase in it is, 'Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.'

It's a potent request which Jesus included so that we ask for something better on earth.

It's fascinating because it completely turns on its head a common misunderstanding: when things go wrong people blame God. When suffering occurs people often think it is God's will. But what Jesus said kicks that into touch. It says God's will is often NOT being done! It's a mess and God is not happy with it. Bad stuff happens – really bad stuff.

This kind of language makes us realize things are not right. We live on a beautiful planet, but there are serious problems. It is occupied by a flawed human race. At times we do appalling things that bring suffering to others. In addition Jesus mentions circumstances and influences that test us and he says there is an 'evil one'. So instead of laying the blame for bad stuff at God's door we should put blame where it really belongs.

'Your kingdom come!'

We are invited to pray for God's kingdom to come; something which will make life on earth better. We can ask that things here would change and for God's will to be done instead. God's ultimate purposes will be fulfilled and he will right all wrongs. Not only that, but he is not uncaring as we face suffering but compassionate. His purposes for us are not frustrated nor is his love diminished.



The Lord's Prayer

This, then, is how you should pray:

**'OUR FATHER IN HEAVEN,
HALLOWED BE YOUR NAME,
YOUR KINGDOM COME,
YOUR WILL BE DONE ON
EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN.
GIVE US TODAY OUR DAILY
BREAD. FORGIVE US OUR
DEBTS, AS WE ALSO HAVE
FORGIVEN OUR DEBTORS.
AND LEAD US NOT INTO
TEMPTATION, BUT DELIVER
US FROM THE EVIL ONE. FOR
THINE IS THE KINGDOM, THE PO-
WER, AND THE GLORY. AMEN!'**

Questions?

Unanswered Prayer?

A man prayed for his son's epilepsy to stop. It didn't. Years of uncontrollable seizures robbed his son of language and ability. Prayer for a deaf boy left him unchanged. A good relationship spiralled into an abusive one and, in spite of prayer, separation was the outcome.

Where is God when he doesn't answer?

Prayer is a conversation between friends. It's not like sending an email off into cyberspace wondering if it will ever be read by someone. If we are in friendship with Jesus Christ we can be sure our prayers are heard. Fundamentally it is less about 'getting something' and more about 'knowing someone'. Our needs often propel us deeper into relationship with God.

There are times when we just need to keep going, knowing that it is not yet the end of the story. There's an old African proverb that says, 'No situation stays forever'. Often perplexing situations of unanswered prayer will yield to change as we persist.

Some things don't work out the way we wanted, but strangely work out better. And sometimes the thing prayed for would not have been good. It's only in hindsight that we realize it. But, agonizingly, some things do not work out and we may question whether God is really there.



The answers may not be understood until eternity. This life on earth is only temporary because we are being prepared for eternity in which there is reward and judgement. The next life is the real thing. The last book in the Bible has an incredible description of the future when there will be no more crying or pain. Perhaps then we will understand how close God has been throughout our life.

'He will wipe away every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'²²

Try telling God that you are willing to trust him – even with things that are confusing.

Questions?

Holy Spirit?

Listen to the things people talk about today and it is often full of spiritual stuff, whether getting in touch with your inner self, spirit guides or mysterious experiences. Dive into almost any civilization and people are aware of the spiritual, even in our secular materialistic world.

However the Holy Spirit is something else. Clear teaching from Jesus shows us that the Spirit is not an 'it' but a person. In fact Jesus told his followers that the Spirit would come and be his presence with them.. After he rose from the dead he told them to wait until he – the Holy Spirit – had come. They would be given power and led into truth through the Holy Spirit.

Today when someone trusts Christ with their life the Spirit comes to them as a sort of deposit on all the good things that are still to come.

He is the essence of God dwelling in us. The effect of this is that he makes us aware when we have done wrong and in a special way he lets us know, on the inside, that we are loved and belong to God as his children.

Try asking for God's Spirit to work in you.

Questions?



Deluded

Is it possible to have a faith based on facts?

Christians would cite many things, but one event stands out and invites investigation: **the resurrection of Jesus**. The documentary evidence surrounding this is convincing and open to examination. And the implications are significant: if it happened then all the rest is possible. If it didn't then, to put it bluntly, every Christian is deluded.

So what is the evidence?

The eyewitness accounts from the first century show that Jesus died as a result of crucifixion just outside Jerusalem. Because he had said on several occasions that he would rise to life again guards were put on the tomb to stop anyone stealing his body and starting a rumour.

But people started seeing him; many people and in different situations. Friends, sceptics and even opponents saw him alive. It is documented that as many as 500 saw him at one time. If this was all a rumour then the simplest way to put an end to it would have been to go to the tomb and produce his decomposing body.

But that was not possible. The tomb which had been protected by guards with a large stone in front of it was empty. Jesus was not there.

The historical evidence around this has been sifted and analysed over many years especially by those who wish to debunk it as myth. But it still defies any reasonable explanation other than this: Jesus said he would rise again, and he did.

What's happened?

It's good to think what has happened as you have used this e-booklet.

You might like to answer these questions for yourself:

What has changed during the days I have been praying? Has my attitude changed? Have my circumstances changed? Has my 'big issue' changed?

Am I getting a new understanding of God?

Above anything else Jesus wants us to believe in him (John Chapter 3 Verse 16). Would you say you now believe in Jesus?

You could look at this again in a week or a month.
Let us know how you got on with this e-booklet and what has happened. Send an email to office@fbcsj.com

Go wild

Give it to a friend

You can pass this e-booklet on to someone else.

Explain that you found it helpful and simply say,
"Why don't you try praying for a week and see what happens?"

Ask them how they got on when you next see them.

Next steps

If you have discovered something during this week then keep going! You've just started and it gets better. The main thing is to get to know more and more of God. You might like to:

- Tell a friend about your experiences. If they are not interested find a friend that is!
- Get more of the story. Read the Bible. It's full of wisdom for living and hope for the next life. Begin with the accounts of the life of Jesus. You'll be impressed. Read the Gospel of John. It's amazing.
- Check out some good web sites. Several are listed on www.fbcSJ.com which also gives access to the trypraying app and other useful articles.
- Check out a good church like First Baptist Church of San Jacinto, CA. Find one that helps you connect with Jesus.

Quotes

1. Prayer in the UK. Tearfund November 2007
2. Mark chapter 9 verses 23,24
3. Jesus' words in Luke chapter 11 verses 5-13
4. Psalm 34 verse 6
5. Jesus' words in Luke chapter 4 verses 18,19
6. Mark chapter 5 verses 24-34
7. Hebrews chapter 11 verse 6
8. The Alpha Course: uk.alpha.org
9. Romans 5:8
10. Psalm 86 Verse 15
11. Luke chapter 11 verse 4
12. Revelation chapter 3 verse 20
13. Isaiah 7th Century BC – Isaiah chapter 6
14. Paul writing in book of Romans chapter 5 verse 8
15. John chapter 10 verse 10
16. 1 Corinthians chapter 2 verse 9
17. Mark chapter 11 verses 24
18. Mark chapter 11 verses 25
19. Luke chapter 18 verse 4
20. Luke chapter 11 verses 5-8
21. Psalm 66 verse 18
22. Revelation chapter 21 verse 4

trypraying.