

THE PRAYER CLOSET

Encouraging & Equipping Believers in Prayer

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NATIONS PRAYING: BLESSING THE WHOLE WORLD

You're probably wondering what the phrase "nations praying" means. Nations praying is covering the nations of the world during your prayer times. It means praying for the nations of the world on a consistent basis. It is pleading with God to transform and bless all the nations of this world.

At this point, some of you may be ready to put the newsletter down and move on to something else. Your interest level might have bottomed out when you saw the title or read those opening words. You may be thinking that this is not really for you. Or, for others, you may feel a little overwhelmed by this. After all, the world is a big place.

But, hang on! God longs to use you in touching and blessing this world. Your heavenly Father wants you to have a global impact! He desires to use you in reaching the world. You can do this by practicing nations praying.

Growing up, I attended a church and belonged to a denomination that had a strong missions emphasis. I can remember my church hosting numerous world missions conferences. God gave me the privilege to hear and meet many missionaries. My pastors taught and emphasized world missions. Each year we had a special season of prayer and giving for world missions. God used all of these things to show me the need to support and pray for missionaries.

Yet, God began burdening me that I needed to go deeper. He convicted me that I must cover the nations of the world. He wanted me to move out of my comfort zone – to forsake my usual, comfortable praying. He wanted to stretch my faith and my prayers to include the whole world.

This is God's desire you also. He longs for you to seek Him for the nations of the world. He wants to move you out of your comfort zone and into the place where you are His vessel for touching and changing the whole world. In this issue of *The Prayer Closet*, we will focus on nations praying. We will deal with why believers should practice this, some obstacles to this, and provide you with some practical advice on how to do this. God wants to guide you on the exciting journey of interceding for the nations of the world. Are you ready to hear and heed His call?



Why Practice Nations Praying?

The Word of God provides us with several reasons why we should pray for the nations of the world. *The first motivation is*

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because God is the global God. Our God is concerned about all the nations. He has a heart for all the peoples of the world. He desires that His Word be proclaimed in all nations. Listen to the testimony of God's Word:

"All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before You. For the kingdom is the LORD's and He rules over the nations" (**Psalm 22:27-28**).

"Be still and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!" (**Psalm 46:10**).

"For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea" (**Habakkuk 2:13**).

"God be merciful to us and bless us, and cause His face to shine upon us, that Your way may be known on earth, Your salvation among all nations" (**Psalm 67:1-2**).

The Word of God is clear: God wants to make His glory and salvation known to all the peoples of the earth. This is His heart's desire and passion. If we love Him and desire to glorify Him, it should be our passion to pray for the nations of the world.

Another reason to practice nations praying is because God is at work throughout our world. God's work is going on in all the countries of the world. He is accomplishing His purpose around the globe. God is actively at work in the nations of this world. Listen to the testimony of the Scripture:

"The LORD looks from heaven; He sees all the sons of men. From the place of His dwelling He looks on all the inhabitants of the earth; He fashions their hearts individually; He considers all their works" (**Psalm 33:13-14**).

"He rules by His power forever; His eyes observe the nations; do not let the rebellious exalt themselves" (**Psalm 66:7**).

"And He changes the times and the seasons; He removes kings and raises up kings" (**Daniel 2:21**).

"All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing; He does according to His will in the army of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth. No one can restrain His hand or say to Him, 'What have You done?'" (**Daniel 4:35**)

Our God is active across the globe. When we pray for the nations, we are joining God in His great and powerful work on earth. We take part in God's eternal plan of touching and blessing the nations.

Another motivation for nations praying is that it is crucial to fulfilling the Great Commission. In **Matthew 28:19-20**, Jesus calls us to take the gospel to all nations of the world, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." We will do this only by praying fervently for the nations of the world. Without faithful prayer, we will not be able to penetrate the nations of the world with the life-transforming truth of Jesus and His salvation. Yet, if the church of Jesus Christ will pray, the gospel will go forth and touch and bless all the nations of the world. Prayer is the crucial key in the fulfillment of the Great Commission in all the nations of the world.

We must pray for the nations because of Satan's grip over the nations. Much of our world is enslaved by the evil one. Through false religions, godless traditions, and ignorance, Satan has blinded and bound nations (**2 Corinthians 4:4**). He keeps the nations in the darkness of sin, misery, and future damnation in hell. He will hinder every attempt to carry the truth of the gospel to the nations. He does not want to lose His grip on any nation. It is only when we pray faithfully that Satan's grip on the nations will be destroyed. When we pray, it releases God's power. Satan cannot stand against the power of God released through prayer. Praying for the nations can destroy Satan's grip over them.

Praying for the nations is part of God's ordained method in reaching them. In

Romans 10, God makes it known that He desires to touch and bless the nations through the preaching of the gospel, "How shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent?" (**Romans 10:14-15**) Preaching the gospel is crucial in reaching the nations.

Yet, **Romans 10:1** gives us the foundation for the preaching of the gospel. It is a burden for the lost and prayer for them. It is not enough to send missionaries to the nations. We must pray and plead for these nations. We must cry out for God to have mercy on them and to transform them through the gospel of Jesus Christ. God's ordained plan for reaching the nations is rooted in fervent and broken prayer.

The final motivation for nations praying is the promise of Jesus. In **Matthew 7:7**, ~~Jesus gives us this~~ amazing promise, "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you." Jesus tells us that we can ask and receive from the Father. God delights in answering our prayers. When we pray for the nations of the world, God will hear and answer. This promise of Jesus applies to the blessing and transformation of nations. If we will ask, God will move in unique and powerful ways in our world.



The Hindrances To Nations Praying

There are some hindrances to nations praying. Whenever I preach or teach on this subject, I encounter a variety of objections to praying for the nations of the world. These things hinder or keep people from getting involved in praying for the nations and God's

work among them. Some of these objections are:

How will I know that my prayers make a difference?

I realize that we don't often hear or see the answers to our prayers for the nations of the world. Yet, God has called us to pray on the basis of faith and not our feelings. We are to pray not on the basis of what we see, hear, or feel, but by faith, "For we walk by faith, not by sight" (**2 Corinthians 5:7**). At the same time, we serve the global God. When we pray for the nations of the world, it delights His heart. He hears and responds. We can be assured of this. Because of God's heart for the nations, we can expect Him to move when we pray for them.

Why should I spend time praying about nations that are so far away when there are many concerns closer to home?

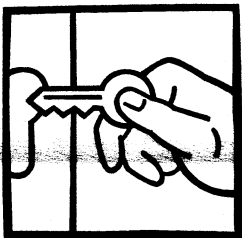
God has called us to be "world Christians." Our prayers and concerns must include the whole world, not just the immediate area and concerns where we live. This is one of the clever lies of the enemy. He attempts to convince us that we should not pray for the nations because they are so far away. At the same time, it is not an "either/or" option. We do not have the option of choosing one to focus on over the other. **Acts 1:8** provides us with the model for our prayers. We are to pray for our "Jerusalem" and the uttermost parts of our world. A mature, effective prayer life includes both.

It overwhelms me to think about praying for the nations of the world. How can one person pray for the whole world?

I realize that it may seem overwhelming. But, it can be done. You can pray for the nations of the world and have a global impact! Praying for the world is not impossible. God will help you and enable you to intercede for the nations (**Philippians 4:13**). His heart beats for the nations. If you commit to pray for the nations, He will provide you with all that you will need for this task.

I'm really not interested in praying for the nations. I have other topics that I'd really deal with in my praying.

I realize that every believer is different. I also acknowledge believers are gifted in a variety of ways. In our prayer lives, God may call us to focus on some areas more than others. We may have distinct callings in our praying. Yet, we cannot ignore or neglect the world in our praying. God loves this world. He longs to bring the nations to Himself. He takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked. Because of God's heart and purpose, our praying must include the nations of the world. We must get out of our comfort zones. We must forsake our self-centered praying. There is a world that God loves and that needs Jesus Christ. Our praying needs to reflect this. Praying for the nations is an exciting journey that makes a difference now and for eternity.



Keys For Nations Praying

You may be wondering, "How in the world do I pray for the world?" You may be thinking, "How do I start?" or "Where do I begin?" The following are some keys that you can use to develop your ability to intercede for the nations of the world.

- (1) **Ask God to create His heart in you.** God's heart beats for the world. He delights in bringing people from the nations of the world to Himself through the gospel (**Revelation 7:9**). He longs for the nations of the world to bow before Him in adoration and praise. Call on God to create His heart in you for the nations. Pray that He will give you the same perspective that He has on this world.
- (2) **Remember that the world is not as big as you may think.** When I first began praying for the nations of the world, I was overwhelmed by it. But, as I began to pray, I realized that the world

is not as big as I thought it was. It is possible for a believer to cover the nations of the world in intercession. This is not an impossible task. God wants you to have a global impact!

- (3) **Stay informed.** An essential key to powerful intercession is staying informed about what is happening in the world. As you gain more understanding about nations and people groups, you can pray with greater power and effectiveness. The following are sites that can help you stay informed about what is going on in the world. They will provide you with the information that you will need to grow in your nations praying:

Bethany World Prayer Center

(Excellent and detailed information about the people groups of our world).

www.bethany.com

Christian Information Network

www.christian-info.com

U.S. Center For World Missions

www.uscwm.org

International Mission Board

www.imb.org

Central Intelligence Agency

(The CIA Factbook can provide you with a treasure of information about every nation in the world).

www.cia.gov

- (4) **Develop a plan.** It is essential that you develop a plan for covering the nations of the world. You might consider praying for a continent at a time. You could cover a nation once a week until you have prayed for the whole world. You might also consider praying for all the nations in one year. You could even cover the entire world in one month. The Prayer Closet has designed a calendar that can help you pray for every nation in one year. We also have brochures to help you pray for the entire world in one month. If you don't already have a plan of intercession, please contact us for help in this area. By having a plan, you can cover the world with believing prayer.