

I Will Pray

I Will Pray for Unbelievers

1 Timothy 2:1-6

March 19, 2023

HDBC

Our focus for this year is **prayer**. There are so many reasons to pray and so many things to pray for. As we pray let's not forget to pray for unbelievers. In fact that should be near the top of our list. I'm reminded of the words of **Andrew Murray**. ***The man who mobilizes the Christian church to pray will make the greatest contribution to world evangelism in history.*** That is certainly what I hope will happen as a result of focus on prayer. A lot of things are accomplished through prayer, but the most important is the salvation of lost souls. Last week I talked about praying for **other believers**. It is equally important to pray for **unbelievers**. That's the focus today.

So, I want to see your hands, how many of you have at least one person **in your family** who needs to come to know Jesus? How many of you have **a close friend** or **co-worker** who needs to know Jesus? One of the greatest things you can do for them is to pray for their salvation. Nothing in this life is more important than that. My goal is to help us become better equipped to pray for the lost. I hope many of you will find a place at the altar when the sermon is over to pray for someone who is lost.

Read 1 Timothy 2:1-6 Three things to consider.

1. Six reasons to pray (**Why to pray for the lost**)

Paul offers four reasons to pray for lost people. I'll add two more.

1) It is good

Not everything we do is good. Some things are just plain bad. Other things are neutral. And then some things are intrinsically good, just by their very nature. Praying for lost people is one of those good things.

Good and acceptable in the sight of God. God sees evangelistic praying as a good and noble thing. The goodness of it ought to cause us to desire to do so.

2) It is consistent with God's love for all people

God sincerely wishes that all men and women would turn to Him in saving faith. His love is **broad and deep**, extending to every nation, every city, every family, every person. He knows each one by name and desires that each one be saved. So, when we pray for unbelievers to be saved, we know we are praying in the will of God.

We don't always know if our praying is consistent with God's desire. **I might pray for healing, but it might not be God's desire at this time.** **Selling my house. Getting a new job.** But when you are praying for a lost person you know it is what God desires.

2 Pet 3:9 The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.

3) Jesus died so people could be saved

Jesus paid a great price to become the mediator between God and people, providing a way for us to be saved. The fact that He paid such a high price should motivate us to want others to be saved. We don't want His sacrifice to be in vain.

4) There is only one way to be saved

We are told in this era of inclusivism that Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism and countless other “isms” are equally valid and will ultimately lead to heaven and God. Many people think you don't have to believe anything in order to be okay after death. They just think it will all be okay.

This is not true. This is one of the great lies of Satan, who is the father of lies. He has convinced people that all roads lead to some form of Heaven, some afterlife that will be good for all. If that were true there would have been no need for Jesus to die and no need to pray for the lost. We could assume that they would surely make it one way or the other. But the Scriptures certainly teach something different. **There is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.**

I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. Who said that? Jesus!

There is no other name under heaven that has been given among men whereby we must be saved. Jesus!

We do a terrible disservice to the lost community when we allow them to go through life with a false assurance that somehow they will be fine. We pray evangelistically because we know this is not true.

5) The examples in the Bible

You can never go wrong when you follow the examples of people in the Bible who did the right thing. **Jesus** prayed for the forgiveness of those who were killing Him. **Stephen** did the same, as he was being stoned to death. **Jesus** prayed for the city of Jerusalem, even weeping over them. **Paul** prayed for the salvation of the Jewish people. We'll look at his words in just a moment.

6) The reality of heaven and hell

Either you believe the Bible or you don't. I do. And since we do, we must take seriously what it says about Heaven and Hell. They are real places where real people will go when they die. They are real places where real people will spend an eternity. **Heaven is good, Hell is not.** In fact, Hell is described as a place of torment, suffering and darkness. I hate the thought of anyone going there. This motivates me to pray for lost people.

2. Eight things to ask for (What to pray for the lost)

Write them down and have them in front of you as you pray for people.

1) Ask God to give them a spiritual thirst

A thirsty person is more likely to drink water than one who has no thirst. Until a person recognizes his need for salvation and desires salvation, nothing will change. Thirst is simply a longing for what is needed. Our **lungs** need air. Our **bellies** need food. Our **hearts** need rhythm. Our **souls** need God. Pray for lost people to get thirsty for God.

2) Ask God to open their spiritual eyes to the truth

In 2 Cor. 4:4 Paul wrote, *the god of this world has blinded the eyes of the unbelieving.* He is a master of deception and confusion. We need to understand that unbelievers have blinders on their spiritual eyes that prevent them from seeing and understanding the truth. Ask God to

remove those blinders and allow them to see clearly.

3) Ask God to send believers to share with them

God has chosen a clear strategy for bringing people to salvation. And that strategy involves believers going to unbelievers and telling them how they can be saved. That's why He told His disciples they would be fishers of men. It's why he sent them out to share with others. We are to tell others about Jesus, inviting them to be saved, compelling them to be saved, praying for them to be saved.

Jesus instructed his disciples and us to *pray to the Lord of the harvest that He would send workers into the fields*. That was His way of reminding us that lost people need to be in contact with believers. Ask God to send believers to their workplace, their classrooms, their ball teams, their organizations, to neighborhoods.

4) Ask God to heal any hurts that might be blocking them

Some people are rejecting God's offer because of some past experience of pain and suffering that they blame God for. They struggle to believe God could love them when they have experienced so much hurt. For some, this hurt has even happened at or because of the church. They've had a really bad experience with church or with Christians and this has become a major obstacle to their salvation.

Ask God to heal, restore and soothe their hearts, so that they will be receptive to the gospel. Ask the Lord to help them see beyond the hurt caused by people and look to Jesus, who will never hurt them.

5) Ask God to remove anything keeping them from salvation

For some people there is something keeping them from trusting Jesus. Maybe they are **living a lifestyle** that they know is incompatible with the Christian life. Maybe they are involved in **a job** that would be difficult to keep if they got saved. Maybe there are **hobbies or habits** that they intuitively know they might have to give up. Maybe it is a **moral or political position** that they have taken that is incompatible with Christianity and they feel it would be too humiliating to forsake it.

Ask God to lovingly and gently remove any obstacles.

6) Ask God to give them faith to believe

Some people struggle with faith. Faith in God, faith in Jesus, faith in heaven and hell, faith to be saved. For some people they just don't believe. God can give them the faith to believe. Ask Him to do so.

7) Ask God to give them an awareness of their own mortality

Some people don't think about salvation because they don't think about their own death. Deep down they know they will not live forever, but they manage to push the thought of death to the back recesses of their minds. Ask God to remind them of how frail they are. Ask him to cause them to face the reality of their own death and to think, what then?

8) Ask God to convict them of their sin and lostness

No one is ever saved apart from a sense of their own sins. To be saved a person has to confess their sin, repentant of their sinfulness and trust Jesus to forgive their sins while yield to Him as Lord. That's how one is saved. Unless one is willing to admit sin and lostness he or she is not ready to be saved. In fact, they cannot be saved. **Illustration of the prim and proper lady who came forward during invitation.**

One of the primary roles of the Holy Spirit in the life of an unbeliever is to convict them of sin and lostness. Ask Him to do so for those on your prayer list.

3. Four things for me to do (Practical things)

So, let me close it out by sharing four things to so.

1) Make a list (be specific)

Start by making a list of people you know who need Jesus. If you are unsure, assume they need to be saved. Don't focus on how many are on the list. Just ask God to bring to mind those who need to be on your list, then add them. This should generally be for your eyes only.

2) Stay with it (persistence)

Be in it for the long haul. Determine to stay with it. This is not a short-term commitment. **Need to see it like those Allied soldiers in WWII.** They were essentially in it until they secured a victory.

3) Have a heart (compassion)

As you pray, do so with heart of compassion. Listen to the words of Paul who prayed for the salvation of his people, fellow Jews. Rom 9:1-3; 10:1.

I am telling the truth in Christ, I am not lying; my conscience testifies with me in the Holy Spirit, that I have great sorrow and unceasing grief in my heart. For I could ^[a]wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Christ for the sake of my countrymen, kinsmen according to the flesh, Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to God for them is for their salvation.

Ask God to give you a heart for the people for whom you are praying. Ask the Lord to give you the passion that inspired **John Knox** to plead, **Give me Scotland or I die.** Or to have the attitude of **George Whitefield**, who prayed, **O Lord, give me souls or take my soul.**

4) Be available (willingness)

Make yourself available to be the one who speaks the gospel to them. Be available for God to use you however He might choose to do so, for them to be saved. Paul wrote . . .

I have become all things to all men that I might by all means save some. Paul was well aware that he could not save them, but was expressing his willingness to do whatever he took for them to be saved. He made himself available.

I'm aware that for many of us, the thought of sharing your faith is frightening. I get it, but that does not absolve us of the responsibility. **But any of us and all of us can regularly pray for the lost.** I'm confident that the more you pray for the lost the more God will give you confidence when the opportunities arise, to share your faith. So, start by deciding to pray for the lost.

Invite as many as are willing to come to the altar to pray for the first lost person who comes to your mind. And to make a commitment to praying regularly for the lost people in your circle of influence.