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Prayer-Walking

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For many years, I wanted to be doing something to enhance the spiritual life of the communities I lived in. Sure, I met a few neighbours and maybe even invited them to church, but I felt like I could be doing more. However, I didn't really know what to do.

Nearly six years ago, my wife and I felt drawn to move into the community we now live in – even though we only lived a few blocks away! It became clear in our minds that we were supposed to move into this community. We were excited about the possibilities. Since the church we were attending at that point was a long drive away, we thought maybe God was calling us to be part of a church planting team as we had been a couple of times before.

Then, at a seminar, I heard someone talking about something his church was doing in their community. A number of people would walk (or drive) through a specific area and pray for the people in each of the houses. They called it prayer walking. And they talked excitedly about seeing positive results.

Imagine if every home in my community was prayed for specifically on a regular basis? What a difference that could make in the lives of those people! Well I decided I could do that! And now, in my neighbourhood, I know that is happening—because I have been prayer walking in front of every home for the last five years!

What is Prayer Walking?

Essentially, it is just what it says—praying while walking. It is nothing extra-ordinary, just an intentional walk with the focus of praying for the people in the homes you pass by.

There are several kinds of prayer walking—some more intensive than others. Some people are led to pray in a kind of warfare attitude—praying against a specific place of evil. That kind of prayer walking needs to be done with care and with full awareness of what you are doing, and should not be taken lightly. We are fighting principalities and pow-

ers, Paul tells us, and we need to engage in warfare prayers fully armed.

Others people pray before beginning a visitation program. They pray for a community and then they visit the homes, looking for those who are open.

What I was led to do was more broad—I felt I was to pray for the community and the individual families, not for a specific purpose, but simply as part of my responsibility to my community. God gave us this place to live, and I believe God gave us both the authority and the responsibility to pray for our community.

I now see this as part of a bigger picture.

I believe God is going to revive our nation for himself. And I believe that revival will start with the prayers of ordinary people like me as well as the great prayer warriors. Prayer is something I can do to touch my community that will make a difference.

One of the things prayer walking has done for me personally is put a love and concern for the community in front of me every time I walk through it.

Choosing a Route

I'd recommend that you choose an area around your home that you can walk at a leisurely pace in 30 to 45 minutes. I think it is important to pray in front of every home, so plan on doing both sides of the street. Mapquest is a good way to get a map to follow (<http://www.mapquest.com/maps>)...Put in your own address and zoom in to the closest setting...print it and you have a good map to plan your route.

If you live in an apartment building, choose to do so many floors each time.

If you live in a rural community, prayer driving makes a lot of sense.

I'd recommend going once a month to start. Perhaps later, you might be led to go more often. I now have 5 routes that I alternate through on a weekly basis (and three

of them just happen to go by the neighbourhood coffee shop! I've learned that you can pray, walk, and drink coffee all at once. :)

Determine to pray briefly for each home. It may take 10 to 30 seconds to walk by a home, so there isn't a lot of time. Sometimes, you may feel led to pray a little longer in front of a particular house—but don't be conspicuous about it.

How and What to Pray

Some people are very sensitive to the Holy Spirit's prompting as they prayer walk and feel directed to pray for specific items for the people in that house or apartment. If that happens with you, go with it—pray for that need. I have heard exciting stories about people praying for a special concern that they felt and later having that need confirmed as they came to know the people in the house.

Special leading doesn't happen often for me, so I don't rely on it—but I do react when prompted.

So what do I pray for when I don't know the people and God doesn't give me a direct impression of the people's needs? I look for clues. Is the flower garden exquisite? I thank God for the person who loves His nature and cares for it so well. Is the lawn badly neglected? I pray for the person responsible to be able and willing to take care of his or her responsibilities. Are there toys around? I pray for the children to have opportunities to learn to love God.

You will already know some of your neighbours—think about them and their needs and pray accordingly. Is there someone in your area who really annoys you? As you walk past that home, be sure to pray for God's blessing on their lives. (It will do you good!)

Often, there is nothing special about a particular house. I often pray that the Holy Spirit will make his presence known in the lives of the people that live there—to prompt those who don't know God to seek him and to prompt those who do know him to live out their faith. And you can always simply ask God to bless the people in the house.

I've also learned to accept brief times of silence—in some ways the walk IS the prayer, so I don't get uptight about saying something every minute. However, with long periods of silence, my mind starts to wander—so I look for clues and keep praying.

I don't think it normally matters whether we pray aloud or silently. But sometimes I have felt led to spend my whole walk praising God out loud. Other times, I have sung

praise songs the whole time. I have even done the whole walk with my hand out praying a blessing on the homes. (Well, it was 6 in the morning with no one around to observe). Variety keeps me from having my thoughts wander.

Alone or With Others?

If you know someone else who might be interested in joining you, go ahead and invite them. It can be rewarding to prayer walk with others. I have benefited from the insights and prompts of some of the people I have partnered with—and it can be very encouraging. On the other hand, it might be distracting—what if the person you are with wants to chat about other things? Being a natural introvert, I value my times alone with God in these walks and go with others as a supplement. I would never agree to prayer walk on a regular basis with someone until we had gone together a few times to see if we are compatible.

Recently, I've had the opportunity to go with people from other churches as we intentionally focused on this community together. That has been exciting in bringing us together to ask God's blessing on the people who live in our community

If you go with others, I think it is important to go in very small groups of 2 or a maximum of 3. With any more, it is quite difficult to hear what others are saying. And it is hard to be inconspicuous in a large group.

What About the Results?

Have I seen God bless my community? To be honest, not yet. But one of the clearest answers to a prayer I have ever had occurred was when, after several years, I asked God, "Why should I continue to prayer walk? I haven't seen any results."

The answer came back instantly and clearly in my thoughts. "It's none of your business—I asked you to do it—so just do it."

"Yes, Sir!" So, for me at this time, I will continue... until he changes His mind...and I prayer walk in faith knowing that I may never know the effects of my prayers.

I don't suggest that this commitment is for everyone. But I do have a dream that each home in our city, no, in our country, would be prayed for every month. And I believe that the results will become evident as God awakens our nation for him. ~