

The Use of Prayer in Evangelism and Missions

By Dietmar Schulze

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: About how many non-Christians have you prayed for during the last three months? About how many non-Christians have you shared your faith with during the last three months?

Assignment Two

Read the comments related to “The Harvest Is Plentiful, the Laborers Few” in the section **It’s in the Book**. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: According to Matthew 9:35-38, how are missions and compassion related?

Assignment Three

Read the comments related to the “Open Doors” in the section **It’s in the Book**. Prepare to share your answer to the following question: What are the attitude for and the purpose of prayer in Colossians 4:2-4?

Scripture to Memorize

“Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”
Matthew 9:38

Session Goal

Consistent with God’s Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will have knowledge of biblical foundations for prayer in missions and evangelism.

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Dietmar was born and raised in a Christian home. At the age of twelve, he received the assurance of his salvation and was baptized. He became a follower of Jesus Christ, a born-again Christian, and a fourth-generation Baptist.

When he was sixteen, he survived three life-endangering situations in one week. This experience made him curious about God’s plan for his life. In a military training camp, on his twentieth birthday, he received the call to vocational ministry. After his theological studies, Dietmar worked ten years as a pastor in two Baptist churches. He has been teaching in a seminary since 2007.

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It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

Your church wants to reach unreached people groups. A pastor makes the suggestion that the church should adopt one people group with more than 100,000 members and one small group. The church intends to send short-term mission teams to the large group and pray for the small group.

The pastor asks you to create a prayer guide. You search <http://peoplegroups.org> for a people group and find the Gongduk of Bhutan. You create a list of five prayer points and five points of information about the Gongduk. Later your lists go to the entire congregation. Do you think prayer for this people group could actually make a difference?

Definition and Situation

Prayer in evangelism is prayer for the unsaved, asking the Lord to draw them to Himself (John 6:44), to open their ears to understand the truth (Matthew 13:19) and to open their eyes to see the light of the gospel (2 Corinthians 4:4). This also involves praying for ourselves; that we may have compassion for the spiritual well-being of unbelievers and be open to sharing the good news as He opens the door of opportunity. "Simply put, in evangelistic praying we talk to God about people and then talk to people about God." (Adapted from *Lausanne Occasional Paper No. 42*, 11).

According to a survey about prayer conducted by LifeWay in 2014, only 20% of the participants prayed for people who have either no faith or of other faiths. This number corresponds with the number of people who actually share their faith according to LifeWay research conducted in 2013. Out of a group of ten believers, ages 18-29, only two to three actually share their faith. That means eight out of ten American believers neither pray for nor share their faith with non-Christians they don't already know.

Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now share answers to these questions: About how many non-Christians have you prayed for during the last three months? About how many non-Christians have you shared your faith with during the last three months?

Discussion Questions

What connection could exist between praying for non-Christians and sharing your faith with them? Why is that so?

On Your Own

In the space below, write the name of one non-Christian you will pray for during the next seven days: That you or someone else could present the gospel to them.

The Harvest Is Plentiful, the Laborers Few

Read Matthew 9:35-38 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 35. Jesus went . . . proclaiming . . . healing. Here is the situation: Jesus was visiting cities and villages, preaching the gospel and healing people. This verse describes the ministries of Jesus with absolute statements. He went to all the cities and villages; he proclaimed the gospel of the kingdom; He healed every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.

Such statements show the perfect and holistic work of Jesus. God's mission is perfect and does not need improvement. God calls the fruit of Christ's mission His harvest. When we pray for missions and evangelism, we do not ask God to do a better job in saving people. Verse 38 instructs disciples to pray for something else.

Verse 36. [Jesus] had compassion. Jesus had compassion for the people. Compassion is the "quality of showing kindness or favor, of being gracious, or of having pity or mercy" (*Tyndale Bible Dictionary*, 306). Compassion is a character trait of God. Disciples who become more compassionate become more like God. **like sheep without a shepherd.** Missions and evangelism are driven by compassion for people who are lost and without a shepherd. We should pray that believers, including ourselves, will be filled with compassion to become laborers in God's harvest.

Verse 38. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest. God could easily reap the harvest by Himself, but in missions God wants disciples to participate in this ministry of compassion.

Assignment Two

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now share an answer to this question: According to Matthew 9:35-38, how are missions and compassion related?

Discussion Question

Do you think the harvest is still plentiful? Please explain your view.

On Your Own

In the space below, list some questions you have about God's activity in the world you that would like to explore in the future.

Read Colossians 4:2-4 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 2. Continue steadfastly in prayer. Prayer does not happen automatically. We breathe automatically, but we need to devote ourselves to prayer. Otherwise, we won't do it. Such devotion is easier when we see immediate results. Many believers can tell you that God has answered some of their prayers immediately, but sometimes we don't see a short-term result. A devotion to prayer should not depend on seeing immediate answers. We pray because we have devoted ourselves to prayer.

Verse 2. Being watchful in it. Prayer helps us look for and see what is going on. Jesus told His disciples to be on guard (Matthew 24:42; 25:13; and 26:41). People who do not pray lose their ability to recognize spiritual developments. That means they cannot give praise to God for what He is doing.

Verse 3. pray . . . that God may open up to us a door . . . to declare. We need to pray that God opens a door so we or others can walk through that door and present the gospel. Our prayers are preparing the way for mission and evangelism.

Verse 4. that I may make it clear. Prayer also helps us and others present the gospel in an intelligible and biblical way.

Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now share an answer to this question: What is the attitude for and purpose of prayer in Colossians 4:2-4?

Discussion Question

If you can, share about one of your answered prayers that unlocked closed doors in missions and evangelism.

On Your Own

Write down the name of a missionary you will pray for during the next week. Ask God to open a door and help the missionary present the gospel clearly. (If you do not know the name of a missionary, ask a leader or pastor to provide a name for you.)

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Prayer

7 minutes

At Home: Nail It Down

“Simply put, in evangelistic praying we talk to God about people and then talk to people about God.” However, eight out of ten American believers neither pray for nor share their faith with non-Christians they don’t know. What about you?

Jesus is always our example. He visited cities and villages, preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing the people of all kinds of diseases. Christ’s mission is perfect and does not need improvement. When we pray for missions and evangelism, we simply pray for wisdom and power to follow His example.

God wants disciples to participate in His ministry of compassion. Compassion is a character trait of God. Disciples who become more compassionate become more like God. Jesus clearly had compassion for the people. Missions and evangelism are driven by compassion for people who are lost and without a shepherd. We should pray that we will be filled with compassion to become laborers in God’s harvest.

- Disciples pray because we have devoted ourselves to prayer.
- We pray so we can watch and spiritually see what is going on.
- We pray because we are preparing the way for missions and evangelism.
- We pray faithfully, whether or not we see immediate results.
- We pray so that we and others can present the gospel in an understandable and biblical way.
- We pray for God to open doors so that we can walk through those doors and present the gospel.

Follow up Question

Why is prayer important for missions and evangelism?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.