

WHY AND HOW TO PRAY FOR MISSIONARIES

Why do we say: “Brothers and sisters, pray for us”? There are many reasons, including those listed below. The full-time missionary must have the intercessory missionary working with him on a regular, systematic basis. We cannot work independently in the salvation, discipling, and training of national leaders. (See 2 Corinthians 10:4.)

THE MISSIONARY IS INVADING ENEMY TERRITORY

In most instances, Satan has held uncontested sway for centuries or even millenniums in the countries which we think of as “foreign mission fields.” As a result, the thinking of the people is twisted, their minds are blinded, and God’s truth does not penetrate easily. Satan does not meekly give up his prey; he counter-attacks in all and many times undreamed-of ways. He fights to the last ditch. We are in the midst of a spiritual battle. Intercessory missionaries (prayer partners) must see themselves as part of the same team. (See 2 Corinthians 10:4.) Pray that souls will be released from Satan’s bondage and will put their trust in Christ. Pray that the missionary will recognize the attacks of the Adversary and use Scriptural weapons in the battle.

THE MISSIONARY FACES MANY FRUSTRATIONS

There is much to discourage and frustrate the missionary.

- **Language Disparity.** This means that we cannot clearly communicate the message of God’s salvation until we have spent months or even years in language study.
- **Customs and Culture:** these are often different, and sometimes conflict with our Western ways of doing things. But we are guests in these countries and must learn to be careful not to offend by thoughtlessly ignoring things that are important to those we have come to reach with the gospel.
- **Unfamiliar Food.** These can be delicious or unpalatable. We have to subordinate our own tastes and be prepared to eat what is offered, if friendly relationships are to be established.
- **Climate.** We who come from temperate zones often have problems adjusting to the tropics: enervating heat coupled with high humidity, typhoons and rainy season’s deluges.
- **Lack of Privacy.** Many people in other countries live much of their lives in public and expect the missionary to do the same. We must work out a balance.
- **Lack of Results,** when we expected to set the world on fire. There must be a constant “looking to Jesus.” Pray for the missionary to be graciously flexible and able in very practical ways to obey the injunction of Philippians 4:6 (worry about nothing, pray about everything).

THE MISSIONARY HAS NEED OF SELF-KNOWLEDGE

It is not long before we are again forced to face up to the fact of our own sinful flesh. We then recognize afresh how human we are! It’s rough to learn what we are really like.

Pressure will reveal it all too clearly! Here are a few of the revelations the Lord brings to our attention:

- Pride of Race, which may be quite unintentional, yet is apparent to the national; pride of “face” and love of position or “place” may also be found.
- Prejudice. “My” way and the way “I” have been taught is viewed as the only right way.
- Selfishness. Lack of consideration for others, wanting attention, stubbornness, and the inability to see another’s viewpoint can all come from this root of self.
- Lack of Self-discipline. It is so easy to waste precious time, our own and others’, on the mission field. We may also find that we do not have sufficiently defined, measurable goals for the work and insufficiently detailed programs for accomplishing them.

Pray that the missionary will learn to submit his own desires and inclinations to God’s Holy Spirit, and then that the fruit of the Spirit will be more and more apparent in the life of the missionary. Pray that he will understand and appropriate all he has and is in Christ.

THE MISSIONARY FACES LONELINESS

It is easy to succumb to loneliness in a foreign land when we are surrounded by people of another culture and language. This is true of those who are single and those who are married. We all need to know we are loved and accepted. Loneliness is one of the means the devil uses to discourage and depress us and to cause us to engage in disastrous self-pity. But God has supplied a way of escape! His promise in Hebrews 13:5b, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee,” is as true today as it was when He first gave it. What we need to do is to claim it for ourselves and experience the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in our everyday living. Pray that the missionary will experience fellowship with God in new and satisfying ways.

THE MISSIONARY MUST REMEMBER THE MEANING OF BEING A MISSIONARY

It has been in our Bibles all the time, and on the field we really need to learn the truth of Christ’s statement in John 6:38; “I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me” and Mark 10:45: “For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.” Our mission is to be servants to all. We are God’s instruments, to be used as he sees fit. We must learn to work as team members regardless of our training, or talents, or lack of either. Pray that the missionary will have the humility of Christ as described in Philippians 2:5-8.

THE MISSIONARY’S NEED FOR STABILITY

In all areas of life we must maintain equilibrium. Spiritually, there must be doctrinal stability through the study of the Bible and its application to our daily living. Mentally, we must learn how to combat Satan’s great tool of depression. Emotionally, we need to

strike a happy balance between becoming too calloused or too sympathetic. Pray that in each of these areas the missionary will develop mature stability. Pray that the missionary will get his true identity and self-worth from who he is in Christ and not from success or what others think or say about him.

THE MISSIONARY'S INSIGHT NEEDS TO BE SHARPENED

Missionaries need insight into the heart-needs of those around us, both nationals and fellow missionaries, to diagnose and to apply remedies. We need insight into methods of work in order to know what will best accomplish the task. We need insight concerning our priorities and the setting of goals. Once we acquire a working knowledge of the language, we need real wisdom from God to know which opportunities to pursue and which to leave undone. Pray that the missionary will have a heightened sympathy and insight into the heart-needs of those around him. Pray, too, that he will have insight and heavenly wisdom to know what God would have him undertake, and how he would have him go about it.

THE MISSIONARY NEEDS GOOD INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

These are all-important if God's work is to go forward unhindered. The oil of the Spirit of God must be operative to insure that we get along well with others: husband/wife, worker/co-worker, worker/director, worker/national Christian, worker/national unbeliever. If relationships become strained we need to be honest and open with each other, show real repentance, and allow God to break our stubborn pride. It is no easier for us to admit we are wrong than for anyone else! Pray that in this important area the missionary will be surrendered to God and sensitive to the prompting of the Holy Spirit. Pray that he will see his own personal needs. And that couples would love each other with agape love seeking the highest good rather than claiming their rights.

THE MISSIONARY'S NEED TO BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT

His gracious fruit must show in our lives, or our work will accomplish nothing. Unless we have daily communion with our Lord, the pressure will result in failure, and we will finally drop from foreign service. We must keep spiritually fresh if we are to glorify him. Pray that the missionary will be able to obey the injunction of Ephesians 5:18; Galatians 5:16, 25 ("Be filled with the Spirit ..." and therefore, walk in the Spirit) and that he will always keep short account with God (1 John 1:9), be aware of Satan's deceptions and hate all sin.

THE MISSIONARY'S HEALTH PROBLEMS

Physical health is important, and many workers have been disqualified for service on the grounds of ill health. Common foes are malaria, hepatitis, amoebic dysentery, and dengue fever. Excessive fatigue may cause depression or discouragement, with disastrous results in other areas. We need, too, to be aware of attacks upon our mental health. Our enemy sometimes attacks our minds, leading to mental and emotional problems. Anxiety and

worry will soon drain us of all vitality. We need to learn to guard against these with the “shield of faith.” Pray that God will keep the missionary in that condition of health that will best glorify him.

THE MISSIONARY’S TRAVEL

Travel on the field is very often hazardous, whether by plane, bus, car or on foot. Sometimes as we send up a quick prayer to God, we wonder if anyone else was led to pray at that moment. Pray for safety in travel.

THE MISSIONARY’S CHILDREN

Our sons and daughters can be of the greatest blessing and help to us, or may pose a problem. Sometimes decisions made because of our children have a far-reaching effect on our lives or service, and theirs, too. Sadly, children that are loved but not disciplined can adversely affect our work and testimony. We need wisdom to train and teach them in ways well-pleasing to God and in full accordance with his Word. Pray for the health of missionary children. Pray that both parents will be godly role models and will do all they can to help their children develop godly self-worth. Pray that parents may have wisdom in providing for their education. Pray that children, as well as parents, will have a good understanding and attitude should separation become necessary for schooling. Pray especially that the children will not let any bitterness take root because of separation.

THE MISSIONARY’S CONSTANT NEED TO SHOW LOVE

Love is required at all times, in all circumstances, for all people. Our human love will not do; it always falls short. Only the love of God which is “shed abroad” in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, and has the characteristics outlined in 1 Corinthians 13, will suffice. Pray for the missionary as Paul prayed in Philippians 1:9 (that love “may abound more and more in knowledge and in all depth of insight”). Pray that at all times, in all circumstances, with all people, we will take that which God has so fully and freely provided. “God has given ... TAKE.”

SHARE THE MISSIONARY’S BURDEN FOR ADDITIONAL WORKERS, BOTH NATIONAL AND FOREIGN

With untold millions dying untold and untaught millions dying untaught, plus the population explosion and the closing of doors, we must have more co-workers to gather in the harvest and disciple those who are coming to Christ. Pray that many more at home and on the foreign field will make “his last command their first concern.”

THE MISSIONARY’S OWN INTERCESSORY LIFE

Missionaries must take time to pray for every aspect of the work in which they are engaged, because they are so intimately involved in the local situation. Pray that the

missionary will recognize and faithfully fulfill his part in prayer for the work to which God has called him.

HOW DO YOU PRAY FOR MISSIONARIES?

Be specific, systematic, and steadfast.

Agree in prayer with others. (See Matthew 18:19-20.)

Practice saturation praying—covering many aspects with many brief requests.

Pray as for yourself. Any problem you have, the missionary may also have, but it will be magnified by his situation and circumstances.

Pray with the authority you have in Christ, and bind the strong man. (See Matthew 18:18 and Mark 3:27.)

Try using a passage of Scripture when you are praying for your missionary, such as Ephesians 1:15-23, Colossians 1:9-14, or Ephesians 3:16-21. “Someone has said: ‘Better, far better, do less work, if need be, in order that we may pray more; because work done by the rushing torrent of human energy will not save a single soul: whereas work done in vital and unbroken contact with the living God will tell for all eternity.’ No doubt, we would all heartily agree with this—the trouble, of course, is to actually put it into practice.”