



# THE PRAYER CLOSET

*Transforming Lives Through Intercessory  
Prayer And Fasting*

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## PRAYING FOR THE LOST

Prayer is an essential tool in leading people into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. In order to see lost people surrender their lives to Jesus Christ, we must pray for this to happen. We must plead with God to do a powerful work of grace in the hearts of men and women. Sharing the good news of Jesus Christ must be built on the foundation of broken and agonizing intercession. If we desire to see lost people cry out to God, we must first cry out to God in their behalf. As Evelyn Christensen writes in *A Time To Pray God's Way*, "In pre-evangelism praying, we ask the omnipotent God of the universe to reach down and work in people's lives before we do. And what a difference such praying makes."

Unfortunately, prayer is the forgotten factor in evangelism. There are numbers of evangelistic programs that teach people how to share their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Believers need to know how to share the gospel with the lost. They need to know how to talk with others about God. **Yet, just as believers need to know how to talk to others about God, they also need to know how to talk to God about others.**

Our failure to fervently pray for lost people is the reason that our efforts to reach people with the gospel has produced little if any fruit. Our evangelistic programs can never substitute for the power of God that is released through prayer. There must be a combination of fervent prayer and Spirit-empowered witnessing if we are going to lead others to the Lord Jesus Christ. A harvest of souls

can be reaped only after fervent and broken intercession for the lost occurs.

It is time for believers to humble themselves before the Lord and offer intercession for those who need the Lord Jesus Christ. It is time to forsake our superficial praying for the lost. We need to forsake our half-hearted prayers of "Lord, save the lost" and begin pleading and standing in the gap for the salvation of sinners. Believers must offer agonizing and scriptural intercession for those who need Jesus Christ. Before we see people coming to Jesus Christ in faith and repentance, we must cry out to God in their behalf. **The church that wants to be a winner of souls must first be a weeper over souls.** If you want to have an impact on the lost world around you, you must plead with God for this lost world. God is pleased to save when His people plead with Him to save and transform sinners through His Son Jesus Christ.

My heart breaks as I see a lack of concern for those who are lost and a lack of fervent intercession in their behalf. Where is our pleading for the lost? Where are our tears for those who are lost? Have we forgotten that those who do not know Jesus Christ are lost and headed for hell (**John 3:16, 14:6; Acts 4:12**)? If a church is not pleading for the salvation of sinners, it is nothing more than a religious social club.

This issue of *The Prayer Closet* will focus on praying for lost people who need Jesus Christ. It is my hope and prayer that God will grant you insight through this issue on how to intercede for

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lost people. At the same time, it is my earnest prayer and hope that God will stir you to plead for the salvation of those who need Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. God uses the prayers of His people to bring lost person into a right relationship with Himself. God will bless your prayers for those who are lost. You are the only one who is standing in the gap between lost people and eternal damnation and misery in hell forever. Will you be committed to intercede for them? Will you cry out to God for their salvation? Or will you let them die in their sin and go to hell without weeping over their condition and crying out to God to save them from their sin? The choice is yours. You can make a difference in the lives of people. But, you must be committed to pleading with God for their salvation.

## Why Should A Believer Pray For The Lost?

I have been asked on several occasions, "Does the Bible teach that believers should pray for the lost?" The answer is "Yes!". There are several biblical reasons why believers should pray for the lost. *First, the Lord Jesus Christ taught us to pray that God's kingdom would come (Matthew 6:10; Luke 11:2).* God's kingdom is the reign and rule of Jesus Christ in the hearts of those who surrender to Him. When a person surrenders to Jesus Christ, He becomes the Lord of that person's life; He begins to reign over that person. By praying for the kingdom to come, you are actually praying for lost people to surrender to Jesus so that He becomes the Lord and Savior of their lives. You are praying for Christ to invade their lives through conversion. When Jesus says to pray, "Your kingdom come," it is a command to pray for the salvation of the lost. By teaching us to pray this way, Christ is revealing the necessity of praying for those who are lost.

*Believers are to pray for the lost because it is the church's responsibility (1 Timothy 2:1).* Paul declares that the church is to be characterized by fervent intercession for all kinds of people and needs. The church is to be a house of prayer. Since we are to pray for all kinds of men and needs,

this must include those who are in need of salvation. The church is to offer intercession for those who are lost. The church is to stand in the gap for those who need Jesus Christ and His life-transforming power. This is the desire of God for the church. It is the responsibility of the church to plead for the souls of men.

*Believers should pray for the lost because of the example of the apostle Paul (Romans 9:1-3, 10:1).* Paul prayed for the salvation of his lost Jewish family and friends. He plead with God to bring them to faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He labored to share the gospel with them. Paul sets the example for the believer in this matter. He did share his faith in Christ with those who were lost. Yet, at the same time, he fervently interceded for God to save them. Praying for the lost needs to be a priority among believers. Witnessing to and interceding for lost people go hand-in-hand. Our burden to see them saved should motivate us to plead with God for their salvation and to share the gospel with them.

*Fulfilling the Great Commission requires that we pray for the lost (Matthew 28:19-20).* The church has the responsibility of leading people to Jesus Christ and then teaching and training them through the Word of God. This cannot be done in our own wisdom and power. We must have the power and wisdom of God that is released through pray to accomplish what Christ has called us to do. If we are going to see people saved, we must pray for their salvation. If we are going to see people discipled and transformed through the Word of God, we must pray for this. Transformed lives are a result of believing, fervent prayer. It is impossible to fulfill the Great Commission without praying for the lost.

*If you desire to see God glorified, we will pray for the lost (1 Corinthians 10:31).* The salvation of a sinner reveals how great and how gracious God is. There is nothing that exalts God like the salvation of a sinner. When a person comes to Jesus Christ in faith and repentance, God is revealed as a gracious, powerful, and loving God. When God saves a person, it shows people how mighty and good God is. If you long to see God exalted in this way, you will pray for the salvation of the lost. If you desire to see God revealed as a

gracious and powerful God, you will plead with Him to save sinners.

*Praying for the lost is a way that you fulfill the second great commandment (Matthew 22:39).* Jesus Christ has commanded that believers love their neighbor as themselves. This means that you will seek the highest good of others. You will strive to minister to others. The greatest thing that you can do for a lost person is to pray for his or her salvation. This is not a substitute for ministering to and sharing the gospel with the lost person. But, prayer is the crucial key. By praying for the lost, you are revealing your love for them. You are seeking their highest good by praying for them to be saved. You are seeking to minister to them through your intercession.

*The condition of sinners should motivate you to pray for those who are lost (Ephesians 2:1-3).* A lost person is dead in sin, bound by Satan, and dominated by the lusts of the flesh. This person is separated from God and is without hope in this world and in the life to come. This person is headed for eternal misery in hell. It will take a miracle for this person to come to Christ. Only God's grace and power can deliver this person from his or her condition and eternal damnation. You cannot save anybody through your own efforts or determination. You cannot deliver a lost person through your own power or persuasion. It will take God's power and grace. This power and grace are released through agonizing and heartbroken intercession. You must plead with God to transform this person. You cry out to God to deliver this person. This is the only hope that the person has. The condition of lost people should stir you to intercede for them.

*You should pray for the lost because God has given you the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:19-21).* God has given you the responsibility of bringing people into a right relationship with Himself. The only way that this can happen is by you leading them to Jesus Christ. Someone prayed for you to be saved. Someone shared the gospel with you. Through these things, you entered into a right relationship with God. Now God desires that you do the same with others. The only way that you will be able to carry out this ministry of reconciliation is through prayer. Prayer will enable you to lead others to Christ so that they

can be reconciled with God.

*A final reason that you should pray for the lost is because Jesus Christ has taught you to ask (Matthew 7:7-8).* If you want to receive from God, you must ask of God. If you want long to see lost people surrender to the Lord Jesus Christ, you need to ask God to save them. Lost people are not saved because we fail to ask God for their salvation. Ask God to powerfully work in the lost person's life. Seek God continually for this person's salvation. Knock for an open door to witness to lost people. God has ordained things in such a way that we must pray for the salvation of sinners. No one gets saved without someone somewhere asking God for his or her salvation. You are saved because someone prayed and asked God to save you. If you want to see people surrender their lives to Christ, you need to ask for this. Asking for a person's salvation is the way to this becoming a reality.

## The Importance of Prayer in Leading People To Jesus Christ

The Bible does teach that believers should pray for lost people. This is God's desire. He wants you to intercede for lost people. Prayer for lost people is also crucial in leading them to Jesus Christ. It is a necessity that believers pray for the lost. Without prayer, you cannot lead a person to Jesus Christ. Prayer is a crucial part of the evangelistic process. Why is prayer so important in leading a person to Jesus Christ?

- (1) *Prayer prepares the heart of the unbeliever (Matthew 13:3-9).* A lost person's heart needs to be prepared to receive the Word of God. There are many things in a person's life that can hinder a person from hearing and seriously considering the Word of God. Prayer paves the way for the Word of God to be heard and received by the lost person. Through prayer, a hunger for God's Word can be created in the lost person. It can also cause a person to contemplate eternity and his or her condition before God. You cannot touch the

heart or the mind of a person. Yet, the Holy Spirit can. When you pray for a lost person, you are asking the Holy Spirit to touch the heart and the mind of the lost person. He can touch the innermost core of a person. Through prayer, you are seeking the Holy Spirit for this powerful work. When this happens, the lost person can be prepared to hear and receive the Word of God.

- (2) *Prayer empowers the believer to witness (Acts 1:8, 4:31).* Through prayer, the believer receives the filling of the Holy Spirit (**Ephesians 5:18**). This provides the believer with the spiritual power to share the gospel with those who are lost. Through prayer, a believer can receive insights on how to witness to a person. It also gives the believer courage and boldness and courage to share the gospel with others. When a believer intercedes for a lost people, it creates a greater burden to share his or her faith with the lost. Prayer deepens the burden that a believer feels for those who need Jesus Christ.
- (3) *Prayer defeats the forces of evil (2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2).* The lost person is under the control of Satan. This control varies in degrees from having influence on the lost person to demon possession. The lost person is bound by the chains of Satan. It is Satan's desire to damn lost people to hell forever (**John 8:44**). He does not want to lose his grip on the lost person's life. He does not want his deceitful and destructive plans for the lost person to be destroyed. He will oppose every attempt to lead any person to Jesus Christ. Leading people to Jesus Christ provokes a spiritual conflict. It is a spiritual warfare because Satan's power and grip on the lost person must be destroyed. The only way to neutralize and overcome the forces of evil in this situation is prayer. Prayer is an offensive weapon. It can destroy the chains of Satan in a person's life. It can release the power of God that can overcome Satan and his devious plans.

- (3) *Prayer destroys strongholds in a person's life (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).* A stronghold is a sinful habit or mindset that has been established in a person's life. The person has yielded to this sinful habit or mindset so much that it grips and controls the person. This sinful habit or mindset hinders the person from the truth of God. These things oppose the truth of God. They hinder the Word of God from taking root in a person's life and bringing change in the person. Yet, these strongholds can be torn down through fervent, believing prayer. Prayer can help in dealing with those things that are hindering the person from receiving the Word of God and from surrendering to the Lord Jesus Christ.
- (4) *Prayer focuses the power of God on the lost person (Jeremiah 32:17).* Prayer is the channel through which the power of God flows into a person's life. God is a God of power and might. He has created all things by His own power. He sustains all things by His own power. This power that created and sustains the heavens and the earth flows into a person's life. The lost person desperately needs this power to transform his or her life. Without this power, there is no hope for the lost person. It is this power alone that can bring salvation to a lost person. This power is channeled into the person's life through prayer.

## Strategies For Prayer Evangelism

When you pray for lost people, you need to consider developing a strategy. It is not enough to simply say, "Lord, save the lost." You need to provide specific and intense intercession for people. You are in a struggle for the souls of people. You are facing an enemy that is not going to lose his control over people without a struggle. These people are headed to an eternal hell unless the miracle of salvation takes place. There needs to be