

ABC of Prayer - Part 4 - D

D is for Days of Prayer

Every day should be a day for prayer! But every year there are many days for focused prayer, when churches, Christians and countries pray for the same thing on the same day.

In any given calendar year there are already specific days allocated for praying for education, for hospitals, for the persecuted Church, for children at risk, for the media, for mothers and fathers, and for those affected by AIDS, for example. In every year from now to 2010 we also have a Global Day of Prayer, when Christians from every nation can unite in prayer, around the clock and around the throne and around the world - all praying for each other and the whole world.

We also have marked on our calendars Prayer Week and set periods for prayer such as Lent, and the ten days from Ascension Day to Pentecost Sunday. At the prayer centre where I am based we have a day of prayer each month for the country in which we are located, and another for those nations which are predominately Muslim, where the Christian Church is often small and generally the subject of discrimination and persecution.

What can a day of prayer involve? There is no limit! Try splitting the day into portions, depending on the size of your church or the number of churches participating. Ask people to nominate to fill every hour of the day (or every half or quarter of an hour) for prayer, so that every hour is covered.

You could split the day into various topics according to the burdens God has given you and your church: for example, an hour for family life, another for prodigals, another for missionaries sent out from your area, another for social issues or for outreach projects, another for political leaders, or church leaders, or teachers - the list is endless. Include an hour for the children to meet and pray, and make sure it's creative and interactive for them.

For each topic, provide some visual material to aid prayer - either on paper, or on posters, or on a PowerPoint presentation. Use prophetic symbolism with objects or flags. You could have an area where people can draw or paint a picture as they pray.

During corporate times of prayer, change the style of prayer from time to time (silence, small groups, one voice at a time, simultaneous voices). Change the posture (sitting, kneeling, standing, walking around, lying prostrate.) Use Scripture in prayer, as the Holy Spirit leads.

There are 365 days in a year, so there is plenty of room for more. And nobody has yet exhausted the many creative ways we can pray!

Remember, however, that God warns us not to regard one day only for humbling oneself before him, and fasting (Isaiah 58:5). In other words, God is looking for more - for changed lives. Character is important to him as we approach his throne-room of grace. If our praying and fasting ends in quarrelling and strife and in violence, what use is our praying? (Isaiah 58:4) One day alone is insufficient, but it becomes important if it leads to other days. Prayer without action is inadequate. God wants us to put feet on our prayer and help to bring about the changes we pray for.

D is for Driving

Have you ever thought of prayer-driving? Getting into a car and praying as you drive? If you are a passenger you have plenty of time to pray and depending on road conditions and the ability of the driver, you may feel compelled to pray!

On long car journeys I often pray as I go. "Lord I've got three hours to spare. Please keep me safe as I drive, but at the same time give me your burdens to pray over." It's amazing how time flies! But beware of getting too excited as you pray, and always keep your eyes open!

There are other kinds of prayer-driving. I heard of four men (one is a friend of mine) who used to meet early in the morning in a car to pray. They would drive around Gloucester, praying on location as God led them. The two in the front seat would pray about the needs of the area, while the two in the back seat would pray for the two in the front. They found this so powerful, but noticed that when the two in the back got involved in praying for the area they felt they were being less effective.

One day they felt led to pray for the exposure of what lay hidden in houses. Two weeks later the victims of Fred West (the serial killer) were discovered, and the full extent of the 'house of horrors' uncovered - in the same area where they had prayed that prayer.

On one occasion we went to pray in three separate cars around the streets of an area being targeted by a church for outreach and evangelism. At the same time another group was praying inside the church. The synergy this kind of prayer produced was amazing. But to pray effectively, those in the car needed to be highly sensitive to the leading of the Spirit. So we asked God to increase our sensitivity both to the needs of the streets and the people, and to what he saw was necessary for us to be praying for. And He did!

So many of us spend hours driving around the country. Let's redeem the time a bit more. Put on a worship CD and then pray as the Lord leads you, or for the villages, towns and cities you pass. Let's bring the presence of God into every part of the land.

Brian Mills is an executive member of the International Prayer Council and has served on the forefront of prayer mobilisation initiatives for the last four decades. He co-founded Interprayer, an organisation interested in developing community transformation around the world, and also encourages prayer at the Ashburnham Prayer Centre in Kent.