

Finding Joy in our Prayer

WEEK 2: PRAYING USING SOCIAL MEDIA AND TECHNOLOGY

I will be the first to admit that I don't find praying easy. I can think of countless times when it has fallen to me to pray out loud and suddenly every word in the English language has just completely dropped out of my head. Matt, George and I run a home group on a Monday evening, and it is customary to start with a prayer. Of course, we all hope that Matt will lead us in prayer, he's the Vicar, he's much better at it right? He's often coming from another meeting, for example a School Governor's meeting so it's up to one of us to pray, I look around the



faces on the Zoom screen and everyone is casually looking at their toes. 'Oh no, I'm going to have to do it! What can I pray about? I've forgotten what we're doing again! Everyone will be looking at me, what if I say something stupid!' Yes, we all think it. But why?

Prayer is just a conversation with God. The Holy Spirit is there to help us, to guide us, to intercede on our behalf so why do we all get so tongue tied when all we are doing is talking to our greatest and most trusted friend and confidante, our Father who loves us unconditionally. It doesn't matter what we say to God, He won't ever think any less of us, He is just glad that we are talking to Him.



Still, starting that conversation can be daunting, but that is where we can look at countless ways to help us.

In the modern world we have access to an unprecedented number of mediums to find prayers, follow a daily rhythm of prayer, have daily Bible verses, inspirational quotes, follow virtual prayer walks, join prayer forums or online prayer meetings – if you can think of it, there's an app for it!

A quick Google search of 'Prayer' brought back 793 million results – narrow that down to Christian prayer and we get 291 million results. So, what are some ways that we can use social media or technology in general to help us in our prayer lives.

If we start with our New Creation social media, we have our Facebook page www.facebook.com/NewCreationChurches where we post our daily blogs and many other things that we find helpful in our personal discipleship that we want to share with others. Many of these can also be found on our website www.newcreationchurches.org.uk and our YouTube Channel @newcreationchurches1289 www.youtube.com/channel/UCXn34qIXIXBeOAmO1M1KbBw

On our website we have a 'Growing in Faith and Discipleship' tab www.newcreationchurches.org.uk/growing-in-faith-and-discipleship/ currently housing information about our home groups and this series of 'Finding the Joy in Prayer' posts, however we are excited to use this section as a space to post anything that may provide inspiration for all of us to grow in our personal devotion and discipleship.

As for the rest of the internet – it would take far too long to name everything that is available, so I will share with you some of the sites and smart phone apps that George and I find most helpful.

Daily Prayer

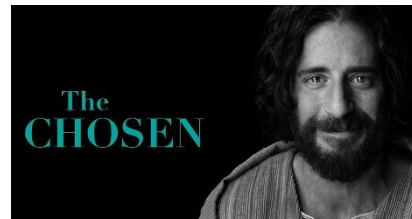
Firstly, the Church of England www.churchofengland.org/ have some excellent online resources and mobile apps for tablets and smart phones. I use the daily prayer app and the lectionary app regularly – the daily prayer app is free and gives an order of service for morning, evening and night prayer, the lectionary app gives all Bible readings, collect and post communion prayers for each day, plus additional information for feast days has a small subscription fee.

My absolute favourite online resource is The Bible Project bibleproject.com/ Not only do they have videos for each book of the Bible, the ‘Read Scripture’ series, but there are videos on how to read the Bible, themes within the Bible, Hebrew words and much, much more! There are also several apps using their online content, including an app to study the Bible in a year, which you can also customise to read at your own pace.



BibleProject

The other app that is one of my favourites is The Chosen, www.thechosen.tv the global phenomenon crowd funded TV series (can you call it a TV series if it’s not actually on television? OK, series of 30min to hour long programmes created for an online streaming platform!) The series can be viewed via the app, on the Chosen YouTube Channel or direct from their website.



Now, I know that The Bible Project and The Chosen are not technically ‘prayer’ resources, but I find that they are extremely useful in my own faith journey and as such open my mind and my heart to a richer prayer life. Going to the V&A doesn’t make you an artist, but certainly inspires an appreciation for the form and may even encourage us to get the pencils out ourselves. It doesn’t matter how we are inspired to pray, so long as we feel the inspiration.



I like to look on ‘Pinterest’ for ‘prayer quotes’, I like the short snappy quotes or play on words to remind us to pray – ‘7 days without prayer makes one weak’ – clever, pithy and to the point! I’ve included my personal favourite which is particular apt in our post-pandemic world!



Of course, there are very specific prayer apps, the Lent or Advent devotionals from CofE or other sources, Thy Kingdom Come prayer resources, daily prayers apps to remind us to pray at particular times – perfect for those wishing to keep a rhythm of daily prayer throughout their lives. Apps with such titles as ‘PrayerMate’ or ‘Daily Encounter with God’, a website called ‘Pray.com’ which is also the #1 Christian prayer app download. There are new resources every day. Have a look and see what inspires you.

The newest app that hit the market just before Christmas is called ‘Hallow’ which is a Catholic prayer and meditation app. It has become so successful due the daily devotionals read by actors Jonathan Roumie (Jesus from ‘The Chosen’), Mark Wahlberg (Boogie Nights, The Perfect Storm, The Lovely Bones and so many more) and Father Mike Schmitz (who has a huge following online for the speed at which he delivers a sermon!) Ft. Schmitz leads us through the Bible in a year, there are daily



prayers, contemplations and snippets from famous voices such as Mother Teresa and Pope John Paul II.

If you are still searching for something and haven't quite found what you're looking for – join an online forum, Facebook group or chat room. Like minded Christians sharing ideas, Bible passages and prayers. There's no pressure to share but it is a safe space for Christians, particularly those who are new to faith or those not yet confident in sharing their testimony in person, to find fellowship and learn more about living a Christian life.

There is no right or wrong in prayer, it is about expressing yourself to God and finding a quiet moment to listen to Him. If using an app or a website is something that you may find helpful as a starting point for prayer, then hopefully I may have shared a few ideas with you. Have a play about and see if there are any apps or websites that you may find helpful.

Finally, if you are looking for something to accompany prayer time or to aid in Bible study, why not listen to the Bible as an audio book? It is available in King James or NIV and read by none other than Poirot actor David Suchet. Available to purchase from Audible or Spotify or each book can be found to listen to for free on YouTube.

Happy web-surfing!

Kirsty Bowles