



THE PRAYER CLOSET

Encouraging & Equipping Believers in Prayer

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EVERY NEIGHBOR FOR CHRIST

Do you have difficulty sharing your faith in Jesus with others? Do you feel as if you will never be an effective witness for Jesus? The Bible is clear – believers are to share their faith in Jesus, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem; and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8). The Holy Spirit has entered our lives in order to empower us to tell others about Jesus. This is God’s desire and He has equipped us to do this.

Yet, many believers do not approach others about their faith in Jesus Christ. They hear sermons about it, feel convicted that they do not, and believe it is hopeless for them to be a witness to Jesus. Other believers want to but are discouraged by fear, frustration, a lack of knowledge, or other issues.

It is time that we come to realize that sharing our faith is not a program. Sharing our faith in Jesus Christ is not about memorizing a plan and then repeating it to a lost person. It is a lifestyle of prayer, ministry, witness, and taking advantage of opportunities. We must expand our understanding of sharing the faith to these things. Without these things, our witness will be powerless and fruitless.

If you struggle to share your faith, there is hope. If you want to lead others to Jesus Christ, God is ready and willing to help you. But, you will have to be committed to a lifestyle of praying for and influencing others for Christ’s sake. Leading others Christ requires a lifestyle that is permeated with prayer, ministry, and witness.

In this issue of *The Prayer Closet*, I want us to look at a prayer evangelism strategy that I call “Every Neighbor For Christ.” This strategy is based on **Colossians 4:2-6**. It is not a program. It is not a plan of slick techniques. It is about building a lifestyle in which you influence others to Christ through prayer, ministry, and witness.

This strategy is called “*Every Neighbor For Christ*.” Evangelism begins at home. Jesus told the disciples that they were to begin at Jerusalem. Jesus desired that they minister to and share the gospel with those around them – their street, their neighborhood, their community, and their city.

This strategy is designed at reaching your neighbors. And who are your neighbors? They are the people around you – the people you come into contact with on a daily basis. It is the people that cross the path of your daily

Dr. Kevin Meador, P. O. Box 278, Hickory, MS 39332 (601) 646-2295

EMAIL: prayercloset_1998@yahoo.com

WEB PAGES: www.prayerclosetministries.org - www.kingdompraying.com

life. Your neighbors are those who need Jesus – those who need the transforming power of God. This strategy will help you to take action in reaching every neighbor for Christ.

Every Neighbor For Christ: Strategic Prayer

A crucial step in reaching every neighbor for Christ is prayer. The apostle Paul makes this clear in **Colossians 4:2**, "Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving." Paul states that the believer is to continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it. This means that prayer is more than just having a quiet time. Of course, we must be diligent to get alone and get with God on a daily basis.

But, Paul's view of prayer in this verse is more than a quiet time. He is speaking of a lifestyle of prayer. Prayer wears denim; prayer wears khaki. What I mean by this is that prayer is a ministry that we carry out each day. It is an opportunity to influence others for Christ on a daily basis.

It is important to notice that Paul adds, "being vigilant in it." This word "vigilant" means watchful. We are to watch for opportunities to pray for others. As we go through our day, we must look for opportunities to pray specifically for those that we encounter. We must be alert for ways to pray for the people that live on our streets, work in our workplace, and go to the mall and grocery stores that we do. This is why it is called "strategic prayer" – it is praying for real people with real needs in daily life. We must be watchful – alert – for these times.

There are three practical ways that you can practice strategic prayer to reach every neighbor for Christ:

Prayerwalking

Prayerwalking is moving your prayer time out into the streets. It is praying for the people you encounter on a daily basis. God desires that we live a life of prayer. We are to pray throughout our day and in all the activities

of life, "Pray without ceasing" (**1 Thessalonians 5:17**).

Prayerwalking has two major aspects. It is a lifestyle of prayer – praying daily for people and needs as you encounter them. Yet, it is also an intentional ministry. It is a plan of saturating a city, a block, a neighborhood, a community, or a city in prayer. As a ministry, prayerwalking can enable a church to offer sustained and concentrated prayer for a particular area. Because of this, I am convicted that churches need to develop an intentional prayerwalking ministry.

The key issue is to saturate an area and people with sustained prayer. By regularly prayerwalking an area, you are releasing God's power into that area and into the lives of those who live there. If we are going to reach our neighbors for Christ, we must saturate them with prayer. We must continually call on God to touch them and to change them. Prayerwalking can help a church or association do this.

How can you put this into practice in your life?

- ✓ *Before you start, spend some time alone with your Father.* Ask Him to reveal to you what He wants to do for your street, neighborhood, city, or community.
- ✓ *Prayerwalk your home and commit it to the Lord.* Before you win your neighbors and your area, you have to commit your home to Christ. Ask Him to show you anything that needs to be removed from your home. Pray that you will have a home where He will be comfortable and where He can work from to reach your neighbors.
- ✓ *Ask God to open your eyes.* Pray that God will help you see what He sees in your neighborhood. Plead that you will see the people as God does.
- ✓ *Regularly prayerwalk your street or neighborhood.* Plan to regularly walk through your neighborhood and pray for the people and their needs. In some places, you may have to "prayerdrive" instead of prayerwalk. The key issue is

to get out where you live and pray and listen to the Spirit.

- ✓ *Partner with other believers in prayerwalking.* You might consider asking other believers to prayerwalk in your neighborhood while you do the same in theirs. Share the insights, prayers, and feelings that you can enhance your prayerwalking.
- ✓ *Develop a "Spiritual Neighborhood Watch."* Many neighborhoods have what is called a "neighborhood watch." They watch for any suspicious and criminal activity. If they see anything like this, they report it to the authorities. If you have other believers living in your area, you might consider starting a "Spiritual Neighborhood Watch." This is staying alert to what is going on in your neighborhood. When you see anything that needs prayer, you report it to the other believers. Then you can pray in agreement concerning this issue (**Matthew 18:19**).

Spiritual Mapping

Spiritual mapping is finding out who lives in your area and praying according to this information. A spiritual map includes the people who live in your area and their spiritual condition. You can also highlight problem areas that are in need of particular intercession. Believers and churches should have spiritual maps of their areas.

What are the benefits of a spiritual map?

- (1) *It helps you to know who lives in your area.* You can't pray for or minister to people if you do not know them or their needs.
- (2) *It enables you to pray with greater power.* God can bless the prayer, "Lord, bless my neighborhood." Yet, you will have greater power when you pray specifically for people and their needs.
- (3) *You can gain insight for ministry through a spiritual map.* A spiritual map can help you to know how to reach out to your neighbors and your community. It

can help you identify needs and ministries that can meet those needs.

- (4) *A spiritual map reminds of people and their needs.* In conferences and seminars, I've often had people say to me, "I don't need a map to know who lives on my street or road. I already know this." That may be true, but I'm not sure that it is always the case. We live at such a fast pace that most people and their needs are nothing but a blur to us. A spiritual map is a healthy reminder that our streets, roads, communities, and cities are filled with people who need Jesus and the Word of God.

How do you compose a spiritual map? The following are some things that you might consider.

- ✓ *Who are the people who live in your area?* If possible, find out who lives around you. It would be helpful to know the names of your neighbors.
- ✓ *What is their spiritual condition?* Do they profess faith in Jesus Christ? Do they go to a church? What church do they go to?
- ✓ *Identify strongholds of Satan.* In your area, identify those places where Satan has a stronghold. The following are some suggestions.
 - Pornographic businesses
 - Bars and nightclubs
 - Gambling facilities
 - Houses of lost people
 - Psychic or spiritualist establishments
 - Known witches' covens
 - New Age facilities
 - Places of worship for cults
 - Churches that do not preach the Word of God
- ✓ *Identify strongholds of the Lord.*
 - Churches that preach the Word of God
 - Homes of believers
 - Christian ministries
 - Christian businesses
 - Neighborhood houses of prayer
 - Evangelistic billboards and signs

- ✓ *Include insights from your prayerwalking.* As you prayerwalk, God will give you insight into your area. Include this information with your spiritual maps.
- ✓ *Do research on your area.* What is the history of your area? Who founded your area? What has been the dominant religious group in your area? Ask the Lord to show you information that is helpful to you, such as anything that has had an impact on how people believe and how they behave in your area.

Once you begin developing your spiritual map, you can pray specifically and with power for your neighbors and your area.

Praying For Open Doors

Prayerwalking helps us to saturate our neighbors with prayer. Spiritual mapping gives us insight on how to pray for our neighbors and their needs. Yet, Paul adds one more aspect of **strategic prayer for reaching our neighbors** for Christ. It is praying for open doors. He writes, "Meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains" (**Colossians 4:3**).

An open door is an opportunity to share the good news of Jesus with another person. Praying for an open door is asking God to grant an opportunity to share the good news with others. Praying for an open door involves the following:

- *Praying that God would prepare the hearts of your neighbors for the gospel.*
- *Asking that He would remove anything that might hinder that person from hearing and believing the gospel.*
- *Pleading that God would help you to share the gospel with that person.* If you pray for God to open the door, be prepared to walk through the door.
- *Praying that God would help you to make the gospel clear through your words and your life.* This is what Paul means in **Colossians 4:4**, "That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak."

- *Calling on God to raise up others to witness to your neighbors.* Sometimes when you pray for open doors, God may have other believers that He will use to share the good news with them. Pray that He will have others who will speak to your neighbors about Jesus Christ.

Every Neighbor For Christ: Intentional Ministry

In **Colossians 4:5**, Paul says, "Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time." This verse refers to intentional ministry to your neighbors. It is living the Christian life in front of them while seeking to minister to them in unique and powerful ways.

In **Colossians 4:2-4**, Paul emphasizes the need to pray for your neighbors. This is the foundation of reaching our neighbors for Christ. Yet, we must also provide intentional ministry to our neighbors. We must show them the love and compassion of Jesus. These things – prayer and ministry – must be combined if you are going to have significant spiritual impact on those around you.

In **Colossians 4:5**, we are told to "redeem the time." This means we are to make the most of opportunities to do good for those around us. We must seize every possibility of blessing and ministering to our neighbors. We are to be wise and discerning about the circumstances when we can offer significant ministry to our neighbors.

How can you provide intentional ministry to you neighbors? The following are some suggestions that you might consider:

- *Ask God how you can minister to your neighbors.* Call on Him to give you a plan of action.
- *Pray that God will give you the discernment to see opportunities to minister to your neighbors.*
- *Ask your neighbors how you can pray for them.*
- *Send your neighbors a letter or card, telling them about your prayers for them.*