

# THE PRAYER CLOSET

Encouraging & Equipping Believers in Prayer

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ISSUE 1

## YOUR CHURCH: A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR THE LOST

In **1 Timothy 3:14-15**, Paul tells Timothy, "These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth." Paul makes it known that he is writing Timothy on how to guide the church. He wants this young pastor to know how the church is to function. He teaches this to Timothy first, "Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men" (**1 Timothy 2:1**). Paul instructs Timothy that the church is to be a house of prayer for people – especially those who are lost.

The word "first" in **1 Timothy 2:1** means first in rank. It refers to priority. The Word of God is declaring that prayer is to be priority of the church. The church is to be a house of prayer for all kinds of people with all kinds of needs. Seeking God in behalf of others is the first and great work of the church.

Our God is a saving God. He desires to deliver people from their sin and eternal misery. Because of this, He desires that we pray for the salvation of those who are lost. He longs for us to stand in the gap for those who

are outside of Jesus Christ. His call to the church is to intercede for those who need Christ. This delights His heart and is in line with His merciful character, "For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (**1 Timothy 2:3-4**).

The church then has the privilege and responsibility of becoming a house of prayer for the lost. Our churches must become places of prayer for those who need Jesus Christ. This is God's call and the delight of His heart.

The question is then, "How do you build a house of prayer for the lost? How do you guide a prayer ministry, a church, into intercession for the lost across the street and across the world?" This issue of *The Prayer Closet* will focus on leading the church to become a house of prayer for the lost. We will examine what it means to be a house of prayer for the lost. We will also look at tangible steps you can take to lead your prayer ministry or your church to this. It is my hope and prayer that this material will encourage you and provide you with the insight that you need to you aid you in building a house of prayer for those who need Jesus.

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

EMAIL: [prayercloset\\_1998@yahoo.com](mailto:prayercloset_1998@yahoo.com)

WEB AGES: [www.prayerclosetministries.org](http://www.prayerclosetministries.org) – [www.kingdompraying.com](http://www.kingdompraying.com)



## Why Labor To Build A House Of Prayer For The Lost?

Why should a church strive to become a house of prayer for the lost? There are three basic biblical reasons for this. *First, it is the desire and delight of God.* In **1 Timothy 2:1**, we are told that the church should pray for all kinds of people with all kinds of needs. In this same section, Paul refers to God as the Savior (2:3). Of all the needs that a person has, salvation is the greatest need. And it is the great desire of God to save. The combination of this call to pray for people and the emphasis on God being the Savior who desires to save puts praying for the lost as the priority of the church. People have many needs, yet their greatest need is forgiveness and a right relationship with God through faith in Christ. God desires that we pray about this great need in peoples' lives. God delights in it when His church prays for those who need His salvation. The church should intercede concerning all kinds of needs; yet our primary focus in prayer must be the salvation of sinners.

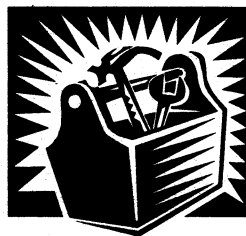
*Building a house of prayer is essential to fulfilling the Great Commission.* In **Matthew 28:19-20**, Jesus declares that the church is to take the message of Jesus to the masses, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the 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." This can only be accomplished through prayer. The church that desires to fulfill the Great Commission has to become a house of prayer for the lost. It is only as the power of God is released through prayer that the church can carry the message of Jesus to the world, lead them to Christ, and disciple them in the Word. Apart from prayer, the Great Commission is only wishful thinking. Any church that desires to reach out to the lost with the good news of Jesus must become a house of prayer for those who are lost. Prayer unleashes God's power and affects the witnesses, the witness, and those who are hearing the message. Fulfilling the Great

Commission and becoming a house of prayer for the lost go hand in hand.

Building a house of prayer for the lost is obedience to the Great Commandment. In **Matthew 22:37-39**, Jesus says, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself." First, we are to love God with all of our beings. If you love God, don't you want to see Him glorified? What glorifies God more than the salvation of sinners? Loving God means that you want to see people saved by God that God might be glorified.

Second, you are to love your neighbor as yourself. You are to seek the highest good for those around you. What greater thing can you do for those around you than pray for their salvation? Loving your neighbor means asking God to have mercy on him and bring him to Christ.

When a church becomes a house of prayer for the lost, it is seeking to obey the Great Commandment of Jesus. It is seeking God's glory through the salvation of sinners. It is also seeking the highest good of those who need Jesus by interceding for their salvation.



## The Essential Tools For Building A House Of Prayer For The Lost

In our previous section, we laid a biblical foundation for why you should strive to become a house of prayer for the lost. Now, we need to examine the tools that you need to build this house of prayer for the lost. The following are some essential tools that you will need for this:

➤ *A burden for the lost.*

"I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and continual grief in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my

brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh" (**Romans 9:1-3**).

This is the first and most crucial tool for building a house of prayer for the lost. The church must have the similar burden that Paul models in these verses. Believers must understand the lostness of those who are outside of Christ. Believers have to accept and know the consequences of rejecting Christ – exclusion from heaven and an eternity in the misery and suffering of hell. This burden will provide the fuel for our praying for those who need Jesus. This provides motivation and direction for our praying. Building a house of prayer for the lost begins with a burden for those who are without Christ.

➤ *Conviction that prayer makes a difference.*  
"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is that they may be saved" (**Romans 10:1**).

Another essential tool for building a house of prayer for the lost is the conviction that praying for the lost does make a difference. God has ordained prayer as a part of bringing people to Jesus Christ. It is a necessary part of bringing people to faith in Jesus. Paul sets the example in this verse of Scripture. He desired the salvation of people. Yet, He also prayed for the salvation of those He wanted to see saved. Prayer is a crucial element in seeing people come to Jesus Christ in faith. Believers must be thoroughly convicted of this truth. There can be no doubt or hesitation concerning this point. Building a house of prayer means that you know and trust that your prayers make a difference in the lost.

➤ *Training*  
"Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, 'Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples'" (**Luke 11:1**).

This verse is a powerful reminder that believers must be taught to pray. Prayer is a spiritual discipline that is learned. The believer must grow and mature in prayer. The

same is true of praying for the lost. Believers must be trained in how to seek God for those who need Jesus. They must be instructed and encouraged to seek God in behalf of the lost. Building a house of prayer for the lost means that you provide training for believers in how to intercede for the lost.

➤ *Tangible opportunities*  
"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you" (**Matthew 7:7**).

In order to build a house of prayer for the lost, you need to provide tangible opportunities for people to pray for the lost. This means that you have to offer definite opportunities for people to practice evangelistic prayer. When a church is a house of prayer for the lost, there are tangible ways that people stand in the gap for the lost. It's not enough to say, "We need to pray for the lost. We need to pray for our community." There must be practical, tangible opportunities to pray specifically for those who need Jesus.



## Objections To Building A House Of Prayer For The Lost

When I have dealt with the subject of building houses of prayer for the lost, there are some objections that are made. These objections basically focus on praying for the lost. But, they will surface when you attempt to lead a church in being a house of prayer for the lost.

### **Objection # 1:**

*"Where are we taught in the Bible to pray for the lost?"*

There is no specific command to pray for the lost. You will not read in the Word, "You shall pray for the lost." Yet, the Word is filled with numerous truths that clearly point to the necessity of intercession for those who need Jesus.

**Romans 10:1** – The apostle Paul revealed that he prayed for the lost. Obviously Paul saw the necessity of praying for lost people. If the apostle Paul saw a need for this, praying for the lost cannot be ignored. It must be a part of our praying.

**2 Thessalonians 3:1-2** – In this text, Paul asks the Thessalonians to pray for his labors in Corinth. In these verses, Paul connects evangelistic effectiveness with fervent prayer. He makes it known that prayer was crucial to his declaration of the gospel in Corinth, “Finally, brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may run swiftly and be glorified, just as it is with you, and that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith” (**2 Thessalonians 3:1-2**). Paul asks them to pray that “the word of the Lord may run swiftly.” He wants them to pray that people will be open and receptive to the good news of Jesus. He also wants them to pray that the word of the Lord would “be glorified.” This means that he wants it to change the lives of the Corinthians. He desired that they receive the good news of Jesus and that they experience salvation through it. He calls on the Thessalonians to pray that they will believe the gospel and will be transformed by it. There is an inseparable connection between prayer and the lost coming to Christ.

**Matthew 9:37-38** – In this text, Jesus commands us to pray for laborers, “Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. “Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest” (**Matthew 9:37-38**). Christ calls on us to pray for laborers to go out into the harvest. If we are to pray for laborers, shouldn't we also pray for the harvest? If we pray for people to go out into the harvest, should we not also pray for the people that they are striving to reach?

**Colossians 4:3** – “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.” In this text, Paul connects prayer and open doors for witness. He states that only prayer could prepare people to hear

and receive the good news of Jesus. Prayer is crucial in people hearing and receiving the good news of Jesus.

**Matthew 23:37 & Romans 9:1-3** – In these texts, we see Jesus and Paul agonizing over lost people. They are burdened and broken over the lostness of people. We know that any person outside of Christ is lost and headed for an eternity of misery in hell. That should break us and stir us to do all that we can to lead others to Christ, which includes praying fervently for them. Although there is no direct command to pray for the lost, shouldn't their condition and future state drive us to seek God in their behalf?

### **Objection # 2**

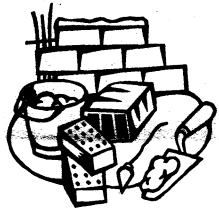
*Does praying for lost people really make a difference?*

The answer to this question is an emphatic “Yes!” Praying for lost people does make a difference. This is revealed to us in the Scripture. In **2 Thessalonians 3:1-2**, Paul asks the Thessalonian church to pray for his labors in Corinth. He wanted them to pray for open and receptive hearts and that obstacles to the good news would be taken out of their lives. The Word of God tells us in **1 Corinthians 6:9-11**, “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.” Paul says, “*And such were some of you.*” These Corinthians had been ungodly and wicked; yet now they had believed the good news of Jesus and had been transformed by it. **This is exactly what the Thessalonians had prayed for!** They prayed for changed lives in Corinth and it became a reality! Praying for lost people does make a difference.

### **Objection # 3**

*"We've tried this and it didn't work."*

Praying for the lost is a ministry – it takes commitment and hard work. You must persevere in prayer if you are going to see people come to Christ. This is exactly why we have **1 Corinthians 15:58** and **Galatians 6:9**. We must be willing to pray for the long haul for the salvation of sinners. We will reap if we do not give up and quit. Your labors and prayers in behalf of lost people are not in vain. Building a house of prayer for the lost takes time, work, and commitment. Just because you did not see any fruit from a period of praying for the lost does not mean that it is useless or in vain. Praying for lost people should not be a special emphasis of the church; it must become the heartbeat and lifestyle of the church. It has to become integral to the life of the church.



### **Steps To Building A House Of Prayer For The Lost**

The following are some practical, tangible steps that you can take to building a house of prayer for the lost. These are offered to you to help you pray and discover the best way to guide your church or prayer ministry or group in this direction. You may use these or you can develop your own from them. Each situation is different and these are given to stimulate your thinking and praying about this issue.

(1) *Call on the Holy Spirit to give your church or group a burden for the lost (Romans 9:1-3).* Pray that the Holy Spirit will create a fresh burden on the believers in your church – a burden that will move them to pray for and reach out to the lost.

(2) *Create an atmosphere of prayer for the lost.* There must be a concerted effort to keep this before the congregation and/or the prayer ministry. It has to be emphasized in the pulpit, in the bulletins, and in the various

educational and missions programs of the church. You must keep it ever before the people. Evangelistic sermons and Bible studies are ways of creating this atmosphere for praying for the lost. The lostness of people and the necessity of Jesus must be taught and emphasized in the church.

- (3) *Train believers in prayer evangelism.* It is crucial to train believers in how to intercede for the lost. You might consider do a series of sermons or Bible studies on this subject. You might also consider have a conference or seminar on this in your church. Continue to provide materials that will encourage and equip your people to pray the Word of God for those who need Jesus.
- (4) *Utilize prayer meeting times.* Your prayer meetings can be excellent times for emphasizing the need to pray for the lost – whether in your area or across the world. You can use the prayer meetings to teach people about the necessity of praying for the lost along with how to practice this. During the prayer meetings, you might consider praying for the lost in your area, your state, your nation, and your world (**Acts 1:8**). You might focus on one of these each week. Prepare prayer guides or prayer sheets that will help you focus your prayers for these particular areas. At each prayer meeting have a focus on praying for those who need Jesus.
- (5) *Have periodic prayerwalks or prayer drives.* Prayerwalking or prayer driving is crucial to building a house of prayer for the lost. As people get out into the streets and roads, it stirs or renews their passion to pray fervently for the lost. It gives them fresh insight. It helps them to “see” the needs and the burdens of lost people. As believers practice prayerwalking, it inflames and sustains their prayers for those who need Jesus Christ.
- (6) *Take advantage of a prayer room.* Establish or utilize your prayer room to lead your group or church in praying for the lost. Equip the prayer room with materials for praying for the lost – whether in your area or across the world. You can fill it with materials to help believers pray for

missionaries and their labors. You can have a "Claiming The Cross" poster. This is a poster in which a cross has been drawn. You then write the names of people who need Jesus inside that cross. Those who come to the prayer room commit to pray fervently for those who need Christ. You might also consider having a map of your city or area. As people come to the prayer room, they can pray for the spread of the gospel on these streets and roads. The prayer room can be a vital tool in guiding your church or group to pray for the lost.

- (7) *Plan special events.* Throughout the year, you might consider planning special events that will focus people on praying for those who need Christ. Some special events you might consider are: prayerwalks or prayer drives, Claiming the Cross Sunday in which people commit to pray for the lost, prayer seminars or conferences, have missionaries speak, have a missions emphasis, a Concert of Prayer for the lost, or, Going Fishing Sunday in which people place the names of the lost on a card and believers choose a card out of a fishbowl and pray for those on the card. These are just some ideas that you might consider. The key issue is to plan special events that will remind people of the priority of interceding for the lost.
- (8) *Encourage people to pray for specific lost people.* It is crucial that believers pray specifically for the lost. Stress the need to develop specific intercession for those who need Jesus. Believers might consider making a "Most Wanted" list – a list of those that they want to see come to Christ.
- (9) *Develop Great Commission prayer teams.* Great Commission prayer teams consist of two or more believers who commit to pray in agreement for at least five or more lost people. They join together to pray fervently and specifically for those who need Christ.



## The ABC Prayer

The "ABC" prayer is designed to help you intercede for those who need Jesus Christ.

This prayer outline enables you to pray for their salvation and their personal witness. Salvation is not complete until the evangelized become the evangelists. This prayer guide will help you to seek God for this in the lives of those who need Jesus. Pray that the lost will:

**A**dmit their sin and guilt before God (**Romans 3:23**).

**B**elieve in the Lord Jesus Christ and surrender to Him (**John 3:16**).

**C**onfess Jesus Christ as the Lord of their lives both publicly and privately (**Romans 14:9**).

**D**elivered from sin and the power of Satan (**Acts 10:38**).

**E**xperience daily the assurance and joy of their salvation (**1 John 5:13**).

**F**aithful and active in a local church (**Hebrews 10:25**).

**G**row and mature in the Christian faith (**1 Peter 2:1-2**).

**H**ear and heed the Word of God (**James 1:22**).

**I**nvoke others to repent and trust in Jesus Christ (**Acts 1:8**).




## Praying For A House Of Prayer For The Lost

The following prayers can enable you to pray for your church to become a house of prayer for the lost:

Father, create within us a burden for those who are lost. By the power of the Spirit, burn within us a passion to see people come to Jesus.

Father, unleash a spirit of prayer in this church for those who need Jesus. Stir us afresh to pray for those who are lost. Create within us the heart to pray for the lost.

Father, remove anything from this church that would make it a house of prayer for the lost. I ask in Jesus' name that this church would be a place of prayer for those who need Jesus. I plead that this church will make this city/area the hardest place in the world to go to hell from.




ather, open our eyes to see the spiritual needs of our community. Help us to see people as You do.



## Praying For Your Worship Services

Becoming a house of prayer for the lost requires that you pray for the worship services. When the lost do come, you want them to experience the power of God in the midst of the service. The following are some suggested ways that you can pray for your worship services:

✓ **Early Sunday morning** – Some believers might be willing to come on early Sunday morning and pray through the sanctuary and over the pews.

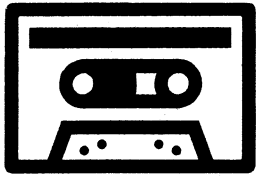


**On Saturday** – You might consider having believers come on Saturday and pray over the pulpit and the pews.

- ✓ **During the week** – You might consider having believers sign up on a specific day to pray for the worship services.
- ✓ **At the start of the service** – You might invite people to come to the altar to pray for what is about to happen in the worship service.
- ✓ **During the service** – You might enlist a team of intercessors who will pray during the worship service in another room. You might also consider having someone other than the pastor pray for the worship service at the beginning of the service.
- ✓ **After the service** – Invite all those who will stay after to church to pray for the Spirit's work to be sealed in the hearts and lives of those who were in the service.

How should you pray for your worship services, especially if you are striving to become a house of prayer for the lost? The following guide can help you pray for the worship services:

- (1) Pray that the lost will be drawn to the worship services.
- (2) Plead that God will prepare the hearts of the lost to hear and receive the Word.
- (3) Ask the Holy Spirit to unleash His conviction into the midst of the worship service.
- (4) Pray that the worship will glorify God and point people to Jesus.
- (5) Plead that the pastor will clearly and powerfully declare the gospel.
- (6) Ask that the schemes of the enemy will be bound and thwarted.
- (7) Pray that the lost will turn from their sin and trust in Jesus.
- (8) Ask that those who believe will confess Jesus as Lord and Savior.
- (9) Pray that those who do not get saved will remain under the conviction of the Spirit during the week.



## Materials To Help You Build A House of Prayer for the Lost

The Prayer Closet has developed materials to help you become a house of prayer for the lost. These materials are designed to enable you to equip and encourage your church to pray for the lost. If you would like to order any or all of these items, please contact us at The Prayer Closet.

### The Beginning Prayer Evangelism Packet

This packet contains the Praying For The Lost brochure, the Releasing God's Power On The Streets key ring, the Personal Evangelism bookmark, and a teaching tape or CD. It is ideal for equipping your prayer group or church in praying for the lost. Please specify tape or CD.

*Special Price!* **\$2.00**

### Praying People To Jesus Bible Study

This Bible study is designed to train believers in how to seek God for the lost. It provides the biblical foundation for this and offers a variety of insights for helping believers offer powerful and Scriptural intercession for

those who need Jesus. This six-week Bible study is ideal for small groups or your Wednesday night prayer meetings.

**\$7.00**

### Why Do You Need Jesus? Key Ring

This key ring presents the plan of salvation to those who need Jesus. It can be used to help you explain the gospel to someone. It is an ideal evangelistic giveaway.

**\$2.00**

### Kingdom Praying CD's

Kingdom Praying CD's contain messages by evangelist Dr. Kevin Meador. These CD's are designed to present Biblical truth in a clear and compelling way. They are also excellent giveaways to those who need Jesus. One CD contains a message and is **\$2.00**. The following are some of the current Kingdom Praying CD's:

*Why Should I Believe In The Resurrection?*

*Why Should I Believe That Jesus Is The Son Of God?*

*When Somebody You Love Is Lost*

*Why Did Jesus Die On The Cross?*

*Why Should I Have Confidence In The Bible?*

### Every Neighbor For Christ

This Bible study will help you reach out to those you come into contact with on a daily basis. It will provide you with a variety of ideas on how to pray and how to minister to your community, city, or area. It is ideal for small groups or your prayer meetings.

**\$8.00**



**The Prayer Closet Ministries, Inc.**  
**Dr. Kevin Meador**  
**P. O. Box 278**  
**Hickory, MS 39332**

Non Profit Org.  
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Hickory MS  
Permit #2

Steve & Ann Mayes  
P. O. Box 525  
Pelahatchie MS 39145