

## Try praying Sermon Series

Suggested Main Resource= God is closer than you think by John Ortberg  
 Supplementary Material in the Trypraying Booklet (See day number)

Cell notes will follow the sermon series

DATE	SERMON TITLE	CHAPTERS	TP DAY	BIBLE PASSAGE
3rd April	God's Great Desire for people " I will be with you"	Ch1	1	I will be with you Joshua 1.1-9 (Ps 145.17-19) Luke 24.13-25
10th April	Where is God in my world	Ch2	1	Gen 3.8-13, John 21.1-8
17th April	Partnering with God today	Ch 3 & 4 & 8	2, 3	Genesis 8.6-10 Ephesians 3.16-19 Luke 10.38-42
24th April	Listening to the Voice of God	5 & 9-10	6	James 1.5-8, John 10.1-10
1st May	God wants a relationship with you	Ch 6 & 9-10	4 & 5	2 Kings 5. 1-19 Matthew 18.19-20
8th May	Heaven breaks through: On earth as it is in heaven	Chs 7 10	6	Ephesians 2.1-10, Luke 24.44-end
15th May	Awesome		7	Here I am send me Isaiah 6, Acts 2, John 14.8-17

## Trypraying Booklet

TITLE	DAY	BIBLE PASSAGE
Anyone there?	1	Help thou my unbelief
Nerve	2	Persistent widow
There must be more than this	3	The Spirit of the Lord is upon me...
Faith	4	Woman healed by touching Jesus without faith, it is impossible....
Thank you for saving me	5	Jesus death on the cross for our forgiveness
The spark of the spirit	6	I stand at the door
Awe	7	Here I am send me Isaiah 6, Acts 2

## Try Praying Cell Notes

**Week 1: God is closer than you think.**

### WELCOME

Look at this picture painted by Michelangelo on the ceiling of the Cistine Chapel.



John Ortberg in Ch1 of his book “God is closer than you think” sees this as God’s passionate determination to reach out to Adam - God strains towards Adam - but leaves just a little gap as freedom for Adam to respond. Adam’s attitude is ambiguous he looks towards God but his reaching out is languid, he is half turned away.

- When in your life have you been aware of the gap between yourself and God?
- What was your response to God and what was the result
- What may be keeping you from “lifting a finger in response to God?”

### WORD

Read Luke 24.13-35

1. Each share a verse which attracts you and explain why to the group.
2. Each share a verse which you find difficult or challenging and explain why to the group
3. Share questions or things you don't understand. Help each other with them and make a list of tricky ones to ask someone or look up later.
4. Why do you think the disciples don't recognise Jesus at first? What causes them to recognise him in the end?
5. What makes it harder or easier for you to recognise Jesus' presence in your life?

### WORSHIP

Introduce the Personal Journey material for people to do on their own over the next couple of weeks.

Then do the exercise overlaid together which seeks to help each other to still yourselves and become more aware of God's presence.

PTO

Set yourselves a time limit. Ten minutes is probably enough to begin with. Not so much time that you get bored or distracted.

Sit in an armchair or kneel comfortably. You may wish to adopt an open posture with palms upwards as if to receive a gift, or allow a slight smile to form on your lips.

Close your eyes and enjoy a few moments of silence, taking some slow, deep breaths.

When everyone is stilled, the leader should speak God's promise "I will be with you" slowly and decisively. You can imagine Jesus on the hillside 2000 years ago, speaking this word over ordinary people. Remember that this is God's word to you, here and now. God will be with you

Allow the sentence to resonate in the silence and then, after a short pause, speak it again gently but firmly. Don't rush. If you find yourself getting distracted, don't criticise yourself for it, just return to the word "I will be with you".

Notice any images which form in your mind. You may see a warm light, like the sun beaming down on you, or experience physical sensations of warmth or tingling, laughter or tears. If so, don't hold on to these experiences too tightly. Continue with the word "I will be with you" and be glad.

If, at the end of your time, there are things that you'd like to say or ask God, feel free to offer them to God. Don't expect an immediate answer, just leave them there for the time being.

## **WITNESS**

Try praying is a simple resource designed to help people who don't go to church to pray for a week and to seek to find God. It is suggested that in your cell you "use it and lose it" i.e. order a copy and use it yourself and then pass it on to someone else. Watch the video at <http://www.thereishope.co.uk/resource/use-it-or-lose-it-video/>

Make a list of those from your cell who would like to order a copy at £1 each and send the list to Sally. Copies will arrive in time for the week of prayer 8-15 May.

Or you can each order a single copy on line for free - and get it earlier

## **READ AT HOME**

God is Closer than you think by John Ortberg (The whole cell series is based on this book. You might want to get it and read Chs 1 & 2 before next week.

## **PERSONAL JOURNEY: TO DO ON YOUR OWN**

It is possible for each of us to learn how to recognise and experience God's presence - right now, every moment, wherever we are. There's no better time than right now to begin living with an awareness of God's presence in your life. Set aside during the next couple of weeks to read each of the following guiding principles for practicing God's presence. Think about them, pray about them and ask God to open your heart and mind to his presence.

- God is always present and active in my life whether or not I see him
- Coming to recognise and experience God's presence in my life is learned behaviour. I can cultivate it.
- My task is to meet God in the moment
- I am always tempted to live outside "this moment" When I do that, I lose my sense of God's presence.
- Sometimes God seems far away for reasons I do not understand. Those moments too are opportunities to learn
- Whenever I fail, I can always start again straight away.
- My desire for God ebbs and flows, but His desire for me is constant.
- Every thought carries a "spiritual charge" which carries me a little closer to or a little further away from God.
- Every aspect of my life - work, relationships, hobbies, errands - is of immense and genuine interest to God
- My path to experiencing God's presence will not look exactly like anyone else's
- Straining and trying too hard do not help

## Try Praying Cell Notes

### Week 2: Where is God in my world? (meeting after Cell AGM)

#### WELCOME

Bring along a “Where’s Wally Puzzle” and see who can find Wally the quickest.  
In what ways does recognising the presence of God in your day, sometimes feel like a Where’s Wally exercise?



OR

John Ortberg talks of Rainbow days when it is easy to recognise the presence of God in our lives. If you have had one of these days, tell the group about it. Why do you think God doesn't give “Rainbow days” every day?

#### WORD

##### Read Genesis 3.8-13

Why do Adam and Eve hide from God?  
What makes us want to say to God, “Don't look at me now”?

##### Read John 21.1-8

What helps the disciples to recognise Jesus?  
What helps you to recognise where Jesus is at work in your life?

OR

##### Read Ephesians 5.15-17

Ephesians describes a way of life in which we can more easily recognise God's presence. What in these verses do you find helpful, affirming or challenging?

#### WORSHIP - PRAYER OF EXAMEN

A great way to pray is to look for God's presence in your life. More than 400 years ago St. Ignatius Loyola encouraged prayer-filled mindfulness by proposing what has been called the Daily Examen. The Examen is a technique of prayerful reflection on the events of the day in order to detect God's presence and to discern his direction for us. Lead the cell through this version of St. Ignatius's prayer giving space between each step for individuals to pray silently.

1. Become aware of God's presence. Look back on the events of the day in the company of the Holy Spirit. The day may seem confusing to you—a blur, a jumble, a muddle. Ask God to bring clarity and understanding. (SILENCE)
2. Review the day with gratitude. Gratitude is the foundation of our relationship with God. Walk through your day in the presence of God and note its joys and delights. Focus on the day's gifts. Look at the work you did, the people you interacted with. What did you receive

from these people? What did you give them? Pay attention to small things—the food you ate, the sights you saw, and other seemingly small pleasures. God is in the details.  
(SILENCE)

3. Pay attention to your emotions. One of St. Ignatius's great insights was that we detect the presence of the Spirit of God in the movements of our emotions. Reflect on the feelings you experienced during the day. Boredom? Elation? Resentment? Compassion? Anger? Confidence? What is God saying through these feelings?  
God will most likely show you some ways that you fell short. Make note of these sins and faults. But look deeply for other implications. Does a feeling of frustration perhaps mean that God wants you consider a new direction in some area of your work? Are you concerned about a friend? Perhaps you should reach out to her in some way. (SILENCE)

4. Choose one feature of the day and pray from it. Ask the Holy Spirit to direct you to something during the day that God thinks is particularly important. It may involve a feeling—positive or negative. It may be a significant encounter with another person or a vivid moment of pleasure or peace. Or it may be something that seems rather insignificant. Look at it. Pray about it. Allow the prayer to arise spontaneously from your heart—whether intercession, praise, repentance, or gratitude. (SILENCE)

5. Look toward tomorrow. Ask God to give you light for tomorrow's challenges. Pay attention to the feelings that surface as you survey what's coming up. Are you doubtful? Cheerful? Apprehensive? Full of delighted anticipation? Allow these feelings to turn into prayer. Seek God's guidance. Ask him for help and understanding. Pray for hope.  
St. Ignatius encouraged people to talk to Jesus like a friend.

#### FINAL PRAYER TO BE SAID TOGETHER

**Thank you Lord for your presence in our lives.**

**For the sin in our lives, forgive us and help us to change.**

**Give us your protection and help**

**For the questions in our lives, we ask for your wisdom**

**For the problems in our lives, we ask for discernment and strength.**

**Thank you that you are with us, alongside us in all the challenges we face, in every joy and in every sorrow. Thank you for the gift of life and every gifts we receive in life, especially the gift of your presence. In Jesus name AMEN**

#### WITNESS

Try praying is a simple resource designed to help people who don't go to church to pray for a week and to seek to find God. It is suggested that in your cell you "use it and lose it" i.e. order a copy and use it yourself and then pass it on to someone else. Watch the video at <http://www.thereishope.co.uk/resource/use-it-or-lose-it-video/>

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#### AT HOME

- Try doing the prayer of examen on your own
- Purchase and read the book, God is Closer than you think by John Ortberg (The whole cell series is based on this book.)

**Dont forget to book for Cell Training on 23 April!**



## Try Praying Cell Notes

### Week 3: Listening to the Voice of God

#### WELCOME

*“Human beings mainly hear God speak to them through their minds. We can’t force or control God’s speaking - and it’s not wise to try. But we can make choices about what we fill our minds with which can make us more (or less) receptive to God’s voice. It’s a bit like sunbathing - We don’t control the sun but, if we want a tan, we chose whether to stand in sunlight or shade.”*

To what extent do you agree with the above statement?

What sorts of things might we fill our minds with which will make us more deaf to God’s voice?

What thoughts might we choose which may make us more receptive to God’s voice?

If you want to go deeper - look at the table in the WITNESS section - which column does your life belong in?

#### WORD & WORSHIP: JOHN 10.1-11

One of the ways of seeking to be more receptive to God’s voice is meditating on scripture. Meditation is simply “chewing something over.” It is a bit like positive worrying if you can imagine such a thing! It is suggested that the group tries engaging in an ancient pattern of meditation called “lectio divina”. Choose someone to read the instructions and another to read the bible passage aloud but encourage everyone to have their bibles open ready to read to themselves. The bible passage suggested is **JOHN 10.1-11**

The instructions are below

#### SILENCIO

Place yourself in a comfortable upright position and allow yourself to become silent. Focus on your breathing in and out, in and out. As you do remember that God is closer to you than your own breath. **(Allow the group to settle and give them a few minutes to focus on their breathing and to become still)**

#### LECTIO

Turn to the text and listen to **the Reader** read it slowly, gently. Savour each portion of the reading, constantly listening for the “still, small voice” of a word or phrase that somehow says, “I am for you today.” Do not expect lightning or ecstasies. In lectio divina, God is teaching us to listen to him, to seek him in silence. He does not reach out and grab us; rather, he gently invites us ever more deeply into his presence. **(The Reader reads the text)** Now read the text two or three times more seeking that word or phrase which seems to say “I am for you today” **(Give silent space for reading)**

#### MEDITATIO

Take the word or phrase into yourself. Memorise it and slowly repeat it to yourself, allowing it to interact with your inner world of concerns, memories, and ideas. Do not be afraid of distractions. Memories or thoughts are simply parts of yourself that, when they rise up during lectio divina, are asking to be given to God along with the rest of your inner self. Allow this inner pondering, this rumination, to invite you into dialogue with God. **(Give 3-5 minutes of space for meditation)**

Now iturn your thoughts into a prayer to God. In your mind, pray about what you have meditated on. . Interact with God as you would with one who you know loves and accepts you. Tell him anything you want to do or anything you want to change Thank him for what you have discovered during your experience of meditation. **(Give1 or 2 minutes for people to do this)**

**CONTEMPLATIO**

And now just rest in God's embrace. Rejoice in the knowledge that God is with you.**(1 or 2 minutes before you say a concluding prayer for the group.)**

**Father God, Thank you for this time meditating on your word. We ask your help for anything which confuses or challenges us. We ask your help to put into practice anything which we have learned. We ask your blessing on each other AMEN**

Give an opportunity for each person to share anything which struck them from the passage as they meditated (This can be something confusing, challenging, encouraging or inspiring). Say a short prayer blessing on the person who shared after each time of sharing.

**WITNESS/ WORK-IT OUT**

Look at the table below. What one change could you make to cultivate a mind which is more receptive to God?

<i>How to cultivate your mind: It's your choice</i>		
<b>Follow your natural tendency</b>	<b>Go for the "half and half" deal</b>	<b>Cultivate a mind which is receptive to God</b>
Avoid Scripture	Dabble in Scriprire	Meditate on Scripture
Avoid wise, honest and godly people	Receive sporadic spiritual input	Actively seek out good spiritual input and wise, honest and godly people
Avoid honest self-examination	Know sin makes you feel guilty but don't address it - just keep it as hidden as possible	Pursue honest self examination
Stay away from Christian fellowship	Occasional Christian fellowship	Committed to Christian fellowship
Never pray	Pray sometimes- mainly when you're in trouble	Pray when things are good as well as when they're bad
Be self centred	Think about God occasionally	Celebrate God's presence

**AT HOME**

- Try doing the prayer of examen on your own(from last week's notes) or try meditating on your own using the process above but a different bible passage
- Purchase and read the book, God is Closer than you think by John Ortberg (The whole cell series is based on this book.)
- Watch <http://www.thereishope.co.uk/resource/use-it-or-lose-it-video/> and order a try praying booklet



## **Try Praying Cell Notes**

### **Week 4: God wants a relationship with you**

#### **WELCOME**

Have you ever felt that you "saw God" through the actions and words of another person? If so, share an example of this with the group.

#### **WORD**

God often sends his messages through ordinary people who may not impress us. Naaman is a classic example of someone who had difficulty hearing God through the mouths of ordinary people.

#### **Read 2 Kings 5**

1. Who was Naaman and what difficulty did he face?
2. Who did God first use to give Naaman hope?(v2-3) Was there anything about this person which would make her a likely messenger from God in Naaman'd eyes?
3. Next Naaman received a clear message from God (v9-12) How did he respond and why?
4. Who did God use to reach out to Naaman one last time and what happened (v13-14)
5. How do we know Naaman finally got the message? (v 16-18)
6. If one of those people God used had not been there, what would have happened?

#### **WORSHIP**

- Spend some time thanking God for the way he has spoken to you through other people.
- Share needs and pray for each other.

#### **WITNESS**

- Who are the Naamans in your life and how has God called you to reveal himself to them?
- Plan what you are going to do in the try praying week.

## **Try Praying Cell Notes**

### **Week 5: Heaven breaks through**

#### **WELCOME**

Why do you think the human race is so intrigued by life after death?

#### **WORD**

##### **Read**

*Jesus went to Galilee to preach God's good news. "At last the time has come!" he announced. "The Kingdom of God is near. Turn from your sins and believe this good news." Mark 1.15*

*"My purpose is to give life in all its fulness" John !0.10*

##### **Discuss**

Many Christians view the gospel as being little more than the minimal entrance requirements for heaven. They miss out on the life in all its fulness aspect of the gospel which Jesus says is available right now because the "Kingdom of Heaven is near". To what extent have you experienced or missed out on the fulness of life with God in the here and now?

##### **Reflect together**

*"Thy kingdom come"*

This prayer is about asking God to bring what's "up there" into our "down here" experience. Reflect upon ways are God's people called to be part of the answer to this prayer by reading one or more of the bible passages below. For each identify the qualities or behaviours which are from "up there". Then discuss how these qualities and behaviours can be brought down to earth in our everyday experience.

- Romans 15.1-6
- Luke 14.12-14
- Colossians 3.12-17
- 1 Thessalonians 5.15 & Luke 6.27-36
- Ephesians 4.31-2

Are there things you can identify which would enable you to experience more of "up thee" in your "down here" life every day?

##### **WITNESS**

- Talk together about anything you have done together as a cell or as individuals to witness? (eg How did helping to host cafe church go?) In what ways have you been able to be part of a little bit of heaven breaking through?
- What are the next steps you need to let a little more of heaven touch earth - Plan and pray about this.

## **WORSHIP**

- Share joys and needs. Thank God and pray for each other:
- Listen to this song by Kim Walker-Smith

*Our Father, all of Heaven roars Your name  
Sing louder, let this place erupt with praise  
Can you hear it, the sound of Heaven touching Earth  
The sound of Heaven touching Earth [x3]*

*Spirit break out Break our walls down  
Spirit break out Heaven come down [x2]*

*King Jesus You're the name we're lifting high  
Your glory shaking up the earth and skies  
Revival we wanna see Your kingdom here  
We wanna see Your kingdom here [x2]*

*Spirit break out....*

- Finish by saying the Lord's prayer