

## PRAYING FOR MISSIONS

### Matthew 9:36-38

36 But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.

37 Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few;

38 Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.

Now we come to what might be the most important need there is in the work of missions. That is *Praying for Missions*.

E.M. bounds (the prayer authority has written the following:

“Prayer has a great deal to do with missions. Prayer is the handmaid of missions. The success of all real missionary effort is dependent on prayer. The life and spirit of missions are the life and spirit of prayer. Both prayer and missions were born in the divine Mind. Prayer and missions are bosom companions. Prayer creates and makes missions successful, while missions leans heavily on prayer. The key of all missionary success is prayer.”

Bounds also wrote:

It is all right to urge men to give of their means to the missionary cause, but it is much more important to urge them to give their prayers to the movement. Today, foreign missions have more need of the power of prayer than the power of money. Prayer can make even poverty in the missionary cause move on amid difficulties and hindrances. Much money without prayer is helpless and powerless in the face of the utter darkness, sin, and wretchedness on the foreign field. If we get the church involved in the business of praying, and thus secure the spirit of missions, money will more than likely come as a matter of course.”

Any missionary who is worth the salt that goes in his bread will tell you quickly that **he needs your prayers more than he needs your money**. Money can do a lot of things, but there are many things that money cannot do.

There are three great needs in the work of missions today.

1. We need *mighty power* - - - Somebody has got to get a hold of God.
2. We need \_\_\_\_\_ - - - Somebody has got to go.
3. We need *money power* - - - Somebody has got to give.

We must have \_\_\_\_\_, personnel, and \_\_\_\_\_ for the work of missions to go forward in a manner that pleases God. God would have all of us to pray and provide. He will have some of us to go.

In Matthew 9:38 we have a “prayer request” given to us by the Lord Jesus Christ. **“Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest”.**

Let’s break this verse down somewhat grammatically.

The verb “pray” is in the imperative mode in the Greek N.T. language when means this is not a suggestion, or just a good idea, it is a **command.**

WE ARE COMMANDED TO PRAY FOR GOD TO SEND OUT MISSIONARIES TO SPREAD THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST.

By the way, if the Lord commands us to pray for God to send out missionaries and we do not pray, it is a violation of the command of God’s Word.

I probably should call this a “prayer command.”

I feel terrible when someone makes a prayer request to me and I forget it or fail to pray for it. **Can you imagine us not praying about the Lord’s only prayer request?**

In I Samuel 12:23 we read, *“Moreover as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you: but I will teach you the good and the right way.”*

Samuel felt that it would be sin for him not to pray for Israel. **If it was a sin for Samuel not to pray for Saul and backslidden Israel, how much more is it sin for you and me not to pray for our missionaries?**

I am convinced the reason most of us do not pray more for our missionaries is because we really do not know how to pray for them. All we know to pray is *“God bless our missionaries.”*

I am glad God can hear and answer that simple prayer, but I am convinced that type of praying will not accomplish much in the work of missions. You must pray more \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

In class tonight, we are going to look at three thoughts about praying for missions.

## **I. WE MUST PRAY FOR MISSIONARIES TO BE SENT**

In verse 38 we are given God’s way of obtaining missionary personnel. It is not the job of Bible Colleges, Mission Boards, or Denominational Committees to produce missionary personnel. We have already stated that but it is probably good to emphasize it again.

Missionaries are called of God in answer to the prayers of God’s people. **Notice the setting of calling of the first missionaries in Acts 13:1-4.**

These verses reveal that it was a time when the church was giving itself to preaching, praying, and fasting, that God instructed the church to separate and send out Barnabas and Saul. We are not told specifically **when** the Lord called them, but it seems that it was during this same time period.

Actually, the teaching of Matthew 9:38 is to pray that the Lord of the harvest would send laborers **out of the church** into His harvest field which is the world.

The local church should not be looked at as the permanent residence of everyone that is saved there.

While it is true that it is the will of God for many people to spend their lifetime serving the Lord in their local church, it is also God's will that many who are trained in the local church be sent out into the fields of Christian service.

The church should be considered a place where the sinner can be **saved** and the get **trained** and \_\_\_\_\_ in the Word and work of God, but we should not be selfish.

We ought to want to send out workers from our churches that the gospel can be preached into all the world. A good three-fold philosophy would be:

1. Pray them in, get them saved
2. Pray them \_\_\_\_\_, get them strong
3. Pray them \_\_\_\_\_, get them serving

## **II. WE MUST PRAY FOR MISSIONARIES TO BE SUSTAINED**

Not only must we pray for *Missionaries to be sent* we need to pray for the *Missionaries to be sustained*. It is not enough that they go.... they must stay.

Why do some missionaries leave the field?

- 1- Some leave because of sickness,
- 2- some because of sin, and
- 3- some leave to serve God in other areas such as pastoring or evangelism.
- 4- family problems

It does not matter why the missionary leaves the field

he leaves a "gap in the hedge" of God's work.

You can go to a preacher's fellowship meeting, a jubilee, or a camp meeting and find some brother that you thought was on the mission field, back in the United States pastoring a church.

There is **another side** to this matter of leaving the field. Before we get too critical of a missionary for leaving the field, let's take a look at how much we prayed for them while they were there.

Before we judge the missionaries that leave the field too harshly we must first ask ourselves some questions.

- 1- What was I doing while the missionary was facing the devil head on?
- 2- How much did I pray for them before they came home? Pastors and church members alike should ask themselves, How much did I pray for the missionaries? What was I doing while the missionary was fighting the temptation to leave the field and come home? Was I playing golf, fishing, deer hunting, or just sitting around sipping coffee?

Do we know how to pray for missionaries effectively? We should promised the Lord that if he would teach us how to pray for missionaries, not only would we pray for them, but we would teach others to pray for them also.

How do we pray for missionaries? How do we get more specific in our prayers for them? There are eight areas of prayer for missionaries that I am going to propose to you this evening.

I will give them to you with very few comments.

1. *We need to pray for them physically.* A sick missionary cannot do the job like a well missionary can. We need to pray that God would protect them from sickness, diseases, virus, and a host of other things.

2. *We need to pray for the Spiritually.*

This would cover every aspect of the Missionary's spiritual life: his personal devotions, his preaching, witnessing possibilities, his church work, etc.

3. *We need to pray for them mentally.* Can you imagine what it would be like to learn a new language, a new culture, new laws and regulations that govern your life? We need to pray that the missionary can learn all these new rules and regulations that he now lives under.

4. *We need to pray for them emotionally.*

Most every missionary goes through what is known as a *culture shock*. Often the wife and children of the missionary have a hard time adjusting to being away from home and to the new lifestyle that they experience on the field.

5. *We need to pray for them morally.*

Do not think that being in a different country, a different culture, and a different color of skin does away with the temptation to sin.

6. *We need to pray for them socially.*

The Missionary cannot live alone by himself. He must learn to get along with other missionaries, with those in authority, and those to whom they minister.

7. *We need to pray for them domestically.*

Pray for the missionary's family life. Pray for the husband/wife relationship. Pray for the parent/children relationship. In plain language, if a missionary loses his family, he loses his ministry.

8. *We need to pray for them financially.*

I did not leave this one until last because I do not believe it is important, but because of the importance of the other seven. If a person falls in any of the things mentioned just moments ago, it does not matter how money he has.

We need to pray continually for God to supply the financial need of the missionaries. I believe that if we pray, God can add to the support that the missionary receives.

\*\*God can cause some churches to increase their support.

\*\*God can remind some of the pastors and churches that he visited while on deputation of the missionary and lay it upon their heart to support them.

As you have read these areas of praying for missionaries, be aware that there are missionaries right now facing some of all of these situations I have mentioned. We must learn to pray for these needs regularly.

### **III. WE MUST PRAY FOR MISSIONARIES TO BE SUCCESSFUL**

Not only are we to pray for the missionaries to be *sent*, to be *sustained*, but we must pray for them to be *successful*.

As we pray for the success of missionaries, we must realize that God does not judge success like man does.

If we are not careful we will judge the one with the largest number to be the most successful.

If we try to find some way to gauge success for the missionary, should we look at how we evaluate success at home?

1- Do big crowds where I preach mean I am successful as a preacher?

2- Do I judge my success as to how many people are saved, or many are saved in the church services?

3- What is success for me as a Christian and as a preacher? Success should be determined by my faithfulness to the following four principles.

a. Me being what God wants me to \_\_\_\_\_

b. Me going where God wants me to \_\_\_\_\_

c. Me doing what God wants me to \_\_\_\_\_

d. Me accomplishing what God wants me \_\_\_\_\_

I believe these four principles are the correct guidelines in determining success for myself or for any Christian here in the United States. If these determine success for me, then the same would be true for a missionary serving the Lord anywhere in the world. **Success for a missionary is for that missionary to be what God wants him to be; to go where God wants him to go, to do what God wants him to do, and accomplish what God wants him to accomplish.**

I need to emphasize the importance of the missionaries praying for their supporting pastors and churches. Pray on daily basis or at least twice a week.

***OH THAT GOD WOULD GIVE EACH OF US AN ATTITUDE OF SUPPLICATION OUR FELLOW LABOURERS IN THE MINISTRY OF REACHING SOULS FOR THE LORD JESUS CHRIST.***

Before I close this class, I want to give you nine ways a missionary can care for his mission family on the field. This is presented as though I am talking to a missionary.

Missionary you are on the front line and in harm's way. You, your spouse, and your kids struggle as you labor for Christ in your adopted culture. Your support network is far away and the emotional, spiritual, and physical toll on your family is high. You are the human who can most positively impact the struggles of the ones you love. Glorify God and serve your family by making their care a priority for you while serving in missions.

To those fulfilling the Great Commission, or about to, here are a few practical ways you can decrease the burden missions can inflict on those closest to you: Here are some recommendations from Mike Pettengill who served in Honduras and Equador.

### **1. Family Vacations**

Spend some time away from daily ministry and relax. Remind your family members they are at least as important to you as those to whom you came to minister.

### **2. Cultural Experiences**

God has called you to serve Him in a culture that is not your own. Learn to enjoy the culture in which you live. Explore and learn about the people, food, and life together.

Your ministry is made easier if you understand the culture of those to whom you minister. When you see the culture through the eyes of your spouse and kids you comprehend deeper the people you are discipling.

### **3. Date Night**

No matter your station in life, never forget to date your spouse. Remind yourself how special your spouse is and remind them they still matter to you. Get out of the house, away from kids and away from daily ministry, and enjoy each other's company.

### **4. Prayer**

Pray together and pray for each other. Let your family hear you pray to God for their wellbeing. Petition your Father to help your family members feel loved, safe, and valuable.

### **5. Language Acquisition**

Make sure your spouse and kids receive adequate formal language instruction. A stay-at-home spouse or homeschooled kids still must participate in commerce, interact with neighbors, and contribute to the ministry. A family member who struggles at their new language may feel marginalized and less relevant to the family. Practice together and help each other improve in language in a nurturing environment.

### **6. Traditions**

Maintain family traditions and holidays. Use family traditions to help you feel connected to those far away from you. If your resources are limited celebrate Thanksgiving by eating a chicken or decorate your Christmas palm tree. Remember your old culture and embrace your new one. Combine old traditions with new flavor. Remembering your home and the culture you came from does not dishonor your new calling.

### **7. Seek Counsel**

As you, your spouse, and your kids are struggling, seek the guidance of a spiritual advisor or therapist. There may be both in your new culture, but if not, use technology to communicate with professionals back home. Seek guidance from trained experts.

### **8. Minister Together**

Include your kids and your spouse in your ministry as often and appropriate. Allow your missionary kids to be kid missionaries. Make sure your spouse has opportunities to minister as his or her time and abilities allow. Don't force your family to embrace your ministry, but instead find ways they can minister that allows them to utilize the gifts God has given them. As is possible, minister side by side.

### **9. Familiar Contact**

Use letters, Skype, e-mail, phone calls, and social media to maintain communication with your friends and extended family back home.

While encouraging your family to get to know people in your new culture, do not discourage interaction with those you left behind. If those back home can experience your ministry and familial love they will be more supportive of your missions work and know better how to pray for your family.

Caring for yourselves and your family is healthy, biblical, and increases the probability you will serve longer on the mission field. You and your family are already paying a price, don't make it worse by neglecting each other. You have no business ministering to another culture when your own family is suffering.

Do not allow your kids and spouse to be casualties of your mission work. As you would back home, care for the special needs of your family while you involve them in your mission work and adopted culture. You may be surprised what a Godly witness a healthy and loving family is to the culture you have been sent to serve.