

Creative prayer ideas

For Christians and their witness in different spheres of society

God has placed every Christian in a unique setting, with particular gifts, skills, influences and experiences. As part of the Sanctuary's response to the Archbishops of Canterbury and York's call to prayer for "Thy Kingdom Come" in May 2016, we held a time of corporate prayer focused on praying for Christians' witness in different spheres, in both word and action.

This resource gathers ideas used by different pray-ers within our community from these respective spheres to stimulate prayer during that time, or inspired by it. We hope you will find some or all of its content will be helpful in fuelling further prayer for the effective witness of Christians, and their impact on transforming every sphere of society.

Praying for Christians in business

Equipment needed: pens, post-it notes, flip-chart paper, Bibles

- The Bible speaks a lot about work, economics, money and how to treat people you are trading with or who are working for you – so start by looking at some verses that help you understand God's perspective of business and how it should function. You can do this by choosing some of the verses listed on <http://www.openbible.info/topics/work> or using those listed below, which are particularly helpful:
 - *Colossians 3:23 (AMP) – Whatever you do and whatever your task may be, work from the soul (that is, put in your very best effort) as something done for the Lord and not for men.*
 - *Proverbs 22:1 (AMP) – A good name earned by honourable behaviour, godly wisdom, moral courage, and personal integrity is more desirable than great riches; And favour is better than silver and gold.*
 - *Proverbs 22:29 (AMP) – Do you see a man skilful and experienced in his work? He will stand in honour before kings; He will not stand before obscure men.*
- Based on what you've just read in your Bibles, along with your own existing knowledge, brainstorm a list of all the ways of working and/or personal characteristics that you think God expects, or hopes for, in a Christian who is working in business. If you need some suggestions to get you started, here's our list!
 - FAIR – to workers, producers and consumers ("people not profit") – and PURSUING JUSTICE & RIGHTEOUSNESS
 - DESIRING INTEGRITY – reliable, trustworthy, consistent and honest about mistakes
 - CHOOSING BEST PRACTICE – not just the basic legal requirement
 - AIMING TO ENRICH THE LIVES OF OTHERS – bringing glory to God through every interaction
 - ENTHUSIASTIC – working with diligence and joy
 - LOVING WISELY – gentle and kind but also firm and boundaried when required
 - WORKING FROM A PLACE OF REST – leaning on God's strength rather than own striving
- Now, draw a big briefcase outline onto the flip-chart and write "God's Kingdom" as a title over it. Jot down the names of all the Christians you know who work in business (including themselves if relevant!) onto post-it notes – one person's name per post-it note. Remembering the list of characteristics and Godly practices you have just come up with, stick the names up onto the flip-chart briefcase – and then pray for God to help

all these individuals to embody his Kingdom values in their work and to bear witness to their faith in him by the way they operate in the workplace.

Praying for older Christians

Equipment needed: paper/flip-chart paper (depending on whether you are praying individually or in a group), Bibles

- There are many stories in the Bible about God using older people to further his plans and purposes, and to proclaim his Kingdom. Start your time on this topic by reading about Simeon and Anna in Luke 2:25-38.
- Discuss or think about what the story of Simeon and Anna shows us about why older people might be uniquely placed to share the gospel in powerful ways (you might want to capture some key points on paper/the flip chart) – for example, older Christians might have:
 - years of faithful prayer behind them
 - more maturity in handling situations
 - less inhibitions and more boldness
 - wisdom from years of seeking and worshipping God
 - detailed knowledge of Scripture
 - lots of stories and testimonies of God’s goodness to share
 - respect and authority in the local community
 - more freedom and choice over how to spend their time
 - gentleness and approachability
 - a deeper awareness of the fragility of life and the need for an eternal perspective.
- The 2011 Census tells us that out of the 33.2 million Christians in England and Wales (who make up 59% of the total population), 21% are aged 50-64 years and 22% are aged 65 years and above – so that’s 43% of Christians (or 14,276,000 people) who are in the second half of their life. Spend some time now praying for these Christians and for God to use them mightily in their current context.
- Finally, we know that sadly many older people feel lonely, isolated and passed-over, even in the church, but we know too that God can and does use us all whatever our age, and wants all of us to live fully within the community of believers. Clasp your hands together and as you feel the warmth of gripping each hand, pray silently for older Christians who need to know again the encouraging, comforting touch of God and the warm, honouring embrace of the church community.

Praying for younger people, and for education

Equipment needed: post-it notes, pens, paper, a cross

- Think about some of the negative labels – words, names or messages – that children and young people hear and/or receive from society and/or those around them which speak into their identity in an unhelpful way. Jot these down on post-it notes, one per post-it.
- Tear these up and put them at the foot of the cross – thanking God that they do not reflect the truth of how he sees children and young people, or their true value as people made in his image.
- Now, on a sheet of paper, write down some of the words that accurately reflect how God sees children and young people – and how he feels about them. Place these at the foot of the cross too, covering the ‘labels’ that have been destroyed.

- Pray for children and young people who are Christians to know who their identity in Christ is and to be able to share – through who they are, what they say, and what they do – the truth of God’s love and value for each individual around them in powerful and relevant ways with their peers.
- Pray too for Christian teachers and other staff working in education or youth work, that God would empower them to share his story, and his love for each child and young person in our nation, and that as a result many would come to know him, find their true identity and be set free from the negative ‘labels’ that steal their courage, purpose and joy.
- Thank God that so many Christians sense his call to young people, and pray that they would keep coming to him for the in-filling, inspiration, strength, courage and wisdom they need to be powerful, effective and loving witnesses for him where he has placed them.

Praying for the arts and media

Equipment needed: printed pictures of beautiful scenes from creation, marker pens, paper, flipchart paper (depending on whether you are praying individually or in a group), Bibles

1. Giving thanks

- Spend some time looking at the pictures of God’s creation and read Psalm 19, which celebrates God’s artisan work in creation, and how its beauty and majesty proclaims who he is. (It’s particularly evocative in modern translations such as *The Message*.)
- Think of words and phrases that struck you from the psalm – or come to mind as you read it/looked at the pictures – and capture these into a visual praise psalm by writing them on the pictures (with the marker pen).
- Spend some time thanking God for his creation, for beauty, and for how it blesses you and shows you more of him.
- Now make a list of all the creatives – writers, song-writers, artists, sculptors, photographers etc – who have blessed, inspired or encouraged you through their work, especially those who have impacted your faith in a positive way.
- Fold the list of creatives up and hold them in your hands – thanking God for the work of their hands and the inspiration they have been in your life.

2. Blessing creatives

- Now make a new list – on paper, or on the flipchart if you are in a group – and write down all the Christians personally known to you, or who are famous, working in the arts or media. Pray for them using the following some or all of the following points to bless them, their ministry and influence in this sphere, asking God for:
 - inspiration
 - favour from gate-keepers in their respective fields
 - messages of truth, beauty and redemptive hope to triumph over messages of despair or cynicism
 - their talent to be multiplied
 - them to hold on to integrity
 - protection in the battle they are in
 - them to give glory to God as icons pointing to him, not idols seeking to receive praise themselves
 - them to find and keep personal healing

- they would communicate all God has called them to communicate, and that his messages through them would go far and do all they have been purposed to do.

3. Praying for the church's role and relationship with the arts

- Now use paper or the flipchart to draw a picture of a church in one half, and some symbols of the arts – such as a paintbrush, a book, a musical instrument and a film camera, in the other half. Think about the relationship between the church and the arts and pray as you feel led, or using the following prayer points as prompts, asking God:
 - that the church would embrace the arts more fully as an essential means of communicating God's love and the gospel
 - that artists would find acceptance, love and release in their churches
 - that churches would recognize the arts as a holy calling and vocation
 - that Christians and the church would become front runners in the arts and media
 - that the church would not be afraid to use the tools of the media to express and communicate God's love and redemptive story
 - that the church – and Christians in it – would receive more gifting, skill and inspiration to do all of the above.

NB the Sanctuary has a separate resource with specific creative prayer ideas for the media, written previously. You can find it here: <http://www.thesanctuarycentre.org/resources/creative-prayer-idea-for-praying-for-the-media.pdf>

Praying for those who care

Equipment needed: flipchart or large sheets of paper, marker pens, scissors

- Draw a large heart – as big as the size of paper you have allows and thank God that he made us in his image, people designed for relationship – with him and with each other.
- Think about Christians who – through their natural and spiritual gifting – have been particularly made, called and/or equipped to care for others where God has placed them.
- Fill the heart with the names of as many groups/categories of people you can think of – from doctors, nurses and care home staff through to chaplains, charity workers, parents and foster carers and many more...
- Pray for Christians who work/minister within these groups – and particular individuals within them known to you – to remain close to God's heart, so that they keep caring from a place of love, and keep love central to all they do. Pray against overload, stress, exhaustion, burnout or anything else that you think might get in the way of them receiving and giving love freely and caring effectively.
- Pray also for Christians working/serving in caring professions and environments to be effective and wise witnesses to those they care for, and care alongside, particularly where professional guidelines can make this difficult.
- Now cut the heart out and place it on a second sheet of paper. Draw round the heart and then label this second heart as the church. Overlap the two hearts together and pray for caring Christians to be well cared for, prayed for and nurtured by their churches, and for their church communities – especially their leaders – to recognise the vital ministry each one of them is involved with.

Praying for leaders including politicians, public services and church leaders

Equipment needed: compass, map, A3 paper, marker pens

- Stand up, hold the compass, turn to face north and lay the map out in front of you.
- Pray for all Christian leaders – those in the church, and those in secular positions within the political sphere, public arenas or services – to lead others by looking to follow where Jesus is leading their context. Pray for them to be diligent in fixing their eyes on Jesus (true north) and to look to him for inspiration and revelation on the way forward and the strategy for getting there, rather than trying to discern these things in their own strength.
- Kneel down and pray for all Christian leaders – in every sphere – to be humble, servant-hearted leaders who love and prize their people not the power or structures that they are leading through.
- Draw a large oblong shape on an A3 page to represent Jesus the cornerstone – the only firm foundation on which to build. Put the stone on the floor and step on to it, then pray for Christians involved in exerting authority and providing leadership to others to seek to build God’s kingdom where they are rather than forging their own kingdoms.
- Lastly, silently pray for those Christians leading outside of the church to have the wisdom to know when to hold back from speaking out on matters of faith. And then – out loud – pray for them to have conviction and courage when to speak up and out about their faith, and that God would provide them with the words and tone to use.