



Christ Church  
Winchester

# PRAYER MINISTRY GUIDELINES

September 2016  
(updated 2019)

Christ Church, Winchester  
Prayer Ministry Training - Theology

**Jesus and the Spirit**

From the very beginning - Jesus' ministry is one utterly dependent on the Spirit. John the Baptist said of him 'He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit' (Mark 1:8). As Jesus is baptised we read that the Spirit descended on him like a dove (Mark 1:10). The Spirit sent him into the desert (Mark 1:12). He returned proclaiming the good news (Mark 14). What did he proclaim....? 'The time has come. The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news....' (Mark 1:15).

**'The Kingdom of God is near....'**

What the people of the time were expecting was the imminent coming of the rule or reign of God. The present evil age, in which the Romans ruled, would be replaced by the age to come. God would break in, his messiah, his deliverer would rescue his people and God himself would reign. It was a very physical, material deliverance that people expected.

So when Jesus came and preached that the kingdom of God was at hand - people were listening to see exactly what he meant, what did he mean?

'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 the Lord's favour.' (Luke 4:18, 19)

This was in effect the declaration of war.... But not on the hated occupying Roman force.... This was war of a far more fundamental kind....

War on the powers of sin and evil that had held people captive.... The time is at hand.... It was the beginning of the

end of the rule of Satan....

Jesus preached about the kingdom, this new reign of God that had broken in to the present age through him....and so he didn't just preach, but demonstrated it by bringing God's liberation to those who had become oppressed or enslaved by Satan, through sickness or demonisation. A new rule, a new reign, a new age had begun in the spiritual world, the Kingdom of God was being manifested on earth.

And so....every miracle, whilst it was no doubt good for the person upon whom it was done, had even greater significance - it demonstrated the victory of God, and it meant one small step of advancement for the kingdom and one further defeat for Satan. A new age began in the life and ministry of Jesus - as prophesied by Zechariah 'The dawn from on high has broken upon us.' (Luke 1:78) And of course the most profound demonstration of that new age of redemption was in the cross....and the resurrection.... That proclaimed freedom for all from the powers of sin and death.

What Jesus didn't do was to announce that the battle was over....that the kingdom was fully in evidence....that we now longer have to struggle against sin and evil, disease and death. What he did announce was that the glorious and loving reign of God was breaking in, and that the Battle had begun that God ultimately does have the power over evil.

### **The Kingdom followers**

And it was for his followers to continue in that demonstration of God's power....because in Jesus a new age had begun, God's rule was being manifested....and in His name they exercised the power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus gave his disciples authority to 'drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.' The early church continued that ministry, Peter and John and the early apostles (Acts 3:1-10, Acts 5:12-16). Paul and Barnabas were also

enabled 'to do miraculous signs and wonders.' And the gospel they were proclaiming declared alongside these wonders that Jesus was Lord... As we hear in Iconium 'Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to do miraculous signs and wonders.' (Acts 14:3) The Lordship of Jesus is proclaimed in word but also in deed... The deeds of power confirmed the life changing impact of the gospel. They were demonstrating God's power over all that holds people captive. By doing so, they also were engaged in the battle.

### **The Kingdom - Now**

And so, as Kingdom followers today, we also believe that the Word and the Spirit go hand in hand as we pray for God's kingdom to come on earth.

In scripture there is clearly the expectation that the preaching of the gospel is also accompanied by a demonstration of the Spirit's power. We read in First Thessalonians 'our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction.' (1 Thess 1: 5) And nowhere in the New Testament is there the suggestion that demonstration of the Spirit's power was to be limited to a specific time - that is part of this new demonstration of God's rule that began with the ministry of Jesus.

And then also, as we read in 1st Corinthians, there is the expectation of the ministry of the Spirit within the body of Christ, His Church.

But Paul reminds us that as we are equipped by God's power, we also are engaged in the battle: 'For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.' (Ephesians 6:12) While we do see God manifesting his Kingdom, and building His Church, we also are reminded that the battle still rages.

## **The Kingdom - Still Waiting**

But is the battle over yet? No - and that is why we do still have to wrestle with sin and suffering and death. That is why Paul still had a thorn in his flesh, that is why Paul suffered for the gospel, that is why we still struggle in this age whilst we wait for the final triumphant revelation of Jesus Christ that will wrap up this broken world. That is why, even within the church, we still find sin, and suffering, and human need.

Paul speaks of the hope that 'Creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.' (Romans 8:21) We know only too well that we live in a world still in bondage to decay - still with earthly struggles - but we also know that freedom is coming.

And that is where we have to walk carefully between longing and praying for a demonstration of God's power in physical and emotional healing for people and understanding that this world is not yet made perfect in Christ that is to come. Christians will still get ill, and even die. And God's glory can be seen in faithful suffering as well as in miraculous healing.

### **So what about Prayer Ministry?**

And so....where does that leave us when we consider prayer ministry as we exercise it in the Church today?

Paul teaches about the work of the Spirit within the body of Christ, the Church. 'Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work

of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.’ (1 Corinthians 12: 7 - 11)

We minister in the Spirit, as we believe that God has gifted us, through the Spirit. For all those involved in prayer ministry it is because you, or the leadership (preferably both) sense that this is an area that God has gifted you for, to pray for the ministry of the Spirit to those in different situations, with differing needs. That ministry is done in love, simply and solely for the building up of the Body of Christ, a people in whom God reigns.

And so, ultimately in prayer ministry, we are praying for the loving reign of God, the Lordship of Christ, to be shown in and through the lives of those for whom we pray. Our prayer has to be Christ focussed, rather than simply a sort of counselling prayer - we are praying for God’s power, love, guidance, His loving reign to be known through His Spirit.

### **Healing....and more**

What are we praying for, though? Only healing? No.... If it is healing and healing alone that we pray for we miss out on commissioning, forgiveness, gifting, guidance, challenge, blessing, strengthening, encouragement, greater holiness. We may be laying hands on people in order to receive a spiritual gift, as the Spirit leads, as happened with Timothy. We read Paul’s instructions to Timothy ‘fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands.’ (2 Timothy 1:6) Perhaps the gift of leadership, or of teaching. Peter and John laid hands on believers who had not heard of the work of the Spirit, so that they might receive the Holy Spirit. In Acts 13 the church at Antioch laid hands on Paul and Barnabas empowering them for the mission they were called to do. Jesus simply laid hands on the children to ‘pray for them’ - it seems to have been a blessing on them. Prayer with laying on of hands is clearly not simply about crisis, but about the ongoing work of God in all of our lives, as He uses us for the extension of His kingdom.

If we are praying in the Spirit for each other then we are also praying for the rule of God to be demonstrated as the fruit of

the spirit is seen in our lives. We do believe that in prayer ministry God deals with our physical healing, and our emotional brokenness - but if this is the limit of the Holy Spirit's action then we can easily be focussed simply on our needs rather than on the wonder of God's action in using us to bring glory to him through the whole of our lives as we seek to serve him and listen to him and be used by him.

### **Prayer Ministry and Preaching**

As we have already seen, much of the miraculous manifestation of the Lordship of Jesus comes about alongside evangelistic preaching. In fact there is a very clear expectation that preaching the gospel is accompanied by 'a demonstration of the Spirit's power' - so that faith, as Paul says, 'might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power....' (1 Corinthians 2:5). What this doesn't mean is that prayer ministry is more 'effective' or more meaningful than proclamation - the proclamation of the reign of God in the Word is demonstrated to be true by the ministry of the Spirit in works of power. Neither operates effectively without the other. Ministry doesn't replace the Word; it demonstrates it to be true.

### **In Conclusion**

In prayer ministry we are engaged in a battle which is based on the sure and certain hope of the ultimate victory of Christ over evil. As we pray with people for the power of the Holy Spirit to be at work in their lives we are praying for the reign of God to be shown - for the Lordship of Christ to be made real. It's not about us making others better - it's about God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit, revealing to His people, and His world that His righteous and loving rule is breaking in. 'The Kingdom of God is at hand'.

Christ Church, Winchester  
Prayer Ministry Training - Values

**What is Prayer Ministry?**

There are many different types of prayer relationships - prayer partner, prayer triplets, house group prayer times, prayer counselling, church prayer meetings, etc.

Prayer ministry does not replace these - it operates alongside these as a one-off encounter in the context of a meeting, under the supervision of the church leadership, with the emphasis on listening prayer.

Prayer ministry should be normative, rather than crisis-orientated. Receiving prayer ministry is not just for struggling or hurting people. It can and should be part of the ongoing life of the whole church, with an emphasis on release into the freedom of Christ, with empowering and equipping for the Christian life.

**Basic Values of Prayer Ministry**

**Respect**

It's vitally important that we conduct prayer ministry in an atmosphere of respect for the person prayed for. This means we should seek to preserve their dignity, and we shouldn't be shocked by anyone's disclosure. We should be loving, and non-invasive in our approach.

**Expectancy**

We can pray confidently with people, knowing that God knows, cares, and acts, and that He answers our prayers. Jesus told his disciples that 'anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things that these....' (John 14:12)

**Confidentiality**

What is shared for the purposes of prayer ministry is to remain confidential between the person being prayed for, and the

people praying. You may feel you need to refer them on to someone if more prayer ministry is needed. Issues that might need referral include: mental illness, deliverance, or victims of physical or sexual abuse. It's important that you discuss this with them first, and either get their permission, or leave the initiative with them to seek further help. Remember, though, that this is a one-off prayer encounter, not an ongoing counselling relationship. It may be right simply to leave it with the Lord.

Clearly, however, if you are given a disclosure of child abuse by a child, you have a legal responsibility to pass this on. The current Christ Church child protection policy recommends that you inform the Bishop's Adviser for Child Protection.

### **Accountability**

Prayer ministry is to be done in the open, by recognised members of the prayer ministry team or by others selected by the church leadership. It is preferable to pray for a person in pairs, with at least one of the same sex, and where prayer is one-to-one, it should definitely be same sex.

### **Lifestyle**

Prayer ministry is an aspect of our life of integrity before God. Our prayer for others comes from the overflow of our own life of prayer. God is gracious and sovereign, yet we also have a responsibility to live in communion with God and with others, and to engage in prayer ministry after preparing our own hearts.

Being on the prayer ministry team is not life membership - it may be helpful to take a break from time to time for spiritual refreshment and renewal.

### **Listening Prayer**

In prayer ministry, our role is to listen in our praying:

To the person: even Jesus asked blind Bartemaeus, 'What do you want me to do for you?' (Mark 10:51) We should listen to what the person is seeking from God.

To God - are there any insights, words, pictures or Scripture passages that God has for us to share with the person? God

may give us an insight to pray for something that seems quite unconnected with the prayer request.

To the person who is also praying with you, and to the leaders of the meeting.

And finally remember, this is a one-off encounter, in which you meet someone, pray once with them, and leave them with the Lord. This is not counselling.

### Some Practical Guidelines

**It's all about you, Jesus....**

Remember that in all we do, we want to point away from ourselves, back to Jesus.

**So I'll let my words be few....**

This is God's work, not ours. We don't need to fill the silence with many words. Simple prayers are often best. Start by inviting the Holy Spirit to come, wait on God to see if he's saying anything specific, and then pray simple, short prayers as you feel led.

**Back to basics....**

Remember the place of repentance, and the place of forgiveness -the person may need to repent, may need to forgive themselves or another, or receive God's forgiveness.

**To lay hands on, or not to lay hands on, that is the question....**

Laying on of hands seemed to be a practice of Jesus and the early church:

- Jesus laid hands on people for healing prayer - Matthew 8:3; Luke 4:40.
- Paul used this for the bestowing of Spiritual gifts - 2 Timothy 1:6

But on other occasions, laying on of hands did not seem to be required:

- Jesus simply called Lazarus forth from the tomb.
- Paul looked at a lame man in Lystra and spoke a healing to him without touching him (Acts 14:9-10).

So there is little theological importance in whether we touch or don't touch. It's more a question of discernment and wisdom. Touch for one person can be reassuring, for another it can be invasive and threatening. It may help to ask permission before laying hands on someone, provided you are able to explain the practice to someone who is unfamiliar with it.

### **Who you gonna call?**

Don't attempt deliverance on your own - seek a second opinion.

### **Pictures and words:**

Offer them sensitively and provisionally - offer them in such a way as to give the person freedom to weigh it. Never insist that it is a word from God - remember that you could be wrong. Steer clear of prophesying marriage or babies.

We're organs, not channels - we don't deliver God's word undiluted to the recipient, but we do have a role as part of the body of Christ. We're both fallible and gifted, and our life experience and outlook naturally influences how we deliver prayer ministry.

### **Practicalities**

Pray in pairs, with at least one same sex. Where praying one-to-one, you must be of the same sex as the person you are praying for.

Keep an eye on the situation - it sometimes helps to pray with your eyes open.

### **Physical manifestations:**

Not be something to be afraid of - can be a sign that God is working.

Are by no means the only sign that God is working, and are rarely the focus.

Be wise about physicality - e.g. be prepared to catch someone who is swaying.

### **Initiating the prayer encounter**

Start by asking their name, and if there is anything specific they would like prayer for.

Invite the Holy Spirit to come.

### **The prayer encounter**

Wait for a moment in silence, asking God if He has anything specific for you to say - a word or picture, Scripture verse or insight.

Pray with few words - allowing space for God to speak.

It may be right to check with them if anything is going on - this may provide a key to further prayer. It may also be right to encourage them to pray as well.

### **Finishing a prayer encounter**

Encourage them to pray the issues through after they leave.

Encourage people to come back for more prayer if appropriate.

Consider whether a referral is necessary, and if so, make sure you get the permission of the person first.

It may be appropriate to seek prayer yourself afterwards - you've given out, and you may need to be refreshed, or leave issues in the Lord's hands.

## Knowing Jesus Christ and making Him known