Hello, faithful ones (well, you must be to have put up with me this long!).  Yes, here’s the sixth Holy Habits weekly prompt on prayer.  I wonder what God has to say to us this time?  (I’m never sure until it is all down in print!).

By the way, at the foot of this mail there's a bit more detail on the prayer event at Whirlow - don't miss it (or the event!).

**How's it going?**

Last week I left you with a range of ideas about how to pray in some new, imaginative ways.  How have you got on?  Found any that are helpful?  I’ve had some good feedback on the Prayer Hand prompt.  I’m starting to see that using this a couple of times a week (say) not only builds up a regular pattern of prayer for the different people who impact your life but also can make you more alert to pray ‘in the moment’ for those you come across on a daily basis, e.g. when someone serves you in a shop, when you visit the doctor/dentist, when you see a homeless person on the street, etc.  That’s a very healthy Habit to form!

Do let me know of any prayer aid that you’ve found works for you, and I’ll aim to share it before this series is over.  Thanks, and keep at it!

**Let's move on**

We’re now taking a look at praying in and for the community – that’s another big subject!  A point on definition: while ‘community’ can cover any grouping of people from 2-3 to the whole world I’m particularly looking at here the community (or communities) that you identify yourself with most closely.  That includes your closest relationships (family, a group of friends, groups within the church that you feel part of, colleagues on your team at work, neighbours you see often) and the wider communities you engage with (local shops and businesses, parents at the school gates, clubs, your local community more generally).

So, you’re involved with all these people in some way.  How often does prayer figure in your interactions with them?  You receive quite a lot from them collectively – just run through the Prayer Hand again if you don’t believe me! - but how much do you give thanks for them and ask God to bless them?  Whatever state of wellbeing they appear to have, how much do you want God to step in and bring his love and goodness into their life?

Let’s remind ourselves again of what Jesus teaches us through the Lord’s Prayer.  It’s ‘Our Father’, ‘Give us today our daily bread’, ‘Forgive us our sins’, and so on.  **The Lord’s Prayer is a prayer for the community of which we are a part**.  And it’s not just relevant to church; we can say this prayer on behalf of any and every community to which we belong.  How different the world would look if we all started doing that!

So, let’s get (more) community-minded in our praying.  Following on from last week’s prayer aids, here are some more suggestions for us as individuals or as a church to help get us praying for our community:

         Pray your Day – before you begin your day (either the night before or first thing in the morning) spend 5 minutes thinking about the day ahead, and pray for the people you will/might encounter as you go.

         Link up to pray with others who have a common passion/interest – form a commitment to pray together for that community.  Anyone can do this, not just those with time on their hands!  Through social media you can message one another, perhaps at a set time each week/fortnight, or set up a conference call for (say) 15 minutes.  All things are possible!

         Prayer walk around your community – take deliberate steps (literally!) to walk around/through your community, praying for the people within it as you go.  I used to do this on occasions in the office at work (usually when most people weren’t there!).  Pray for the spiritual atmosphere to change in that place, for ‘God’s kingdom to come’ to bring a sense of wellbeing about all that takes place there.

         Pray before each church service (how often do you/I do this?!).  Yes, I know this is church-specific, but remember that we also have people from outside the church joining us from time to time.  Pray for a tangible sense of God’s presence in the service, that will encourage the church and speak powerfully to everyone present.  This also applies to the groups that we run for the benefit of the community.

         Make prayer accessible to your community – provide ways for them to place prayer requests (yes, that’s for the church to do, but you can suggest ways we might do it!).  This one is looking at community the other way round: not us praying for them, but showing we care for them by allowing people to come to us with their prayer needs.  It can be surprising how much this is appreciated!

As last time, there will be other ideas, but hopefully these have sparked your interest …

So, **here's this week's challenge:** take one practical step towards more actively praying for your community.  Try any of the above suggestions, or use another you’ve come across: **the important thing is to get praying for the people around us, remembering that each one is loved by God and precious to him.**

**“I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people –**

**for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.**

**This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.”**

**1 Timothy 2:1-4**

God bless you as you seek Him this week.

**What else can I expect?**

Well, watch out – because next week we’re getting serious about prayer!

Now, that **prayer event at Whirlow Grange on** **Friday 19th October, 6.30-9.30pm.**  We’ve had a good response, but there’s still a few places left - contact me or Graham to get enlisted! A few words on format of the evening: it’s still being worked out, but what it WON’T be is 3 solid hours of heads bowed in prayer!  (Who’s that who shouted ‘Shame’?!).  We’re expecting that we will get underway proper at 7pm (after meet and greet, and coffee/tea/etc.), with the evening split into two or three sessions, comprised of input from our leader Joy Adams as well as active praying.  Hopefully I can firm this up next week.  See you then!

*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!).*