



This week, thousands of Christians all over our country and millions all over the world will be joining to pray together and discover or re-discover the power and the joy of prayer, both individually and collectively. **Read: Philippians 4 verses 4 - 9** Share with one another the verse, sentence or concept from this lovely passage that spoke to you particularly. This week can be summarised in two simple and beautiful prayers:

- 1: **That we would all grow closer to Jesus.** This happens as we develop a relationship with Him through prayer.
- 2: **That others will come to know Jesus.** We are asked to pray for five friends to come to faith in Christ.

Ruth made two important declarations about this week: it is to be a Guilt – Free Zone and an Expert – Free Zone! All are to come with a blank sheet of paper in relation to our perceived failures or triumphs in prayer, prayer is a glorious leveller! Then, over the course of both morning services, we heard eight peoples' stories of their prayer adventures:

Maureen shared her experience of God speaking to her through Scripture three times from the same verses: (2 Kings 20: 5-6) when she was fighting a serious illness. She dates and notes down in her Bible the promises given her by the Holy Spirit and likens prayer to breathing: an underlying rhythm essential to her life.

Graham admitted to being an innate worrier who has learnt that prayer is a partnership with God. It's about aligning our will with that of the Lord and then believing that He will allay our anxieties (1 Peter 5:7). It's about trusting He will exert His power in situations over which we have no control. (2 Corinthians 12: 9)

Anne talked about her 'everyday prayer' life: she connects with God at any time of day or night in her head, and God communicates back through thoughts, symbols, words or music. Prayer is a wonderful gift that continues to change her own attitudes, actions and prejudices and has transformed other people or their situation.

Chris also majored on 'prayer in the ordinary,' encouraging us to be praying all the time. Just seen someone in the street? Pray for them. Talking to someone with a problem? Offer to pray for them 'now'. Prayer often means travelling along together with someone, it's not always about 'doing business'.

Amanda became a Christian 12 years ago. Her first challenge was to learn to pray to God out loud in a prayer meeting, rather than to the people in the room. The next was a diagnosis of MS ... with a lot of help Amanda learnt that 'God is with me in this, He's not doing it to me'. Then marriage and children, which wrecked her ordered prayer rhythm! Now it's more a conversation with God throughout the day. She has a fortnightly prayer-time with two friends, and prays with her husband 'when they remember'. All this was a great relief for us to hear – Amanda has agreed to oversee our church prayer initiatives and wasn't at all intimidating!

Ollie is another worrier – prone to 'catastrophizing'! He was engaged to be married in summer 2012. He had no job and nowhere to live: despair was setting in. But he remembered our reading and told the Lord (pretty forcibly) how he was feeling but managed to be thankful too. As he did so he felt a huge weight lifting and knew a sense of peace and hope, together with the conviction that God was trustworthy and in control. *[God loves us to be honest with Him]*

Jess has liked to ask God questions in unusual spaces since being encouraged to do so in her church by her youth leader. This led to developing a 'whispering dialogue' with God in her head. Northumbrian Community Monks introduced Jess to the 24-7 creative prayer room and now she is being challenged by the discipline of Celtic Daily Prayer.

James feels prayer is all about love – the love of his Saviour who in the film 'Passion' was seen to be hauling **Himself** onto the cross, to give us access to God. Jesus is James' Rock, Forgiver, Challenger, and the One who knows his sadness. For James, praying is a joy: he walks round whispering in tongues and admits to being somewhat indisciplined

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.