Welcome to the fifth Holy Habits weekly prompt on prayer – well done for sticking with it this far!

**How's it going?**

So how’s it going?  I’m finding that just taking those few simple steps in prayer are bringing God closer - and I do hope that’s true for you too!  There’s nothing much simpler than saying the Lord’s Prayer each day.  Yet to dwell on the first part and begin to express in a personal way that adoration and submission to God’s will is so profound, and surely must be transforming how you pray!

After sending last week’s mail, at our house group that evening what were we studying but the first few verses of the Lord’s Prayer!  (This was quite by ‘coincidence’, I should add …).  But what really stunned me was the recognition that when Jesus taught us to pray ‘Our Father in heaven’ it was to the God he wanted us to know as ‘Abba, Daddy’ (Mark 14:36).  Doesn’t that at once make prayer more intimate and personal to you?!

It prompted me to think of all the wonderful babies we have in church right now.  You can’t tell me that gazing on these little miracles doesn’t make you want to smile and your heart miss a beat!  Come on, you know you can’t help yourself!  And then it dawned on me: that’s the way God sees us!!  **Whether you’re 1, 31 or 101 God looks on you as his little child and delights in you as you take those faltering steps towards him in prayer.**  WOW!!

**Let's move on**

It would be easy just to leave you with that mind-boggling thought, but we’ve got more work to do!  So let’s now take a look at doing prayer differently.

Cor, where do you start with that one?  Well, yes, it’s a massive subject, and there will be as many different ways to pray as there are people on the planet – because we’re all unique with a unique perspective of God.  But there are a number of well-proven techniques out there, one or more of which might help you get more out of prayer.  Before looking at these remember, of course, that techniques themselves are only tools; they’ll have little effect if they’re not in the hands of someone who is passionate about doing business with God in prayer!

Personally, I’m attracted by the idea of the Prayer Hand, i.e. using the fingers on your hand to prompt different prayers.  (I find it’s always good to have a prayer to hand 😁).  There are a lot of variations even of this one prayer aid but I find one particularly helpful as described on the Church of England website (come on now, we’re all in this together, remember!):

1.      Thumb.  This is the strongest digit on your hand.  Give thanks for all the strong things in your life, like home and family, relationships that support and sustain you.

2.      Index finger.  This is the pointing finger.  Pray for all those people and things in your life who guide and help you.  Friends, teachers, doctors, nurses, emergency services and so on.

3.      Middle finger.  This is the tallest finger.  Pray for all the important people who have power in the world, like world leaders and their governments, MPs and local councillors, the Royal Family, leaders in business and commerce.

4.      Ring finger.  This is the weakest finger on your hand; it can’t do much by itself.  Remember the poor, the weak, the helpless and homeless, the hungry, the sick and those bereaved.

5.      Little finger.  This is the smallest and last finger on your hand.  Pray for yourself!

That’s just an example, so what about others then?  Well, here’s a small selection of straightforward personal prayer aids from ‘Holy Habits’ and also the Methodist website (we’ll look at prayer disciplines and corporate prayer later in the series):

         Prayer map – use a map to remind you of places and peoples to pray for.  That works not only on the world scale but also at national and local levels too (but let’s not be too insular – the poor people of Sulawesi island in Indonesia could certainly do with our prayers right now …).

         Rogues gallery – build a photo gallery/album of people to pray for, e.g. friends and family, members of your church, media personalities – even politicians!

         Prayer spaces – try to find/make a special place for prayer which you can go to from time to time.  It could be in your home or somewhere you can get to during your day (e.g. I used to find a quiet place in the Cathedral when I worked in the city centre).

         Pray your day – at start of day you can think of the situations you will face, and offer them to God; at the end, you can review what happened, and give thanks or ask God to step in.

         Prayer for the day – use a prayer handbook or a prayer app to prompt a prayer each day.

         Fridge prayers – put an important/pressing prayer on your fridge door to remind you (and it doesn’t have to be about food!).

         Prayer beads – use those prayer bracelets we created the first Sunday of the Holy Habits programme.  Even I could make one!

         Take a prayer walk – take a walk often (it’s good for you – get a dog if you need an excuse!) and pray as you go, perhaps prompted by the places you pass.

         Portable prayer list – use a notepad app on your phone (or write names/topics on blank business cards) and rotate through a few of these when you have an idle moment sat on the bus, waiting for an appointment, etc.

There are lots of others but you get the picture …

So, **here's this week's challenge:** select a technique from those described above (or use one that you know of from elsewhere) and try it out through this week.  By this time next week decide if it’s working for you – perhaps share with some friends who are working through these and see what they’re doing.  If you find one you like then do tell me, and I’ll pass it on.  Remember, it’s not any one technique that’s best, it’s just what works for you in making your prayer life more effective!

God bless you as you seek Him this week.

**What else can I expect?**

Next week – it’s time to look at praying in community and for the community.  (I know, you’ve been wondering when I’d get to that!).

And, yes, that **prayer event at Whirlow Grange on** **Friday 19th October, 6.30-9.30pm** is getting closer – have you booked your place yet?  If you want to get closer to God can you afford not to?!  Bye for now!

*I really hope that you find these weekly emails are ‘scratching where it itches’; if not, do tell me as I’m always willing to listen and learn!  If all else fails then, of course, just ask me to unsubscribe you.  Please do pray for me and all the Planning Group as we work through the Holy Habits programme, with our sole aim to help the church at Bents Green be better disciples of our Lord Jesus.*

*Produced by Martyn Read on behalf of the Bents Green Holy Habits Planning Group (Debs Barnett, Glenn Evans, Martyn Read, Graham Wassell, Daphne Wilkins, John Wilkins), and based on the* [*Holy Habits*](http://www.holyhabits.co.uk/) *discipleship material supplied by Sheffield Circuit.  You can find more information on the Circuit Holy Habits Programme* [*here*](http://www.sheffieldcircuit.org.uk/newsroom/holy-habits-an-adventure-in-christian-disciple.html) *(be warned: there’s some seriously challenging stuff in there!).*