

Praying Your Friends to Christ

**A guidebook to help each believer understand
and practice biblical prayer for lost people**

Special Thanks

The original Praying Your Friends to Christ (PYFTC) guidebook was created by Wayne Jenkins, Randall Broome, Becky Knight, and Richard Leach for the Celebrate Jesus 2000 Prayer Implementation task force, consisting of Randall Broome, Ted Elmore, Wayne Jenkins, Tom Kyzer, Richard Leach (chair), Alvin Reid, Chris Schofield, and Cloyd Sullin. (c) 1998, North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, Alpharetta, Georgia.

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Purpose

This guide helps believers understand and practice biblical prayer for lost people. It can be used as a personal study guide or as an outline for five one-hour sessions to teach others how to pray for lost friends, neighbors, and global leaders.

Introduction

Jerome was very frustrated. He cried out to the Lord, “Father, I tried, what did I do wrong?” Jerome had shared Jesus with his brother Jamal. He had once again received no response. Jerome was sure he had done something wrong. He had heard on Sunday another example from an evangelist who had met someone and led them to Jesus in just a few minutes.

Anita was weeping for her friend. She was praying for someone to help Suchita to meet Jesus. She had no idea that she could be the person to lead Suchita to Jesus.

Many believers have tried to share Jesus with a friend or family member. They have encountered a hard heart and so believe they did something wrong. Our response is not to quit sharing Jesus but to begin praying for softened hearts. The Holy Spirit is the only one who can soften hard hearts.

Unfortunately, many believers do not pray consistently and biblically for lost people. The only time some people pray for lost people is when they are on visitation. They want to help people but they are afraid. So as they step up the door they pray, “Please don’t let them be home, please don’t let them be home.” ☺

Effective evangelists have recognized the importance of biblical prayer since the first century. These sessions will share the biblical emphases on prayer that was given by Jesus, Paul, and other caring believers. They will help believers participate in the conversion of lost people.

R. A. Torrey, that great apologist-evangelist wrote, “The most important human factor in effective evangelism is PRAYER.”¹ Torrey’s understanding of effective evangelism was true in the first century and still is true in the 21st century.

George Barna, a cultural research analyst for the contemporary church says that, “A church that strives to evangelize its community without saturating its efforts in prayer is like a race car driver that jumps into a car at the starting line and discovers that the tank has not been filled with gas.”²

Drawing from 1 Timothy 2:1-8, Howard Tryon, pastor and prayer practitioner comments, “When we fervently intercede on behalf of unbelievers with respect and thankfulness, we are identifying with God’s very interests and involvement in the salvation process. We are aligning ourselves with God’s purpose.”³

Prayer has tremendous influence on evangelism, evangelists, and lost people. Believers need to make an evangelistic impact on our communities. We need to learn how to talk to God about people just as we talk to people about God. When we do this, we depend on our sovereign Lord to work in, through, and with us as we obey the Great Commission.

A lot of attention has been given to developing new methods for reaching the lost. This is important if churches are to effectively share Christ with the lost. However, believers and churches must pray effectively before, during, and after they evangelize so that fruit will be produced from their many labors.

Session 1

Biblical Prayer and Evangelism

As missionary John Hyde bowed on his knees in prayer, tears streamed down his face and dry choking sobs could be heard from his chamber.⁴ This was the daily routine for this man of prayer. People often described him as a “Christ intoxicated witness.” John Hyde was convinced that prayer was “essential” if he was to win souls to Christ. So much so that he would often spend all night praying before he would travel into the villages to share Jesus with the people there. The results were staggering. In the last three years of missionary service to India, John Hyde was personally responsible for leading at least 2500 souls to Christ through personal soul winning efforts.

John Hyde practiced biblical prayer for lost people. The Bible mandates that prayer is foundational to our lives as believers (see John 15:1-16). Therefore, it is an essential in our witnessing life. There are four obvious ways the Bible links prayer with evangelism:

1. Prayer for Personal Spiritual Needs

A passion to pray and evangelize flows from our individual relationship with Jesus.⁵ This happens as believers recognize their utter dependence on God through prayer. Jesus certainly models His dependence on the Father in John 17:1-8 and Luke 22: 39-45. Jesus prays for His Father to complete His redemptive work through Him. Truly apart from Christ a believer is not able to join God’s redemptive activity.

In Psalm 51:10-13 David recognizes the link between prayer, personal holiness and a fruitful ministry. After his request for cleansing and renewal in verses 10-12 David continues his prayer with the statement, “Then I will teach transgressors Thy ways, And sinners will be converted to Thee” (vs. 13, NASB). This statement demonstrates the important role prayer for personal spiritual needs (in this case personal forgiveness) plays in effective evangelistic ministry. A forgiven heart produces an empowered and confident witness.

Prayer for Unbelievers

Jesus prayed for the lost in John 17:20. Effective evangelism includes heartfelt prayer for the unsaved. “Through intercessory prayer for the lost, believers can become instruments of salvation to men and women all over the world, even to those they have never seen in this life.”⁶

Prayer on behalf of the lost is clearly mandated by Christ in Matthew 6:9-10. In this text Jesus commands believers to pray for Christ’s rule and reign (i.e., Thy Kingdom Come) to come in peoples lives. The Apostle Paul models and exhorts believers concerning prayer for the lost (e.g., see Rom. 10:1-2; I Tim. 2:1-4).

Romans 10:1-2 shows Paul's heartfelt passion to see his fellow Israelites come to Christ when he says, "My heart's desire and prayer to God is that they might be saved." His passionate praying preceded his intentional witness (see verse 2).

In 1 Timothy 2:1-4 Paul exhorts believers to pray for all men to be saved. His words to young Timothy sound forth the priority of prayer on behalf of the lost when he says "First of all." His words also demonstrate the importance of such prayer to the fulfillment of the Great Commission in any nation (see verse 2-4).

Psalm 126:4-6 teaches passionate prayer for the lost. Charles Spurgeon correctly reminds us of the need for compassionate prayer and intentional witness: "Weep Believer. . . Go to your God and tell Him that if souls are not saved it is not because He has not power to save but because you have never travailed for perishing sinners. Wake up, wake up, and be astonished: you have neglected prayer. Wrestle and strive with your God, and the blessing shall come—the early and latter rain of His mercy, and the earth shall bring forth plenteously, and all the nations shall call Him blessed. Look up, then, and weep."⁷

When the altars of churches are wet with the tears of the saints, then and only then will the darkness throughout the land begin to be stamped out. "It is not enough to share the good news: we must also pray that people might open their hearts to the gospel. It is not enough to preach to souls: we must win souls for the kingdom through intercessory prayer. St. Mary of Jesus, a Carmelite nun, has rightly said, 'It is the prayer of agony which saves the world'."⁸

Prayer for People Involved in Evangelism Events and Activities

In Acts 13: 1-4 the early church prayed for and sent Barnabas and Paul on their mission to the Gentiles. The church recognized their dependence upon the power of God to fulfill their mission. In boldness and vigor Paul and Barnabas went forth. This was largely due to the churches desire to trust God in prayer.

In 2 Thessalonians 3:1 Paul requests prayer for his evangelistic team: "Finally brethren, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may spread rapidly and be glorified just as it did also with you" (NASB). One reason Paul's ministry was so fruitful was because of the prayer support he often asked for and received from believers (see Eph. 6:18-20; 1 Thess. 5:25; Col.4:12-13). E. M. Bounds said it well, "The gospel moves with a slow and timid pace when the saints are not at their prayers early and late and long."⁹

Prayer for Believers

Much of the praying that was done in the New Testament was on behalf of believers. Jesus certainly modeled this pattern with His "Mission-Centered" prayer in John 17. In this prayer Jesus prays specifically for his disciples to be: kept in his name and character (vs. 11); protected from the evil one (vs. 15); sanctified in the truth of God and His Word (vs. 17); one in mission and focus (vs. 21); join Christ in His work that they may behold His glory (vs. 24).

In Matthew 9:35-38 Jesus also taught believers how others are motivated to win the lost to Christ. In these verses Jesus shows that the problem is not with the lost multitudes who need Jesus, but the need is for more people to be actively involved in sharing their faith. Then He shares that the solution to the laborer problem is specific prayer—"beseech the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest (Matthew 9:38). "More believers on their knees praying will result in more Christians on their feet evangelizing."

Paul likewise models and teaches prayer for believers throughout his epistles. He prayed for them to have wisdom, to understand their calling to be witnesses, to be empowered and strengthened, and to grow in their love for one another and all people (see Eph. 1: 15-19; 3:14-19; 1 Thess. 3:11-13). Thus, he knew that if new Christians were going to grow and become fruitful witnesses for Jesus, they would need specific prayer.

Prayer for believers that focuses on the Great Commission was also central to the life and practice of the first century church (see Acts 1:14; 6; 4:29-31; 12:5ff). In Acts 4: 23-31 the early church offers specific prayer for boldness to preach Christ even while being persecuted. Verse 31 records the answer to their heartfelt and unified prayers for boldness, "[They] began to speak the word of God with boldness (i.e., Divinely empowered and inspired speech). They prayed, God answered, and the Gospel continued to spread through the bold proclamation of Christ.

Discussion Questions

1. What changes, if any, are needed in our lives that would cause others to describe us as "Christ intoxicated witnesses?"
2. The Bible points to four key components that make up evangelistic prayer. What are those components. Which components are most needed in you personal prayer life? Congregations?
3. What does Jesus mean when he teaches his followers to pray for the kingdom to come in Matthew 6:10?
4. In 1 Timothy 2:1-4 Paul exhorts Timothy to make evangelistic prayer the "first priority" in his ministry. Why is this so? Does your church make evangelistic prayer the number one priority?
5. What impact on Christian witnesses can be made through specific prayer?

Prayer Prompts

Distribute the pamphlet "Praying Your Friends to Christ" (free and downloadable at www.namb.net/prayer). Instruct participants to list 5 lost people, three Christian witnesses, and two evangelistic events on the prayer list on the back of the pamphlets. Then ask them to combine their lists and pray together with the other team members.

- begin praying for the salvation of the lost people listed.
- pray for the Christian witnesses to have boldness in their witness.
- pray for next Sunday's services, that God would bear evangelistic fruit in lost people's lives.

Session 2

Why Pray for Lost People?

Why should Christians pray for lost people? The **first** reason is most important--*Because of our relationship with our Heavenly Father*. The purpose of prayer is for believers to relate to their heavenly Father not just to get things they want or need. Through prayer a believer communes, communicates and walks with God. The Christian walk is all about relationship. No relationship will ever be healthy without communication, intimacy and fellowship. Fulfilling God's mission as believers is not just about the activities related to prayer and evangelism. It is all about a love relationship with the Father through Jesus. So, as Christians we pray evangelistically not because of what we want God to do in our churches or in the world. We pray because of Who God is and because of the relationship we have with Him through Christ. Our motivation to pray evangelistically thus begins with intimacy and our relationship with Christ.

Second, *we pray evangelistically because it is a biblical mandate*. When a Christian weds prayer with evangelism they are modeling the way Jesus, Paul, and the early church did evangelism. The above section clearly shows that the Bible teaches that prayer should precede, permeate and follow all our soul winning endeavors. Biblically speaking, the Bible mandates that believers are priests in His Kingdom. Thus believers are to fulfill the role of intercessors and mediators on behalf of others as they pray (see 1 Pet. 2:3-10; 1 Tim. 2:1-4). This mandate involves prayer for the lost, prayer for the Christian witnesses and evangelistic/mission endeavors. Thus, if we want to do biblical evangelism, we will pray evangelistically.

Third, *believers pray evangelistically because it enhances the fruit of their labors (John 15:16)*. The Lord accomplishes at least six things when Christians pray evangelistically:

- ❖ Motivates others to be involved in sharing Christ with the lost (Matt. 28:35-38).
- ❖ Prepares the hearts of the lost to receive the truth of God's Word (Psalm 126:4-6; Acts 10:1-11:5).
- ❖ Empowers witnesses to boldly and effectively share Christ with the lost (Acts 4:29-31; Eph. 6:18-20).
- ❖ Opens up opportunities for Christians to witness (Col. 4:2-6).
- ❖ Prepares the heart of the witness through cleansing and forgiveness (Psalm 51:10-13).
- ❖ Positions the Christian to be involved in divine encounters with the lost (Acts 8:26-40).

The **fourth** reason *believers pray for the lost has to do with our utter dependence on Christ to fulfill His mission to reach the lost (Luke 19:10; John 15:5)*. This dependence is best understood as believers consider seriously what the Bible has to say about being lost. The Bible gives a vivid and heartbreaking picture of the condition of lost people. Listed below are six ways the Bible describes the condition of the lost.

1. Blind

"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost; In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Cor. 4:3-4, emphasis added).

"There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God" (Rom. 3:11).

"But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Cor. 2:14).

The gospel is hidden from them; they are without understanding; they do not comprehend spiritual things.

2. Bound

"In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will" (2 Tim. 2:25-26, emphasis added).

"Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2, emphasis added).

Those that are lost are held in bondage by Satan. He seeks with all his might to keep them in his grasp, that they might live and die in disobedience to God. In essence, the lost are incarcerated by Satan in his "domain of darkness" (see Col. 1:13).

3. Condemned

"He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18).

"Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Eph. 2:3).

4. Hell-Bound

"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life; and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36).

"But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire" (Matt. 5:22).

"Enter ye into the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat" (Matt. 7:13).

"And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire" (Rev. 20:15).

The Bible clearly teaches that the destiny of the lost will be eternal punishment in hell and damnation. This is a sobering thought considering the millions in North America without Christ.

5. Helpless

"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:44, emphasis added).

"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph. 2:1, emphasis added).

The lost are helpless to change the course of their eternal destiny. Without the work of God's Spirit and the witness of His Word, they will remain lost. Believers need to join God's redemptive work through prayer and evangelistic witness for this to be different. As God's people pray for the lost, His Spirit draws them to understand their need for repentance and faith.

6. Hopeless

"That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12).

Billions on our planet live in spiritual darkness apart from Christ. If the lost are going to be released from their terrible condition Christ must intervene. This happens as the power of the gospel is unleashed in their lives through heartfelt intercessory prayer on their behalf.

Dialogue Session

After covering the material spend time in dialogue about the Biblical mandate to pray evangelistically. Ask participants to break up into groups and discuss the following quote: "The purpose of prayer is to get a hold of God not of the answer." Discuss their responses as a large group.

Lead in a discussion about the process of evangelism (i.e., sowing, reaping, cultivating, sharing a verbal witness) as it relates to prayer and bearing evangelistic fruit. Ask the group to break up into small groups and share how they felt before they met Christ. Encourage group discussion around the 6 biblical conditions of the lost listed above. Ask participants to identify other biblical conditions or other observed conditions they have noticed of lost persons.

Prayer Prompts

Lead in a group prayer time that focuses on specific prayer for believers and congregations to embrace as never before the Biblical mandate for evangelistic prayer. Pray for believers will become more sensitive to the spiritual condition of lost people.

Session 3

How can we Pray Evangelistically?

As noted earlier, effective evangelistic prayer involves specific prayer on behalf of unbelievers, believers, personal spiritual needs and evangelism efforts. These four categories can easily be combined to simplify the way you pray evangelistically. Below are biblical ways to pray for Christian witnesses, evangelism efforts and the lost.

Praying for Christian Witnesses and Efforts

Believers who are seeking to share their faith are in desperate need of specific prayer. Effectiveness in witnessing does not depend on fancy techniques or smoothly prepared gospel presentations. Effective witnessing depends on a Holy God who is constantly seeking to save those who are lost. Christians are filled with boldness and power to share the Good News as they are spiritually prepared and undergirded with specific prayer.

Matthew records that when Jesus saw a vast crowd in need of the gospel He was moved with compassion and commanded His disciples to "pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth workers into his harvest" (Matt. 9:38) There is a definite connection between our praying and His sending.

When we apply this text to the individual(s) we are praying for, we can pray to the Lord of the harvest that He will place someone in the lost person's path to share the gospel, to water spiritual seeds already sown or help to bring in the harvest.

Scripture gives many specific prayers to pray for Christian witnesses:

1. Ask the Lord to send laborers into the harvest.

"Therefore said he unto them, the harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest" (Luke 10:2).

2. Ask the Lord for opportunities to witness.

"Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds" (Col. 4:3, emphasis added).

3. Ask the Lord for boldness for the messenger.

"And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel: for which I am an ambassador in bonds; that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak" (Eph. 6:19-20, emphasis added).

"And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word" (Acts 4:29, emphasis added).

4. Ask the Lord for clarity in presenting the gospel.

"That I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak" (Col. 4:4, emphasis added).

5. Ask the Lord to focus the hearts of His people.

"Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them" (Acts 13:1-3).

Ask God to grant you the courage to be willing to be the answer to your prayer. Jesus instructed the disciples to pray for laborers in Matthew 9:38. In Matthew 10:1, the disciples are called and sent out as an answer to the prayer.

Below are additional ways to pray for Christian witnesses and special evangelistic efforts.

- Pray for Christ to motivate and send witnesses into His harvest fields (Matt. 9:38)
- Pray for Christ to prepare His witnesses spiritually, making them holy and blameless in every way (Jn 17:11)
- Pray for the Lord to protect the witnesses spiritually, mentally and physically from the evil one as they share their faith (Jn 17:15)
- Pray for witnesses to be filled with spiritual wisdom, pleasing in all ways to Christ, and bear fruit in every good work (Col. 1:10-11).
- Pray for Christian witnesses to have open doors to share a Gospel witness (Col. 4:2-3)
- Pray for evangelism and mission efforts to be fruitful and productive for the kingdom (Matt. 6:9-10)
- Pray that believers will experience divine encounters with lost persons as they are sent out and participate in witnessing events and opportunities (Acts 8:26-41)

Praying for the Lost

Praying for the lost results in changed lives for eternity. Paul said that when a person is converted he is “delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred to the Kingdom of [God’s] beloved Son, in whom there is redemption, the forgiveness of sins. God desires that all men, women, boys, and girls might come to a faith relationship with Christ (see 1 Tim. 2:1-4). What the lost need is a new heart, a cleansed and regenerated life in Jesus Christ. Lost people need hearts that are born from above (Matt. 15:15-20). Therefore as you pray for the salvation of the lost, pray for unbelievers to have changed **HEARTS**. Use the **HEARTS** acrostic to help you remember how to pray.

➤ *Pray for Receptive **H**earts (Luke 8:5-15)*

In the parable of the sower (see Luke 8:5,12), the seed that fell beside the road was trampled under foot, and the birds of the air ate it up. Jesus explained that the seed is the Word of God and the seed that fell beside the road represents those who heard the Word. The devil then takes away the Word from their heart, so that they may not believe and be saved. We need to pray that God will prepare the heart so that the seed would take root.

- *Pray for their Spiritual **E**yes and **E**ars to be opened (Matt. 13:15; 2 Cor. 4:3-4)*
The lost person is blinded by Satan.

"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Cor. 4:3-4, emphasis added). Only God can open their eyes.

The individual must hear God speak.

"For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them" (Matt. 13:15).

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that god hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10:9-10).

"How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom. 10:14).

- *Pray for unbelievers to have and understand God's **A**ttitude toward sin (John 16:8)*

This will require that they admit they are sinners who face judgment and are in need of the righteousness of Jesus. The Christian, on the other hand, with God's attitude toward sin, will be proactive. The role of the Holy Spirit is to convict and convince of sin.

"And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:8).

- *Pray for the lost to be **R**elieved from barriers and strongholds that hinder faith (2 Tim. 2:25-26)*

"In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will" (2 Tim. 2:25-26).

God would grant repentance, then the lost individual will come to his or her senses and escape the trap . . . which includes the destruction of barriers and strongholds in the individual's life.

"For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds)" (2 Cor. 10:3-4).

Praying specifically for a lost individual is warfare. Satan will go to any extent to keep a person lost and in his kingdom. We are involved in praying for and sharing with individuals who need to be rescued from the kingdom of darkness and transferred by God to the kingdom of His dear son.

"Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son." (Col. 1:13).

In this spiritual warfare, we do not fight with weapons of flesh, but with mighty weapons of God. Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces in the heavenly realms.

"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12).

➤ *Pray for unbelievers to experience a **Transforming** life in Christ (Rom. 12:1-2)*

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world but be ye transformed by the renewing of your minds, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable, and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:1-2).

➤ *Pray for the Lord to **Send** believers to witness to lost persons (Matt. 9:35-38)¹⁰*

Prayer is the key to effective soul winning efforts. We cannot win lost souls in our own wisdom and strength. Therefore it is imperative that we call upon the Lord of the harvest to save the lost, send us into the fields, and empower us with bold speech to be His witnesses in this generation. Let us then be about the task of winning souls as we labor on our knees in prayer!

Testimony Time

At this point invite participants to share brief testimonies concerning ways they have seen God answer prayer on behalf of Christian witnesses, special evangelism and mission efforts, and how they have seen God answer prayer on behalf of lost people.

Prayer Prompts

Instruct the group to break up into teams and then lead the group in a directed prayer time using the specific prayer bullets and the Heart acrostic above. Lead the group to pray

specifically for the persons and events listed on the *Praying Your Friends to Christ* brochure.

Session 4
Personal Spiritual Preparation
Preparing to Pray Evangelistically

Evangelistic praying is spiritual work and requires spiritually fit individuals. Thus it is necessary to prepare to pray evangelistically. We do so through specific prayer. At this point, divide the participants into teams (preferably teams of three). If this is not suitable for your study, group accordingly. Then lead the group through a focused time of prayer using the following categories and scriptures.

A. Pray with Praise and Thanksgiving

"Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name" (Ps. 100:4, emphasis added).

"I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men" (1 Tim. 2:1, emphasis added).

Think about some things for which you might be thankful. Allow the group to suggest some reasons before showing them the following three.

Thank God for your own salvation. In most cases, someone prayed for you.

"And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 5:18).

Thank God for His redemptive work.

"And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world"
(1 John 2:2).

Thank God for allowing you to join him in his redemptive work.

"And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18).

Prayer Prompt

Father, we come to You in the name of Jesus Christ, thanking You that You not only died for our sins, but You died for the sins of the whole world. Thank you that you love us and have given us the task of sharing your Good News with the world in which we live. We worship you for who you are, Your greatness, goodness and daily provision and grace. Thank you also for your mission and purpose in life. We truly do have full and meaningful lives in Christ!

B. Pray with a Cleansed Life

Our prayers will be ineffective if we pray with unconfessed sin in our lives. In the healing James writes of is that which is necessary to bring about spiritual health according to James 1:21.

"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (Jas. 5:16).

In Psalm 66:18, the Psalmist said, "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me."

The prayer life can not be separated from the pray-ers life. Unconfessed sin will hinder your prayer for the lost.

Prayer Prompt

At this point, ask participants to bow their heads and silently ask God to reveal any unconfessed sins, such as: anything I do that displeases God; anything I say that displeases God; anything my mind dwells on that displeases God; anything that I committed to that I should not have done (read Ps. 15). Instruct them to confess, forsake, and claim 1 John 1:9: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

C. Pray According to the Promises of God

God desires to save people.

God wants "all men to be saved and to come unto a knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:4).

"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9),

We can have confidence in our prayers for the lost because they are according to the will of God. Not only does the Word of God command us to pray for the lost but the will of God demands it.

"And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: and if we know that he hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him" (1 John 5:14-15).

Nothing Is Impossible for God.

Sometimes we are tempted to believe that some people will never respond and, during these times, we fail to prevail in our praying. We have been given a promise from God to pray back to Him when these times come. The words are in Mark 10:27.

The rich young ruler had rejected Christ in exchange for his wealth. Jesus then makes the statement that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to be saved. His disciples asked, "Who then can be saved?" That is when Jesus gives the

promise "With God all things are possible" (Matt. 19:26). You are to prevail in your praying for the lost realizing that no one is beyond the reach of God.

Prayer Prompt

Instruct participants to look at the prayer lists they have made. Ask them to see if there are individuals listed that seem impossible to reach. Ask them to select one or more of God's promises to pray on behalf of the unresponsive lost people from their list. Then lead them to pray for those individuals in small groups. Before they pray remind them that:

"Prayer will reach down, down, down into the deepest depths of sin and ruin and take hold of men and women who seem lost beyond all possibility or hope or redemption, and lift them up, up, up until they are fit for a place beside the Son of God upon the throne."1

"Men ought to always pray and not to faint" (Luke 18:1).

Session 5
Practical Application
Four Ways to Pray Evangelistically

This final session introduces believers to four additional ways to pray for lost people. Teachers can lead participants to apply what they have learned in sessions 1-4. Spend time introducing and describing the four different approaches to evangelistic prayer listed below. Then lead the participants to choose one of the four approaches listed below to apply what they have learned in the earlier sessions concerning evangelistic prayer (give the participants around 45 minutes to complete the prayer experience). Use the remaining time in the session to talk about their experiences in praying for lost people.

1. **List praying** – Make a list of each person and each request that you want to pray for. Many people who want to pray forget the specific requests and people that have requested prayer or for whom you have been led to pray. Specific prayer on behalf of others results in specific answers to prayer (see 1 Thess. 3:10-11; 2 Thess. 1:3). Encourage participants to take their lists and find a place where they can get alone with God and pray. (see www.praytimer.org for a software database and outreach Bible study that helps pray-ers and prayer coordinators to organize and print specific prayer lists. It sold more than 10,000 copies in its first two years and is endorsed by T.W. Hunt and Evelyn Christenson.)
2. **Prayerwalking** – Journey through your world and pray for others as you walk, run, bicycle, or drive. As participants prayerwalk they will be able to pray according to what they observe, know and are inspired to pray for (see 1 Tim. 2:1-4). Break participants into teams of two and send them out into the community to prayer walk. Provide evangelistic tracts for the teams for divine encounters. Encourage teams to look for opportunities to share the gospel with people they meet. Be sure to contextualize the prayer walking experience. Some teams may need to prayer drive the community. (For more information about intentional, biblical prayer walking see *Taking Prayer to the Streets* at www.namb.net/prayer. Henry Blackaby and Steven Hawthorne endorsed this resource.)
3. **Prayer visitation** – Break up into visitation teams of 2 and not more than three to a team. Visit homes, hospitals, prisons, etc. and ask for prayer requests. Provide evangelistic tracts and information concerning the church for each team. This approach allows for open doors for believers to care and share Christ with others. As we pray for people and their needs, God builds relationships and opens hearts to the Good News of Jesus (see (James 5:13-18). One way to begin the conversation is . . . , “Hi, we are from _____ Church and we are praying for our community today. Are there any prayer concerns we can pray about for you?

4. **Prayer Groups**—Unite with other believers in focused prayer. There is power in united prayer toward the Great Commission (see Acts 4:31). Prayer groups can be as small as three and as large as wanted or needed. Pray for specific church and government leaders. See www.namb.net/prayer for free, and priced resources to help you pray specifically for police, firefighters, pastors, families, the president and government leaders.

Dialogue Session

After participants have had their prayer experience and returned, spend the remaining time in dialogue concerning the various experiences people had with the four prayer approaches listed above. Ask participants to share testimonies of divine encounters with people and to reflect on their experiences. Ask them to share how they were led to pray and what they specifically prayed for. Ask for specific answers to specific prayers. Conclude the session with a focused prayer time as a group.

Conclusion

All Christians are faced with the question of how to incorporate this into their lives. One of the most overlooked aspects of prayer is the element of consecration. There is a consistency in the Old and New Testaments of individuals who renew their devotion to God. Every time Abraham, David, and Paul renewed their devotion to God, it was in a specific area of obedience. Following the first persecution in the book of Acts, the early church offered a specific prayer of consecration to share the gospel boldly.

Dwight L. Moody was correct when he said, "Those who have left the deepest impression on this sin-cursed earth have been men and women of prayer. You will find that PRAYER has been the mighty power that has moved not only God, but man."¹

Do not stop praying and do not stop at just praying. Evangelism without prayer is ineffective, and prayer that does not lead a person to deeper compassion for and actions to reach the lost is flawed. Be willing to be the answer to your prayer or the evangelistic prayers of others. Be obedient and boldly share the gospel.

"That God would place such an incomparable privilege and such responsibility in our hands is past understanding, but He has done just that. Through intercession we can become the instrument of salvation to men and women we never see face to face in this life," says Ron Dunn, author of *Don't Just Stand There, Pray Something*.

Final Note

At some point following the completion of the training, lead church members, and the church as a body, to yield themselves afresh to specific consecration to God in praying evangelistically from this day forward. If the following commitment card does not express the consecration needed, develop your own.

I, _____, consecrate myself to God afresh to the following, to honor God and participate in the Great Commission:

(Check all that apply)

- ☐ I commit to pray consistently for the evangelistic ministry of my church.
☐ I commit to set aside time regularly to discover and pray for specific lost people.
☐ I will join with the following believers to pray evangelistically on a regular basis.

¹R. A. Torrey, "The Place of Prayer in Evangelism," in *The Fundamentals*, ed. by R. A. Torrey and others, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1917, 1993 reprint), 3:218.

² George Barna,

³Ibid., 51.

⁴Basil Miller, *John Hyde: A Man of Prayer* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1949), 127.

⁵ An excellent discussion of this can be found in Darrel Robinson, *People Sharing Jesus*, Nashville:Broadman & Holman, 1996.

⁶See James C. Schofield, *Biblical Links between Prayer and Evangelism: How the Bible Interfaces Prayer with Preparation Evangelism* (Th. M. Thesis, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, NC, 1995), 94.

⁷Charles H. Spurgeon, *The Power of Prayer in a Believers Life* (compiled and edited by Robert hall (Lynwood, WA:Emerald Books, 1993), 73.

⁸Donald G. Bloesch, *The Struggle of Prayer* (San Francisco: Harper & Row Publishers, 1980), 139.

⁹E. M. Bounds, *Power Through Prayer* (Springdale: Whitaker House, 1982), 102.

¹⁰ This acrostic is adapted from *Praying Your Friends to Christ* (Alpharetta, GA: North American Mission Board, SBC, 1997), 16-18.