



Praying for the Lost

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Group discussion

- When prayer requests are taken in a Bible study or during a prayer meeting, why do people rarely mention the names of the lost?

- What do you commonly pray for? How often are you praying for the lost?

Personal evangelists must pray for the lost within their networks.

Why we pray for the lost.

After identifying the lost within your relational network, you should now begin praying for those individuals. Prayers are utilized to attune the believer to the instructions of God. Tom Mercer and Oscar Thompson, advocates of the relational evangelism model, believe that prayer is of utmost importance.

Mercer writes, "Listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit. This is very important. As you move into this *oikocentric* lifestyle, you will find more and more that you're hearing that small whisper guiding you. Listen to Him."¹

Thompson writes, "You must intercede for those in your circles. You must pray for God to meet their spiritual, physical, or whatever needs they have. You are his vessel. You must be available."² Mercer and Thompson would suggest that the relational evangelism model requires believers to pray for those in their networks.

Beyond this, the Scripture itself teaches that we are to pray for the lost.

Romans 10:1

"Brothers and sisters, my heart's desire and prayer to God concerning them is for their salvation."

¹ Mercer, *Oikos, Your World, Delivered*, (Chapel Hill, N.C.: Professional Press, 2008), 103.

² Ritzman and Thompson, *Concentric Circles of Concern*, (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1999), 125.

Matthew 9:37-38

“Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is abundant, but the workers are few. Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest.’”

John 6:44

“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up on the last day.”

1 Timothy 2:1-4

“First of all, then, I urge that petitions, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, for kings and all those who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. This is good, and it pleases God our Savior, who wants everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.”

Group discussion

- Which of these verses speak to you the most about praying for the lost? Why?

- John 6:44 indicates that evangelism is a spiritual process. How does prayer factor into this? Also consider 1 Timothy 2:1-4.

- Paul said it was his “heart’s desire” for the lost to be saved. On a scale of 1-10, what level of concern do you have for the lost? Does the level of concern affect the way you pray?

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Identifying prayer concerns for the lost

Thompson writes, “You must intercede for those in your circles. You must pray for God to meet their spiritual, physical, or whatever needs they have.” ³

³ Ritzman and Thompson, *Concentric Circles of Concern*, 125.

As we pray for these needs, we are ultimately praying that God will meet them and at the same time soften their hearts to the gospel. What good will it do if a person is healed from a sickness but spends an eternity in hell?

Consult your "oikos" chart. Identify one name from your list and complete as much prayer information about them as possible.

Relationship	Name	Physical Need	Emotional Need	Spiritual Need (in regard to their salvation)
<i>Example</i>	<i>Joe Smith</i>	<i>Suffering with cancer</i>	<i>Under stress</i>	<i>Salvation: To quit using hypocrites as an excuse not to be saved.</i>
Who I live with				
Relative				
Close friend				
Neighbor/coworker				
Acquaintance				
Random contact				

Let us pray

Jim Cymbala is not surprised that an evangelism focus would require spiritual means. In his view, an evangelistic effort should call the Christian to forsake time-consuming hobbies and instead engage in activities like prayer and fasting for the lost.^{4, 5} Let's schedule a day of fasting for one lost person in your "oikos."

- "Whenever you fast, don't be gloomy like the hypocrites. For they make their faces unattractive so that their fasting is obvious to people. Truly I tell you, they have their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting isn't obvious to others but to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you," (Matthew 6:16-18).

I will be praying and fasting for _____ on _____, 20_____ .

Be prepared to share during the next session any insights, observations, or encounters as a result of your prayers and fasting.

⁴ Cymbala, *Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire: What Happens When God's Spirit Invades the Heart of His People*, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997),180.

⁵ Consult a physician if you feel you have any dietary concerns regarding fasting, especially if you are a diabetic. Fasting can also take the forms of abstinence from activities like television or social media. Replace those activities with prayer for a lost person.