

## Life on Mission Series – Part 6

“Go! Be the Church and Pray.” – Rob Heagy

Main text: Luke 10:1-8

Supporting texts: John 16, Romans 8:26, Romans 10:1, Romans 10:9-15, Ephesians 6:18-20

Good morning church. My name is Rob Heagy and this morning we are finishing the sermon series “Life on Mission.” I’m not sure how much this has impacted your life and your view about the people around you, but for me this has been a powerful series.

A little while ago when Lester asked me if I would be willing to share this morning to close out the series I had to pause. And pray. And honestly wrestle a little while with this topic of prayer and evangelism. As I was preparing for today’s message, I was also reflecting back over the years that my wife Tara and I have been a part of this church family.

Last night was the annual Petra Fall Fest and it is hard to believe that it was 19 Years ago when Tara and I were first invited to attend the Fall Fest; the family that invited us knew that we were visiting different churches and that we were looking for a home church. At that time, we only had one of our daughters, and she had just turned 1-year-old (which is how we keep track of how long we have been attending Petra since she just turned 20 years old) so we came out to see what this fall fest was all about.

After the Fall Fest my wife and I said to each other that we should “try a few Sunday mornings;” so one of the next Sundays we walked through the doors. When we first walked into Petra we really didn’t know what to expect, but I can tell you that I will never forget walking through the doors and seeing a group of people (maybe 6 to 8 people) standing in a circle in the foyer just outside of the welcome center; they were holding hands and praying together. It was such a powerful moment that I still remember it to this day. For Tara and I, as long as we can remember, Petra has been a praying church and I believe it will continue to be a praying church.

In case you’ve missed any or possibly all of the previous weeks, I’m going to take a few minutes to quickly bring us all up to speed from the messages...

In week one Pastor Brian Flewelling brought to us a powerful message of the Father’s heart using the parable of the prodigal son and walking us through the parable allowing us to see the Father’s heart towards the people around the world and how He longs and waits for his sons and daughters to return to him.

Week two Pastor Brian Coles taught us a lesson of “Who is our neighbor?” Using the parable of the Good Samaritan and showing us that as we look at the people in our everyday journey, there are needs all around us that we can meet and show the love of Jesus to them.

Then in week three Lester brought us a message on “Showing God’s Love,” using the example of Jesus and Zacchaeus and how the people around us experience Jesus’ love through us as we value them and spend time with them without expecting anything in return, but just by being present with the world around us, we can show them the love of Jesus and their value to Him.

Week four Brian Flewelling gave us a backdrop of the first three week’s sermons and explained how they were about cultivating the soil and then he began to show us, using the football analogy, how to begin moving the ball downfield and how we can plant seeds along the way as we meet people on our journey.

Then two weeks ago Pastor Lester shared with us about our mission to make disciples. Helping people become fully devoted followers of Jesus. Whether we are a parent, teacher, leader or friend we have the mission assignment of not only leading people to faith in Jesus but also helping people understand what it means to follow Jesus.

And that brings us to this morning where I have the privilege of trying to pull all of this together as we look at how prayer ties into the work of evangelism as we live out “Life on Mission.”

If I asked you: “How many of you wish your prayer life was more robust; or you wish your prayer time was more frequent or more intentional or more consistent, etc.?” How many of us would raise our hands? I’m sure that most of us would raise a hand (or in my case I’m putting both hands up!). Prayer needs to be and is such a vitally crucial part of a Christian’s walk that there can never be enough said about the importance of prayer.

So this morning I would like to look at a few areas as we dive into Prayer and Evangelism: what do the scriptures say about prayer (and look at some examples from scripture specifically regarding prayer/evangelism) and as we are looking at the scriptures I also want to look at some practical applications (bullet points) for ways to pray as we live out a “Life on Mission.”

I’ve listened to so many pastors preach on the topic of prayer, and I have read some lengthy deep theological explanations of what prayer is, but what I have come to realize is this: prayer is the way God has provided for us, His children, to communicate with Him.

In today’s world, with the technological advances of communication being what they are, we tend to communicate to each other with short text messages. In fact, it is the way my daughters often will communicate with me. I get text messages from my daughters like...

“Hey dad, there is a crack in my windshield...can you fix it?”

“Hey dad, can I use your truck?”

Or the one that always makes me roll my eyes and shake my head: “Hey Dad, can you transfer some money into my bank account?”

Don’t get me wrong, I like getting text messages from my daughters (maybe not some of those) but I do like to communicate with them. What I absolutely *love* more than the texts is when they call me; I love to hear their voices. To hold a conversation with them. I believe that God feels the same way about us.

I like the way Richard Foster says it in his book *Prayer: Finding the Heart’s True Home*-

**“For now, do not worry about “proper” praying, just talk to God. Share your hurts, share your sorrows, share your joys—freely and openly. God listens in compassion and love, just like we do when our children come to us.”**

**— Richard J. Foster, Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home**

Since today we are focusing on prayer and how it ties into evangelism, I would like to take a look at some scripture and find some examples of how the two tie so closely together and how we can be praying for those around us. Which leads me to point #1...

1. **Pray for doors to be opened and for relationships to be built.** Col. 4:3-5

Col. 4:3-5 says it this way **“And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.”** Col. 4:3-5

As we are reaching out to the world around us, we need to stay connected to the Father's heart as we look for open doors; listening to His guidance and direction.

I'd like to read a few prayer stories from Nacho and Merrilee Barrera - Petra Missionaries who were called to Thailand.

"We do prayer drives around the area that the church is in several times per year. Each intersection we come to, we pull over and pray specifically and take time to listen to what the Holy Spirit is saying. As we've done this with different visiting leaders and now with the young Hope of Isaan leadership group there, we have noticed many of the same patterns emerging.

When we stop to pray, the Holy Spirit is speaking the same things at each "city gate" through different people who have never heard others speaking over those areas during past trips.

We did this again during our most recent trip to Ubon. Merrilee felt we were to focus on just welcoming the spirit of the Living God into the area. One of the Hope of Isaan had a word about speaking the light of God into the area so people will be able to see clearly.

The next day a new guy came to the church. He had been drawn to the church without natural reason and knew nothing about the Bible or Jesus. When we looked at his Facebook page he had posted a picture of the church sign and said "If you seek it you will find it." The next week he accepted Jesus as his Savior and has begun the discipleship journey with the Hope of Isaan."

They prayed at each "city gate," think about that... the gate (the door) was being opened as they prayed. There is power in our prayers as we connect with the Father's heart.

Their prayer stories do not end there as they also told me...

"There's a lot of witchcraft in our area. We had many times that we felt strongly that we were supposed to go out and pray around the boundaries of the church property.

On one occasion a guy from the church specifically heard a person in town saying they were on their way to put a curse on the church. It was a powerful day of watching the Hope of Isaan rise up and pray against all curses and assignments on THEIR church, declaring those things to be broken, standing against the fear that wanted to rise up in them, and claiming freedom by the power of the Holy Spirit alone. Praise God His power is greater and was proven greater again that day."

Do you know that when we pray we are engaging in spiritual warfare? Prayer is one of the most, if not *the* most powerful weapon that God has given us to combat the enemy! When we engage in prayer for the people around us walls can be torn down and chains can be broken by the power of the Holy Spirit so that Jesus can be made known to those who are far from Him!

When we look at the Armor of God in Ephesians, Paul is telling the church at Ephesus to be strong, and to put on the full armor of God (which can be a whole sermon series by itself) so that you can take a stand against the devil's schemes and after he tells them to put on the armor he says to "stand" and then he says to "pray." Specifically, he says to...

**"...pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all of the saints. Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly as I should." Ephesians 6:18-20**

Talk about preparation! Think about what Paul is asking for! Put on the battle gear that God has given to us and pray! Even in his circumstances, being in chains, Paul still knew what his mission was - to proclaim the Gospel. It is the same mission that we are called to even today.

We can see in other places in scripture Paul's longing for a people group, specifically the Jews, that they would be saved. He writes in Romans 10:1...

**Brothers, my heart's desire and prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved." Romans 10:1**

He continues in chapter 10 talking about how he knows they are "zealous for God" but it is based on their works and not by a saving faith and that saving faith is this: "If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Paul starts this chapter by declaring his prayer - his heart's desire. By petitioning the throne that the Israelites would come to a saving faith and then he lays out for us and explains what that saving faith is... it is faith in Jesus Christ. But if you notice he takes a slight turn in verses 14 & 15...

**"How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" Romans 10:14-15**

His prayer is for the doors to be opened and that people are sent. It takes workers, it takes people who are willing to share their lives and share their faith so that those who have not heard the Good News... the Gospel Message...can hear it and believe.

We have just read a few of the many examples from Paul's letters about praying and proclaiming the Gospel. Now if you would, please turn in your bibles to Luke 10:1-8 - this is the main passage that I want to focus on - as we take a look at an example from Jesus. While you're turning the pages let me set this up for us because chapter 10 starts off saying "after this" so it is important that we see what came before this...

While Jesus walked on this earth He demonstrated for us what "Life on Mission" looks like. If we look back to Chapter 9:51-56 we see that Jesus knew that his time was near when he was going to the cross. The bible says, "As the time approached for him to be taken up to heaven, Jesus *resolutely* set out for Jerusalem. And he sent messengers on ahead, who went into a Samaritan village to get things ready for him; but the people there did not welcome him, because he was heading for Jerusalem."

Even on his way to the cross Jesus knew there was still work that needed to be done. The message that the kingdom of God was near still needed to be proclaimed and taught and he did not want to miss the opportunity for someone to hear it. So he sent messengers, people who would prepare the way for Jesus before he would enter the towns.

Then in 9:57-62 as they continue walking along the road Jesus is stopped and he shows us what it means to follow him.

We see one man saying, "I'll follow you wherever you go." and Jesus' response... Jesus says to another man, "Follow me" but the man wants to go back and bury his father. Another man says he'll follow Jesus, but first he wants to go back and say good-bye to his family.

Jesus is showing us that if we want to be followers of His, we need to *resolutely* set our hearts towards him.

And that brings us to point #2 and to chapter 10 where Jesus is sending out more messengers.

## 2. Pray for more workers to be sent. Luke 10:2

Jesus sends out the seventy-two

**After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. He told them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.**

**“When you enter a house, first say, ‘Peace to this house.’ If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you. Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.**

**“When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’ Luke 10:1-8**

Here we see in Luke 10 how Jesus beautifully marries evangelism and prayer together.

One of the first things that we see is how Jesus sends out the messengers two-by-two and He sent them ahead of himself to go to the places where he was about to go. This is interesting... I am sure that Jesus could have miraculously showed up to the villages and drawn everyone to him by another means, but he didn't; he sends people (ordinary folks like you and me) to go ahead to prepare the way for Him.

Think about this for a moment. Doesn't Jesus still work this way today? Let me ask you a question: If you are a Christian, think back to your conversion, the moment in time when you surrendered your life to Jesus: Who prepared the way for Jesus to enter your life?

I remember the person who opened that door for Jesus to be made known to me... it was my Aunt Cindy. She was always volunteering and working for the Kingdom. She was instrumental in leading and helping with VBS every year and I remember one of those years at VBS when she walked up to me and asked me if I wanted to give my life to Jesus and then she walked with me up to the altar as I prayed to God and asked for forgiveness for my sins because of what Jesus had accomplished on my behalf.

Jesus is still sending us, his followers/messengers, to make a way for people to know him.

As we Continue on in the passage Jesus then goes on to tell the messengers “the Harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the Harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

I have lived in Lancaster County my whole life, and although I am not a farmer it is easy to pick up on some of the patterns of the farming community. One pattern specifically is the harvest season. All year long the fields are being prepared, the soil is being turned...I'm sure everyone in the county is well aware of times when the fields are being fertilized. Then the seeds are planted. Sometimes irrigation is needed and the fields begin to spring to life. Then comes the harvest time of the year. It is during this time of the year when the workers are needed most. The farmers that I know will often work, seemingly non-stop, to bring in the harvest. You will see tractors and wagons, combines and corn-pickers in the fields both in the daytime and the nighttime... there never seems to be enough help, enough workers to gather in the harvest.

What we see here is Jesus telling those whom he is sending to “ask the Lord” for more workers... more people who are willing to share their lives with those around them to prepare the way for the Lord to be known.

A few weeks ago when Brian Flewelling shared with us some of the stories of the interactions that he has had with some people along his journey, one of the people was Igbar. Brian mentioned that, even though the conversation didn't end quite the way he thought it would that he continues to pray for Igbar and that he prays for someone else to come along and minister to, walk with and talk with Igbar. Praying that way, for someone else to come along side of the person you are praying for, is a biblical way to pray as we see here... as Jesus says to "Pray for more workers."

Then Jesus says "Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road." There is a sense of urgency in this sending. As he sends the messengers Jesus warns them first by telling them this is not going to be easy, you are being sent into some dangerous territory. And don't bother taking things along that will distract you from this mission. I do have to admit that I found it to be odd that Jesus says "Do not greet anyone on the road."

You might ask: "But I thought he was sending people out to proclaim that he was coming?" He was, but there were specific places where he wanted the messengers to go, where his messengers were being sent to. If they stopped to talk with people along the way they might not have made it to the villages ahead of Jesus - He had specific harvest fields in mind that he knew were ready and doors that needed to be opened.

### 3. **Pray for peace and blessing to be upon them.** Luke 10:5, Rom. 2:4

Jesus continues with the instructions to the workers when he says, "When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' If someone who promotes peace is there, your peace will rest on them; if not, it will return to you. Stay there, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house."

Have you ever noticed that even when harvest season is here, some fields are ready to be harvested before other fields are ready?

A few weeks ago on our way to church I mentioned to Tara how interesting it is to me that while some of the corn fields are brown and are already being cut down, other fields were still green and are not being touched.

Here we see Jesus saying as you meet people and begin talking with them and try to minister to them it will become evident to you - if that field is ready - if they are ready to receive the Good News... when your "peace rests on them." Then there will be other people who are not yet ready to hear about the Good News and surrender their lives to the Lord - that field is not yet ready but maybe you're the one who was sent to begin the process of "tilling the soil or planting the seed."

Each one of us from the youth, young adults, middle-aged adults to the senior adults has a harvest field, a circle of influence that we are called to... a place where God has sent us to prepare the way. If you are a youth it could be in your school. Maybe it is at your job. Maybe you came out of a bad situation and now you're being called to minister to other people that are in the same situation you were in. Maybe it is in your volunteer time as you serve the community or it may even be in your own home.

Point #4 (actually 2 points in one) ...

### 4. **Pray for spiritual sight in the minds of unbelievers and pray the love of the Father would draw people to Himself.** 2 Cor. 4:4, John 6:44, John 16:6

I do want to be very clear about something... for the past few weeks we have been talking about meeting people along the way, spending time with folks, helping out where there is a need, and even today we have

been talking about needing to be “workers for the harvest” and all of these are great opportunities to point people to Christ, to open the door.

So here I want to take the pressure off of us - while we are called to “Go,” and “Do” and to be workers, it is not our job to save - that is the work of God, through the finished work of the cross, by the power of the Holy Spirit. What we are called to be is the fragrance of Christ as we see in **2 Cor. 2:14-15 (NLT)** **“Now he uses us to spread the knowledge of Christ everywhere, like a sweet perfume. Our lives are a Christ-like fragrance rising up to God. But this fragrance is perceived differently by those who are being saved and by those who are perishing.”**

So while we cannot save and it is not our job to save, we can be praying into and for our “spheres of influence,” and petition God for open doors so that, as we are living out a “Life on Mission,” the Holy Spirit can begin to work to make Christ known because it is a work of the Holy Spirit, as it says in John 16:6, that “He (the Holy Spirit) will convict the world of guilt,” it is not our works or actions that save people. That is why it is so critical that we pray for spiritual sight for those we are called to minister to.

The last point is this...

**5. Pray for a release of the Holy Spirit’s power in meeting needs. 1 Cor. 2:4-5**

Jesus continues with his instructions when he says, “When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is offered to you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’”

I’d like to read one last prayer account from Nacho and Merrilee:

“Toward the beginning of our time in Thailand, Nacho would make trips out to a village with our team leader. They would go and pray for people, sometimes with specific words of knowledge. One guy [was] healed of blindness. A woman who hadn’t walked in years because of an injury was able to stand up and walk. A deaf man began to hear again.”

While it is true that at some point-in-time while you are living out a “Life on Mission” you will need to share the gospel message. It is also important to help people in their journey. Meeting them where they are - praying for them - and helping them in practical ways can be a great way to introduce them to the love of the Father, because of what Jesus has done in your own life - but this cannot be done in our own strength, we need the Holy Spirit’s power as we reach out to the harvest.

**1 Cor 2:4-5** says, **“My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power, so that your faith might not rest on men’s wisdom, but on God’s power.”**

Where is the harvest field that you are being sent to? Or maybe the better question is this: What is the harvest field that is already in front of you where you have already been sent?

Maybe you’re praying for your prodigal son or daughter to return to the Father, or praying for your spouse, a relative, a friend, a co-worker...

Whichever situation you might be in, I urge you to begin praying into it. Pray for open doors, pray for more workers, pray peace and blessings, pray for spiritual sight and that the veil that covers their hearts would be lifted. Most importantly, pray that in all of this that God would be glorified through it.

The worship team is going to be leading us in a song and then I (or Lester) will be closing in prayer. If you are able to, would you please stand?

Before prayer: invitation to surrender your life to Jesus; prayer ministers to the side for other needs.

1 Thessalonians 3:12 May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else  
...

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith. We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now Go! Be the church and pray... You're dismissed.