



THE PRAYER CLOSET

*Transforming Lives Through Intercessory
Prayer And Fasting*

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PRAYING FOR MISSIONARIES

Do you realize that you can impact the lives of people all across the world? Yes, I mean you! You can be a significant instrument that God uses to change the world. You may find this hard to believe, but, it is true. You can make a substantial difference in this world by praying for missionaries and for the spread of the gospel across the world. Your prayers can cause the gospel to spread throughout the world and transform the lives of people that you will never meet in this life. Your prayers can unleash the power of God into nations that have never heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. Your prayers can bring about a world that is filled with the knowledge of God and His gospel.

The church of Jesus Christ is building a capable and influential missionary machine. There is a fresh emphasis and interest in carrying the gospel of Jesus Christ to every individual on earth. Denominations and missionary organizations are laboring zealously to place missionaries on the field and to equip them for their task. Yet, it must be remembered that prayer is the crucial ingredient in the effectiveness of missionaries and the spread of the gospel. Think of the modern missions movement as a well-built, powerful car. It is equipped and prepared to run. However, if there is no fuel in the tank, it is going nowhere. It is powerless and useless. Prayer is the fuel that will cause this capable and influential missionary machine to go and fulfill its purpose. Prayer will

cause the gospel of Jesus Christ to penetrate the lives of people all over this world.

This issue of *The Prayer Closet* will deal with praying for the missionaries and the spread of the gospel to the entire world. It is my passionate conviction that if God has not called you to go to another state or nation to proclaim the gospel, He has called you to pray for and support those who have. Those who go and those who stay and pray are co-laborers in the harvest of the nations. Both are needed if the gospel is going to be carried to every individual in the world.

This issue will give you ideas on how to intercede for missionaries and the spread of the gospel. Prayerfully consider these and implement them into your prayer life as you feel led by the Spirit. Adapt them according to your prayer schedule and as the Holy Spirit leads you. You may already be involved in interceding for missionaries and the spread of the gospel. I pray that God will renew your passion and strengthen your determination for this through this issue of the newsletter. And, I hope that you will receive new insights in how to pray for missionaries. You will notice that most of the information given is concerning our international missionaries but you also will see how this can apply to our missionaries here at home.

Perhaps you have never prayed for missionaries and their labors. Or, at least, you may

have prayed for missionaries, but, it was only in a vague and general way. You have heard missionaries speak and have been to the special services at your church concerning missions. Yet, you are not significantly involved in praying for missionaries and the spread of the gospel throughout this world. I pray that God will challenge you and cause you to make a commitment to do this. I am pleading that God will create in you a heart to intercede for the nations of the world and for the missionaries that are laboring in these nations.

The suggestions that you find in this issue are just that--suggestions. It is my hope and prayer that God will use this issue to create in you a craving to intercede for missionaries and that you will find information that will help to do this. Yet, before we get to the "how" of praying for missionaries and the spread of the gospel throughout the world, we have to establish the "why" for doing this. We must begin with why we should pray for missionaries and their labors. In order to have a genuine commitment to pray concerning these things, you must have a strong and sure foundation of why you are doing this.

Why Should I Pray For Missionaries?

There are several reasons why you should intercede for missionaries and the spread of the gospel across the world. *The first reason that you should do this is because God is worthy to be made known to the nations.* Our God is the glorious God of heaven and earth. He is righteous, holy, wise, and sovereign. He abounds in goodness and mercy. He forgives sin and grants eternal life. He blesses with good and perfect gifts. He hears and answers prayer. There is no other God but Him and Him alone. All other gods are false and are unworthy comparisons to the true and living God of the Bible. The nations need to hear of such a glorious and

good God. They need to know about His character and His commands. God is worthy to be proclaimed to the nations of the world (**Psalms 67, 86:8-10, 97:1, 117**). Those who know His glorious character and commands are the best equipped to share this knowledge with the world. Since God is worthy to be proclaimed and we know His glorious character, it is our responsibility to pray that this would happen. You should be pleading that the nations will know intimately this glorious and living God. It is our privilege to pray that the nations of the world will come to know the awesome God of the Bible.

Another reason that you should pray for missionaries is because of the command of Christ. In **Matthew 28:19-20**, the Lord Jesus Christ has commanded His church to carry the Word of God to the very ends of the earth. This is the marching order of the church. This is the task that has been assigned to us by the Lord Jesus Christ. An essential part of this task is intercessory prayer. To fail to do this is to sin against the Lord Jesus Christ. The good news about Him and His work on the cross is to be declared to the whole world. This can be accomplished by people going and by people praying. In order to do what Jesus Christ has commanded, we must pour ourselves out in intercession for missionaries and the spread of the gospel.

A third reason that you should pray for missionaries is because people must hear the Word of God. If a person is going to be brought into a right relationship with God, that person must hear the Word of God. This is Paul's point in **Romans 10:13-15**. People must hear the Word of God and respond to its truth in order to be brought into a right relationship with Him. The Holy Spirit creates faith and repentance in people as they hear the Word of God (**Romans 10:17**). If people do not hear the message, they cannot exercise true faith in God and repentance toward Him. For this reason, people must hear the Word of God. It is absolutely crucial that missionaries are sent to proclaim the Word of God so that people can hear and respond to

its truth. A part of sending missionaries is praying that God will empower them to proclaim the message and cause those who hear the message to respond in faith and repentance.

Another reason for praying for missionaries is that people need Jesus Christ. In **John 14:6**, Christ declares that He is the only truth, the only way, and the only life. He states that He is the only way to the true knowledge of God and of a personal relationship with Him. In **Acts 4:12**, the Bible announces that it is only by Jesus Christ that a person can be saved from sin and delivered from the eternal wrath of God. Without Jesus Christ, people are perishing in their sin. They are going further and deeper into sin and rebellion away from God (**Romans 1:17-32**). They will be cast into an eternal hell unless they come to know and surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is the Savior of sinners. He is the only anointed and appointed Savior of sinners. People must be encountered with Him and His claims. This can happen only if someone goes and someone prays.

You need to pray for missionaries because of their utter need of intercession. The Apostle Paul, the great missionary of the Christian faith, pled with Christians to pray for him, his co-laborers, and their work on the mission field (**Romans 15:30**). Paul realized the magnitude of having other Christians praying for him and his labors on the mission field. He understood that he could not be effective in doing what God had called him to do. On the mission field, Paul faced numerous problems--opposition, financial concerns, sorrow, hardship, laboring to share the gospel plainly and clearly with people. The same is true today. Missionaries must have other Christians interceding for them, their needs, and their ministries. They cannot be effective in doing what God has called them to do without the prayers of other Christians. You can join these missionaries in their labors share in their victories, and help meet their needs by praying for them.

You should pray for missionaries because it glorifies God. God is the most glorified when

people are turning to Him in faith and repentance (**John 15:8; Ephesians 2:4-10**). God receives glory and praise when people are transformed by the Word of God and the work of the Holy Spirit. God is shown to be a powerful and gracious God when peoples' lives are changed and they become followers of Jesus Christ. By praying for the effectiveness of missionaries, you are praying that God will be glorified. You are praying that God will show Himself to be the sovereign and wise God of heaven and earth. Your prayers for the effectiveness of missionaries in proclaiming the gospel and transforming lives is actually a way of glorifying God.

You should be prompted to pray for missionaries because it should be an essential part of your prayer life. It is the responsibility of Christians to pray for the various leaders and authorities (**1 Timothy 2:1-2**). Surely this should include missionaries. In **1 Thessalonians 5:25**, the apostle once again calls on believers to pray for him and his missionary labors. This was Paul's desire and God's will. This provides the model for believers today. Believers are to pray for those who have been called by God to give their lives to sharing the gospel in other nations. In **Colossians 4:2**, the Word of God commands believers to be earnestly devoted to prayer. This includes praying for the spread of the gospel throughout the world and those who labor to do this. When Jesus taught His disciples to pray, He taught them to pray for the coming of the kingdom (**Matthew 6:10**). Jesus is teaching that His people should pray for the gospel to spread across the world and bring people under His reign through their faith in Him and their repentance. This is how Jesus Christ is teaching us to pray. For this reason, every believer should be devoted to praying for the spread of the gospel and the salvation of the nations. From all these verses, it should be clear that a distinct part of the believer's prayer life is to be devoted to praying for missionaries and their labors. This is not something that a believer can choose to do or choose not to do.

It should be a vital part of every believer's prayer life.

The death of Christ should motivate you to pray for missionaries and the spread of the gospel. In **Isaiah 53:10-12**, the prophet declares that Jesus would see His offspring. He announces that Christ would see the fruit of His work. This chapter deals with the death of Christ on the cross. The offspring and the fruit of His work is referring to the people who will be saved due to His work on the cross. Isaiah is prophesying that Jesus would see people from every language, race, and nation on the earth saved and surrendered to Him because of His death and resurrection (**Psalm 2:8; Revelation 7:9**). This should motivate you to pray for the nations of the world. People from every language, race, and nation are going to be saved and surrendered to Christ because of His death and resurrection. This should give you the confidence and motivation to pray for the nations and the missionaries who labor in them.

The Great Objection

Whenever I deal with praying for missionaries and the spread of the gospel across the world, there seems to be one great objection to this. This objection is either spoken or unspoken. It is often a hindrance to believers praying for missionaries and their labors. It can be stated in numerous ways. But, the summary of this objection is, "Why should we be concerned about other nations? We have so many needs and concerns here that demand our prayers and attention." How can we deal with this objection?

First, it needs to be remembered that God is a universal God (Isaiah 49:6). God's compassion and mercy extends to the ends of the earth. He is a God whose concern is not limited to a nation or a race. His desire is that the nations of the world hear about His glorious character and commands. If we are growing in godliness, our compassion and concern will extend to the nations of the world. It

will be our desire to see the nations hear of His greatness and see them respond to Him by faith in Christ and repentance toward Him.

Second, your knowledge of God should drive you to be concerned about and pray for the nations of the world. You have come to know God in an intimate relationship. You have experienced His salvation. You have been blessed by Him. You have been heard by Him and He has answered your prayers. You have come to know and experience Him as the great and living God. Don't you want others to know God in the way that you know Him? Don't you want others to experience the power and blessedness of having a personal relationship with God? Your knowledge and experience of God should motivate you to want others to have the same knowledge and experience.

Third, the root of a lack of concern and prayer for the nations is selfishness. The book of **Jonah** deals with this. Jonah did not care if the Ninevites heard about God and His message. His main concern was Israel. If we are not concerned about the nations of the world, it is nothing more than selfishness. God showed mercy to you by sending someone to share the gospel with you. God showed compassion to you by moving believers to pray for your salvation. Are you now saying that it does not matter to you if God shows compassion or mercy to anyone else? Are you now saying that God should not have this concern and compassion for anyone else? God's mercy and compassion extends beyond you and your circle of relationships. If we lack concern for the nations of the world, it is selfishness. This is something that must be repented of and dealt with swiftly.

Along with this, it needs to be remembered that Israel was judged for its failure to declare the Word of God to the nations. God made Israel His witness to the nations (**Exodus 19:6**). Their purpose was to share the Word of God with the world. Yet, they failed to do this. Their vision turned inward rather than outward. They were more concerned about themselves than the nations of the world. Because of this, they were judged by God.

God has now made the church His witness to the world. It is our responsibility to declare the Word of God to the world. God desires that His people be rivers of blessing and not reservoirs of blessing. He desires that we share the truth with the world. If we fail to do this, we will face the judgment of God.

Our failure to pray for and have concern for the nations will result in their blood being on our hands. The prophet Ezekiel warns that if we do not warn the wicked of his fate and his need of repenting and turning to God, their blood will be on our hands (**Ezekiel 3:18**). We know the fate of the wicked. We know that they need to turn away from their sins and turn to Christ. If we do not labor with all our might in praying and sending missionaries, then their blood will be on our hands. We will be guilty of failing to share the life-transforming message of the gospel with them. We will be guilty of failing to share with them the message that they need so desperately.

Finally, it needs to be emphasized that God delivers nations through intercessors. In the book of Ezekiel, God declares that He looked for an intercessor for the nation of Israel (**Ezekiel 22:30**). God could not find an intercessor for the nation. Because of this, He destroyed the nation. If there had been an intercessor, God would have spared the nation. This passage is pointing out that intercessors can deliver a nation from its sin and judgment. God honors and uses intercession for nations and peoples. Nations and peoples can be delivered from their sins and their judgment if believers will pray. This makes intercession for nations and missionaries an inescapable necessity.

Praying For Laborers

In **Matthew 9:38**, the Lord Jesus Christ calls on us to plead with God to raise up and send out those who will labor in the field. This is a command to the believer. It is the responsibility of the believer to plead with God to call, equip, and send missionaries. How can you plead with God to

raise up and send laborers into the harvest? The following prayer requests are suggestions on how you can plead with God for this:

(1) Plead that God would raise up church planters who can help start new churches and disciple new believers (**Acts 13:1-3, 26-28**).

(2) Plead that God would raise up evangelists who can preach the gospel powerfully and clearly on the mission fields around the world (**Acts 6:10**).

(3) Call on God to raise up believers who will have the gift of teaching and who will also be called to missions (**Ezra 7:10**).

(4) Plead that God would enable Christian groups in other cultures and nations to develop and send missionaries to their own people in both their native land and around the world (**Acts 21:37-22:21**).

(5) Ask God to raise up believers who will have a burden about and a call to translating the Bible into the language of a people so that they can read and understand the Bible (**2 Timothy 3:16-17**).

(6) Pray that God will burden and convict college and seminary students about surrendering their lives to His call to missions (**Proverbs 3:5-7**). When you pray for college and seminary students about this, there are some other requests that you need to make in conjunction with this:

- That they would develop a deep and intimate relationship with Jesus Christ. This will give them the sensitivity to know God's call on their life and grant them the strength to make this surrender of their lives.
- That they would be a personal witness of the Lord Jesus Christ. If a person is not sharing the gospel in their native land, it follows that they probably will not be a willing and powerful witness anywhere else.