

# proximity-

A book of...

## COMMON PRAYERS

...prayed by those on estates.

A short collection of devotionals and prayers based on common problems faced when serving your community.



## Introduction

Living on an estate, raising a family, keeping on top of money, being neighbourly, and rolling with the punches of life can be all-consuming. Who has time for anything else? We read about John Wesley spending up to eight hours a day with his heavenly Father, and guilt kicks in. We'd love that to be us, but the pressure of the day derails us.

We find ourselves squeezing in five minutes with Jesus, offering a quick-fire prayer up to the heavens now and then, barely scratching the surface of our relationship with God, but who has time to sit still and be silent? Answers rarely ping back as quickly as we'd like, leaving us feeling that time alone with God doesn't appear 'productive'. And we have that nagging feeling we should be making more of an effort. Possibly because our soul longs for connection. We were made to glorify and enjoy God forever. Our hearts know when they're being cheated of that joy.

The following pages are designed to give you a head start with your quiet time. Providing a thought, a line of scripture, and written prayers you can pray along with. This is a gentle call to intimacy with the Lord in response to some of the challenges we all face in estates ministry. Those moments where our insides are crying out, 'God, help!'

But isn't it cheating I hear you say? Shouldn't my prayers come from my heart? Undoubtedly, God loves to hear us express ourselves in our own words, but sometimes our desire to pray doesn't match our ability. Tiredness, sadness, distraction, burnout, depression can interfere with our capacity to pray. The hope of this tiny book is to help kickstart thought and reflection amidst all that busyness and difficulty.

Of course, Christians have long-recorded prayers for communal use too. Our faith is a family, with a tradition of using our brothers' and sisters' carefully crafted words as our own. You may wish to read the following pages quietly or aloud, or to even initiate your own conversations with God. However you choose to use this small collection of words, you can be confident God is listening. '...And if we're confident that he's listening, we know that what we've asked for is as good as ours.' 1 John 5:15 (MSG).

One final word. These prayers are written for healthy people living out the ups and downs of their faith on an estate. A person with greater psychological and emotional need may find the prayers helpful, but not at the expense of seeking professional help.

**'...AND IF  
WE'RE  
CONFIDENT  
THAT HE'S  
LISTENING, WE  
KNOW THAT  
WHAT WE'VE  
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1 JOHN 5:15 (MSG)

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# Day One

## God, I've been judgmental

*"If you judge other people, then you will find that you, too, are being judged. Indeed, you will be judged by the very standards to which you hold other people." **Matthew 7:1-2 (THE VOICE)***

### Thought

Jesus rubbed shoulders with all sorts. He hung out with crooks and thieves, extremists and extortionists, soldiers and the sexually promiscuous and his attitude was kind, forgiving, and understanding. But for the people who sneered down their noses at others? Well, that was a whole different ballgame. Nothing bothered Jesus more than those quick to write their neighbours off. That should tell us something about how seriously God takes it when we too play judge and jury over others.

Sometimes our attitudes catch us off guard. Our neighbours make choices, say things or behave in ways we don't like and WALLOP! Our inner judge brings down the gavel on them! Where did that thought come from? I thought I was better than that. Other times we blatantly bad-mouth someone. Both should take us to prayer.

Our urban and lower-resourced communities are frequently judged more harshly for their choices. For example, people on lower incomes may be judged negatively for owning a large television, whereas that same item owned by someone with a higher income would be deemed acceptable, heck, even



essential. This example comes from a celebrity chef and food campaigner who once told the Radio Times, '...I find it quite hard to talk about modern-day poverty. You might remember that scene...with the mum and the kid eating cheese and chips out of a Styrofoam container, and behind them is a massive f\*\*\*\*\* TV. It just didn't weigh up.' It's all too easy to jump down on people and find faults, especially when we don't understand their bigger picture. But if we don't want that critical spirit ricocheting back in our faces, we'd do well to follow Jesus' example of showing patience, kindness and understanding.

### Let's pray...

**Lord,**

Forgive my fault-finding and quickness to pick on people, and where I have jumped to conclusions and not seen the full picture. Forgive me for thinking of myself higher than my neighbour.

I turn away from criticism and I break partnership with a judgmental mindset.

Help me to see my neighbour as you see them.

Help me to assume the best of them.

Reform and reshape me to the best version of myself.

Thank you for your patience, kindness and understanding of me.

**Amen.**



# prayer

**GOD GIVE ME  
PROXIMITY TO  
THE PROBLEM,  
IMAGINATION FOR  
THE SOLUTION,  
AND PATIENCE IN  
BETWEEN.**

**AMEN.**

## Day Two

### God, this urban ministry stuff is tough

*"Remember, our message is not about ourselves; we're proclaiming Jesus Christ, the master. All we are is messengers, errand runners from Jesus..."*

**2 Corinthians 4:5 (MSG)**

### Thought

An older neighbour choosing between eating or heating. A family trying to live off one wage finding themselves unable to pay their bills. A young lad smashing up the shops because he doesn't know how to express himself. One mother burying her child as another waves her son off to prison. All your neighbour can think of is where his next drink is coming from. It seems everywhere you look people are drowning. But with limited time and resources, who do you help first?

Wait! Nobody asked you to be the saviour of your estate. That job has already been filled. So get off the throne and let Jesus reign again. Our Saviour will see breakthrough come in his own timing. Instead of forcing the kingdom's hand, trying to fix everybody's problems, take a step back and breathe. You're not called to carry their cross. So, what are you called to do?

In Galilee, the streets were full of sick people and those wanting to be healed. The place was overrun with need. Yet Mark 1:34 says, 'and Jesus healed many who had various diseases.' Many. Not all. Jesus only did what he saw the father doing. Feeling overwhelmed? Perhaps you're doing more than God is asking of



you. Ask yourself, 'What is God doing here and what is my true part to play?'

God was already present in your community before you turned up with your panic-driven timetable. Breathe. Look to God. Discern his voice. Because urban ministry is tough, but God's ministry is supposed to be light. He promises us, 'Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly.' Matthew 11:30 (MSG)

## Let's pray...

**Lord,**


I'm feeling overwhelmed and burnt out. I see many people drowning and I don't know what to do. Show me what I'm called to do and help me leave the rest to you. This is your work, your mission, and I turn it back over to you. Take me back to the place where you first called me. Excite my imagination once more, restore to me the joy of serving you in this community.

I'm sorry for where I have elected myself saviour of this estate and I resign from that post right now. I thank you for your work in this community and for allowing me to be involved too.

Bless my role and make it holy.

**Amen.**



An aerial photograph of a residential estate, likely in Glasgow, Scotland, featuring terraced houses and a park area. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The word 'prayer' is written vertically in a large, bold, blue sans-serif font on the left side, with a small orange horizontal bar above the 'r'.

# prayer

**GLORY BE TO THE  
GOD OF GRAFFITI,  
THE GOD OF GREAT  
TREES IN THE PARK,  
THE GOD OF GRAVE  
NIGHTS AND BRAVE  
MORNINGS,  
GLORY BE TO THE  
GOD OF THIS ESTATE.**

**AMEN.**



## Day Three

### God, I feel tired

*"Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace."*

**Colossians 3:15 (NIV)**



## Thought

'If I can just make it to Christmas.' 'If I just push through until summer break.' 'If I can just finish this project.' You know the feeling. Your mind says keep going, keep pushing, but your heart is telling you to stop. Most times the mind wins. So, we keep running from one commitment to the next, main-lining caffeine, and all the while our body is begging stop! We need to repent, to ourselves. We owe our hearts an apology for pushing and persisting instead of calling 'timeout.'

The road to burnout has warning signs along the way. Restlessness. Anxiety. Outbursts. Fatigue. Exhaustion. Sadness. The longer we keep driving without a rest, the further we find ourselves from equilibrium.

But there is more to rest than just lazing around watching TV and eating your way through a bag of crisps. In his book, 'The Way of the Heart', Henri Nouwen writes, 'When we have found our rest in God, we can do nothing other than minister. God's rest will be visible wherever we go and to whomever we speak.' Your estate is rife with tired souls trying to find their way through the dark. Are we any different?

Imagine if the key to transforming your community came from scaling back programmes and decluttering the diary. From withdrawing from busyness and entering God's rest. Because the closer we draw to God's heart, the easier it is to discern his rhythms.

Through prayer we find rest for our tired hearts, energy for our fatigued lives, sharpness to our vision. Weariness is a reminder to change the source of our energy, to switch from self-powered to God-powered. It's only when we charge our spiritual battery we find the get-up-and-go to face another day. When God's presence surrounds us, we are less bothered about pushing through projects- we find ourselves presented with opportunities, with words we might not ordinarily think of ourselves, and we carry the light of Jesus more visibly to those around us.

## Let's pray...

**Lord,**

I come to you tired and my brain is full and my body aches, my emotions are up and down, over and under.

I want to enter your rest. I want to feel whole again.

I give you the most difficult parts of my work, the hardest times of my day.

I am sorry for pushing through when I feel the nudge to stop.

Help me to declutter myself. Help me to slow down. To breathe.

In this moment I choose to breathe in your Spirit.

I choose to exhale the stresses and strains.

I praise you God for caring for me.

I invite your peace to rule my heart.

**Amen.**

# prayer

**BE STILL IN THE CHAOS,  
AND KNOW YOUR  
PRAYERS ARE HEARD,  
THAT YOUR PRESENCE  
COUNTS,  
I AM GOING TO FULFIL  
EVERY PROMISE I HAVE  
SWORN AS GOD.**

## Day Four

### God, my neighbour is an addict

*"But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, 'Lord, save me!'"* **Matthew 14:30 (NIV)**

### Thought

Being honest, each one of us has at least one thing we're overly devoted to. If we're not careful that one thing can dig its claws into our souls. We can end up clinging too tightly to it: sugar, entertainment, phones, gossip. Left unchecked these can eat away at us, leaving us pale imitations of ourselves. The outward signs of somebody dependent on drugs or alcohol may appear more dramatically visible than the rest of us, but aren't we all addicts?

It's never nice seeing people at their lowest, and addiction can magnify the brokenness in our humanity. The good news is God is in the business of restoring people to his original intentions for their lives. That's for us as well as our broken neighbours. Some of the most faith-filled people are those who can speak freely about their addiction. Recognising their own powerlessness and by surrendering to God, they receive a kind of holiness that Paul knew well, 'I will boast all the more gladly of my weakness, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me' (2 Corinthians 12:9). God can use addictions as roads to salvation.

When we present ourselves as well-balanced people, it's easy to convince ourselves we're doing a fine job of our lives without



God. An addict knows they need rescuing.

The challenges of living in proximity to someone battling addiction may present you with boundary issues. It might also mean you're able to support them or signpost them to professional help. However, this is a thought about prayer, and so we're focusing on addiction as one way of being led to Jesus. To a place where we stand in awe of the brokenness of our Saviour's body and of the salvation and freedom given to us. A place to bring your neighbour's brokenness in prayer for them to be made whole again.

### Let's pray...

**Lord,**

I ask you'd save me from those things I cling too tightly to.  
In the same way, I ask you'd save my neighbour from the addiction that's destroying them.  
Help me be the best neighbour I can possibly be in this situation.  
Let me love my neighbour as myself.  
Break the hold of this addiction over their life.  
Guide them to the best professional help.  
Restore them to the original design you had for them.  
Bring love, wholeness, and dignity back into their world.  
Use this addiction as a path to salvation.  
I bring my neighbour to you and ask by the broken body of Jesus that they will be made whole.

**Amen.**



# prayer

**AS FOR ME AND MY  
ESTATE WE WILL SERVE  
THE LORD!**

## Day Five

### God, where are you?

*"My heart is struck down like grass and has withered..." Psalm 102:4 (ESV)*

### Thought

God is always present. God loves us. God is everywhere. But what do you do when you read your Bible, but nothing leaps from the page, you sing worship songs, but your heart isn't in it, or your prayers end mid-sentence. What do you do when you've confessed every sin until your conscience is rung dry, and you've done everything you can to inch closer to heaven and yet still God feels distant? It takes a large dollop of faith to see our urban communities through hopeful eyes. So, when we struggle to feel God's closeness, how can we expect to see him at work on our estates?

Through these dry seasons, we've all asked, 'Where are you, God?' It might encourage you to know that the greatest of saints have been there too. Mother Theresa devoted her life to the poor in Calcutta once said, 'It's been so long since I've felt close to God that I don't remember what it feels like.' So know the truth that God is close to you, but be comforted by knowing that you're not alone feeling his absence. For whatever reason, we all experience periods of nothingness and Jesus himself echoed this spiritual loneliness from the cross, 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?' Matthew 27:46 (ESV)

But where do we take our prayers from this place? If you're feeling



spiritually dry, prayer can seem an empty exercise. We can lose our desire to reach God but Saint Ignatius simply advises us 'to pray for the desire to want to pray.' So let's do that together.



### Let's pray...

**Lord,**

I remember when I knew you were there and recall times when I felt excited by my faith.

Lately I have felt nothing. The silence has broken my heart and left me with unanswered questions.

Help me navigate these thoughts and feelings.

Let me find you again.

Increase my desire to pray. Strengthen my desire to desire to pray.

Bring me through this dry season into a place of greater intimacy.

**Amen.**



# prayer

HERE I AM, LORD.  
SEND ME OUT WITH  
A HEART FOR JUSTICE,  
A VOICE FOR GOOD NEWS,  
HANDS TO HELP,  
FEET FOR THE EXTRA MILE  
AND EYES TO SEE YOUR  
BEAUTY ALL AROUND ME,  
MAY I BE THE GOSPEL TO  
MY NEIGHBOUR TODAY.

AMEN.





## Day Six

### God, I'm too busy to pray

*"The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But you will not always have me." Mark 14:7 (NIV)*



## Thought

Wait! Hasn't Jesus been banging the drum for the poor. Those dripping in gold are going to find it easier pushing camels through eyes of needles than getting into God's kingdom. So, when the woman empties a whole perfume boutique over Jesus – don't the disciples have a right to be slightly miffed? What a waste! WRONG! There's clearly a place for us to contribute to the progress of humanity but not at the expense of worship. The woman pours out everything at the feet of Jesus and he promises, '...wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.' (Mark 14:9)

Faced with overwhelming need on your estate, it might be tempting to prioritise activism over prayer. Oswald Chambers would disagree, 'Prayer does not equip us for some greater works - prayer is the greater work.' Like the woman pouring out her fragrance, somebody dancing in the spirit or retreating to a quiet place to worship can feel extravagant, inappropriate or embarrassing. Especially when there's work to be done. Why is that?

Do we think Jesus isn't enough to fix all the brokenness? Must I be

the one to solve everyone's problems? Do we underestimate the power of prayer in our communities? Do we care more about what others think of us?

To live long-term on my estate maybe I need to flip my thinking. I must accept that worshipping God might mean saying 'no' to someone or something. Spending time in prayer might mean giving up one of my other commitments. If I have become too busy for God, I have lost the reason for my ministry. Poverty will always exist, and I can make my dent in it whenever I wish, but my doing shouldn't be at the expense of pouring out my worship to Jesus.

## Let's pray...

**Lord,**

Thank you for the gift of work.

I'm sorry for when I have become obsessive or held too high an opinion of it.

Help me keep balanced in doing my very best for my community whilst caring well for myself.

Help me to prioritise time with you.

I accept I am not the solution to everyone's problems and acknowledge you as my community's Saviour.

I repent for shrinking the value of prayer and I receive your wisdom in reorganising my diary.

Show me when to say 'yes' and where to say 'no' to the demands of my time.

Jesus, I want to return to the place of the woman who poured out her worship at your feet.

Let me extravagantly adore you with my valuable time.

I say I am not too busy to pray.

**Amen.**

# prayer

**CHRIST, MY LIGHT  
ILLUMINE AND GUIDE ME,  
AND BRIGHTEN MY STREET.**

**CHRIST, MY SHIELD  
OVERSHADOW AND COVER ME,  
AND SHELTER MY NEIGHBOUR.**

**CHRIST BEFORE ME, BEHIND ME  
AND ALL ABOUT MY DAY.**

## Day Seven

### God, someone has hurt me

*"Come to me all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28 (NLT)*



retaliation, or destructive behaviour. Come to the one wounded for you. Let him carry your heaviness. He will exchange his rest for your burden, are healing for hurt.

### Thought

Being fully human, Jesus must've felt deeply hurt by his friend's betrayal on the night before his death whilst his disciples slept and then Peter denies him. And then he's taken to the cross, facing the most painful death. Jesus knows what it's like to be let down by those he loves. He feels your pain. The question is - what do we do with that pain? Do we turn in on ourselves, building up a wall and promising not to let anybody else hurt us again? Do we turn to the one who hurt us? Bad-mouth them, cut them out of our circle. Or do we turn to Jesus?

At his most wounded, Jesus declared, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit' (Luke 23:46). The best place for our wounded spirit is in God's hands. We must trust that God will take our brokenness and raise us up back to life. That's not to say, we push our feelings down and paint on a smile. No, it is good to acknowledge the pain. It is healthy to confront the one who hurt us. But only after we've given our brokenness to God. Otherwise, we might find ourselves speaking from a place of hurt. That's the way of sharp words, flying fists and revenge. As the old saying goes, 'hurt people, hurt people.' If we bypass coming to Jesus first, knowing he understands our pain, we're likely to worship at the altar of self-pity, self-loathing, sarcasm, aggression, violence,

### Let's pray...

**Lord,**

I'm hurting. I want to choose forgiveness and yet I also want to choose hatred, self-pity, destruction.

Help me to be honest with my feelings. Help me also to not act harmfully because of my emotions.

I focus now on your brokenness at the cross. I acknowledge my sin placed you on the tree.

I thank you for your forgiveness and healing found at your wounded body.

I look at you in your suffering and know that I am not alone in mine. Help turn around this situation for goodness. Help me to heal and learn to forgive.

I ask you'd raise me from woundedness to life.

Breathe your resurrection power.

Restore what is broken in my relationship with the one who hurt me.

Your will be done.

**Amen.**





   [info@proximityhub.org](mailto:info@proximityhub.org)

[proximityhub.org](http://proximityhub.org)