



HOW TO NURTURE A FAITH-SHARING CULTURE

PRACTICE 2 – PRAY FOR FIVE

SUMMARY

Build into the personal and corporate life of your church, congregation or fresh expression an intentional and regular way of praying for specific people to come to know the life transforming love of Jesus.

EXPLANATION

Thy Kingdom Come¹ has popularised an idea that has been around for a while², that of praying for specific people that they might come to know ‘the amazing, life-transforming love of Jesus’. Prayer is at the heart of faith sharing as we seek to join in with what God is doing in people’s lives, and also as we recognise that in some mysterious way God’s activity on earth is linked to our praying. Someone once said to me ‘talk to God about people, before you talk to people about God.’ That does seem the right way round. Ultimately God is the evangelist, and we depend on him to be at work in and through us and in the lives of those we pray for.

Thy Kingdom Come have encouraged people to make praying for five a specific intention of prayer from Ascension to Pentecost. This practice expands the timescale to make it a normal part of the ongoing personal prayer life of Christians, and of our prayer life as we gather in various ways.

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‘The most important human factor in effective evangelism is prayer.’

Construct a process for helping people to identify their five that will work in your context. For some, there may need to be quite a bit of explanation about why praying for five is a good thing to do, as well as what it involves. For others, you may be

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‘Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful.’
Colossians 4:2

able to introduce it quite quickly. For some it will be best to start by introducing it to a specific group (churchwardens, PCCs, a Lent course, a youth group), and then percolate it out to others over time. For others, it will be fine to introduce it to whole congregations straight away.

When introducing Pray for Five, invite congregation members to identify five people they know using the following suggestions:

- Those who, as far as they are aware, are not yet Christians.
- Those with whom they have contact on a regular basis.
- Those whom they have a concern for.

Encourage them to write their names down, and pray for them on a regular basis (they can define what regular means, but ideally at least once a week, if not each day), that they might come to know the life-transforming love of Jesus. Use some of the resources suggested here and in Guide 3 to help with this.

Then work out how to build praying for five into the flow of gathered church life. For example:

- When you gather for worship together, find creative ways to include Pray for Five as part of what you do each time you gather (see Practice 3).
- At your PCC meetings build in time to Pray for Five. It only has to be a few minutes but it will shift the culture of the PCC.³
- If you have a staff meeting, a meeting with key leaders (for example churchwardens or standing committee, eldership, Messy Church leadership team), make Pray for Five a part of your time together.
- In ministry groups (for example music group, choir, Messy Church Team, prayer ministry team, finance committee,

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and possibly even flower arrangers, bell ringers and so on) spend a few minutes Praying for Five as part of your gathering.

- If you have home groups, youth or children's groups, include Pray for Five.

Making it a part of our gathered life helps build in support and accountability. If I am honest I am shocked how quickly I forget to pray for my five in my own personal prayers. Regularly being in a context where I am reminded to keep on praying for my five is incredibly helpful, especially if there is time to reflect with others on how things are going (see Practice 4).

Listen to [John Sentamu](#), former Archbishop of York, talk about his experience of praying for five.



TIPS

There are some great resources available to help people do this (see below) but here are a few tips if you are introducing this idea:

- Encourage people to prayerfully identify their five. It may take a few weeks to discern whom to put on the list.
- It is fine if initially people can only identify one or two names.
- Generally speaking, it is best to not include family or close friends. Two reasons. Firstly, we are probably already praying for these people anyway. Secondly, those closest to us are often the most difficult people to share faith with (read Mark 3 and 6 to see the struggles Jesus had with his family and those who knew him well).
- Generally speaking, it is best to choose people whom we think might be open to faith conversations.
- The list isn't fixed. As people move in and out of our orbit we may change the list. For a season I prayed for my chiropractor, with whom I had some great conversations about faith as he pummelled my back, but then he moved to America and I am no longer in touch with him. I took him off my list and added the manager at the gym I went to.
- It works best if we have regular contact with these people (online or onsite), and sometimes it helps to describe what regular means. I generally suggest at least once a month, preferably once a fortnight.
- Teach people what and how to pray for their five (see Guide 3 for some ideas). It is easy to assume people will know how to pray. That isn't necessarily the case.
- Finally, I have seen an interesting pattern over the years. Sometimes the people we end up sharing faith with are not on our list of five, but the fact that we have been praying for five has actually opened us up to the possibility of sharing our faith in new ways.



RESOURCES

- See Guide 2 for more ideas on prayer and evangelism (also available as a [downloadable guide](#)).
- See Guide 3 for more ideas on Praying for Five.
- [Thy Kingdom Come](#) have a wide range of resources for children, young people and adults to help with praying for five. They include materials for individuals to use, and materials for use in gatherings. Some of these are outlined in Guide 3.
- [HOPE Together](#) also have resources related to Pray for Five.
- [Five Things to Pray for the People you Love](#), Rachel Jones (Good Book Company).

1. www.thykingdomcome.global/stories/pray-5.
2. More recent iterations include Mission England Matthew Project, Springboard Oikos cards, HOPE pray for 5.
3. See PCC Tonight Leading in Evangelism sessions for more on this.