

Tool #30: Prayer-Walking Guide

What is prayer-walking? One simple definition: "Praying on-site with insight." The purpose of prayer-walking is to seek God's blessing, mercy, and transforming power -- both for the community, and for ourselves as God's servants in the community. (Read more about prayer-walking and download detailed guides at www.waymakers.org/prayerwalking.html; see also Jay Van Groningen, *Communities First*, p. 30-31.)

Become more aware of what you see while you walk and pray by connecting prayer-walking with structured observation (see the Community Observation Guide, tool #31). The discussion questions in the observation guide can help participants "debrief" after a prayer-walking experience.

General guidelines for prayer-walking

- Meet at an assigned time and start with group prayer.
- Walk in groups of two or three. Plan routes ahead of time to cover as much of the area as possible.
- Pray aloud in a quiet, conversational voice, if you feel comfortable doing so. Or pray silently, letting your prayer partner(s) know what you are praying about. Don't call attention to yourselves. As the Waymakers website puts it, "You can be on the scene without making one."
- If anyone asks what you are doing, be prepared to respond: "We're praying God's blessing on this neighborhood. Is there any special way we can pray for you?"
- Although it is not the primary purpose of prayer-walking, be open to opportunities to interact with and bless people that may grow out of your experience. Waymakers highlights the connection between prayer and action:

As you pray God's promises with specific homes or work sites in view, you'll find that hope for those people begins to grow. You'll begin to see people as God might view them. You'll likely find yourself becoming more interested in the welfare of the people you are praying for. ... Watch for the ways God impresses you to display his love in practical acts of kindness.

- Plan to walk for about half an hour. If anyone in your group is not comfortable with walking, they can prayer-drive around the neighborhood instead.
- Afterwards, gather to share your prayers, observations and experiences. What did you learn about the neighborhood? How was God manifest in this experience?
- Encourage people to continue praying for the community during the week.

How do you pray?

- *Pray for discernment* -- seek the gift of seeing the community through God's eyes, and to discern what God is already doing among the people; ask God to reveal what you need to know to inform your prayers for the people, events, and places in the community.
- *Pray for blessing* -- over every person, home and business you encounter; for God's intervention in each life, so that each one can be fruitful in God's kingdom; for God's will to be done in this community "as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10).
- *Pray with empathy* -- see and feel what residents live with every day; offer intercession for those things that express brokenness and grieve God's spirit, and give thanks to God for the blessings and gifts that exist in the community.
- *Pray from Scripture* -- prayers based directly on God's word can be especially powerful. You may want to bring a Bible with key passages highlighted, or copy verses onto note cards.
- *Pray in God's power* -- allow times of silence for God's spirit to speak to you, or for you (Romans 8:26). Ask with confidence in the power of Jesus' name (John 14:12-14).