

Praying Effectively for the Lost

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Specific Requests

Motive

Ensure your motive is proper. Our primary motive in praying for the lost is God's glory (John 15:8) but many times our motives are poisoned with pride and selfishness. Satan abides in pride just as God abides in praise. We can pray for those "black sheep" in our families to be saved, to change them to be a better husband or to stop abuse. We can pray for people to be saved to grow a church's membership completely missing the point. Our prayers and that person's salvation are for the glory of God. The bible is very clear on this point: **James 4:3 (KJV)** Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts (desires).¹ Salvation is our desire because it is God's desire for His glory. If we pray for salvation for a person to fulfill our own selfish desires, we render the prayer null and void.

Pray for the individual by name, asking the Lord to do five things in their Life.

These five requests follow the acrostic: **SBCIS**

1. Sanctify

First of all, we ask the Lord to sanctify them. This is how God begins His work of redemption in every individual's life. He always "sanctifies" or "sets apart" a person for salvation before He saves them.

1 Peter 1:2 (KJV) Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, **through sanctification of the Spirit**, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.²

2 Thessalonians 2:13-14 (KJV)

13 But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation **through sanctification of the Spirit** and belief of the truth:

14 Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.³

It carries the thought that God draws an invisible circle around the person and then begins to bring His influence to bear within that circle. The person is being pursued by the Holy Spirit, C.S. Lewis called this being "in the meshes of the net. I doubt you'll get away."

2. Bless

We ask the Lord to bless them. Since it is always the goodness of God that leads individuals to repentance, it is imperative that we implore God to bless them.

Romans 2:4 (KJV)

4 Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?⁴

Sometimes when our prayers for the salvation of others do not bring speedy results, we tend to get frustrated and impatient, secretly desiring God to "teach them a lesson with the rod of trouble." Note in the following scriptures the disciples' reaction to a village of Samaritans rejecting Jesus, and how Jesus responded.

¹ *The Holy Bible : King James Version*. electronic ed. of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version. Bellingham WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

Luke 9:51-56 (KJV)

51 And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem,

52 And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him.

53 And they did not receive him, because his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem.

54 And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?

55 But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of.

56 For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And they went to another village.⁵

If we are to emulate our dear Savior, we must continually desire God's best for all people. We should especially ask His very best upon those for whom we pray.

3. Convict

We ask the Lord to convict the individual, since conviction is absolutely necessary for salvation. Only the Holy Spirit can bring someone under conviction, so we would do well to plead as in John 16:8-11.

John 16:8-11 (KJV)

8 And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:

9 Of sin, because they believe not on me;

10 Of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see me no more;

11 Of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged.⁶

Conviction means to "convince of a fault." The fault or problem of the lost is in "not believing on Jesus" and this is THE SIN of which the Holy Spirit convicts (John 16:9). People already know what their "sins" are, except for "the sin" of unbelief in Christ. Since this is the only "sin" that condemns one to hell, Satan tries to keep them blinded to it. Therefore, the Holy Spirit convicts or convinces the lost at this one and only point, revealing to them the Lord Jesus Christ in His glory, so they can be saved. However, we must know that conviction does not automatically guarantee salvation as we can see in Acts 24:25.

Acts 24:25 (KJV)

25 And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.⁷

Felix trembled in conviction, but there in no Biblical indication he ever got saved.

4. Illuminate

We ask the Lord to illuminate their mind to the truth. Even after one comes under conviction of their need for salvation, the gospel-blinded mind may remain closed to the light of the glorious gospel of Christ and they will remain in spiritual darkness.

2 Corinthians 4:6 (KJV)

6 For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.⁸

Once the heart and mind has been open to the truth, God uses Christians to explain the gospel to them. Consider the story of the Ethiopian eunuch:

⁵ *The Holy Bible : King James Version*. electronic ed. of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version. Bellingham WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

Acts 8:26-39 (KJV)

26 And the angel of the Lord spake unto Philip, saying, Arise, and go toward the south unto the way that goeth down from Jerusalem unto Gaza, which is desert.
27 And he arose and went: and, behold, a man of Ethiopia, an eunuch of great authority under Candace queen of the Ethiopians, who had the charge of all her treasure, and had come to Jerusalem for to worship,
28 Was returning, and sitting in his chariot read Esaias the prophet.
29 Then the Spirit said unto Philip, Go near, and join thyself to this chariot.
30 And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest?
31 And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me? And he desired Philip that he would come up and sit with him.
32 The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearer, so opened he not his mouth:
33 In his humiliation his judgment was taken away: and who shall declare his generation? for his life is taken from the earth.
34 And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some other man?
35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.
36 And as they went on their way, they came unto a certain water: and the eunuch said, See, here is water; what doth hinder me to be baptized?
37 And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.
38 And he commanded the chariot to stand still: and they went down both into the water, both Philip and the eunuch; and he baptized him.
39 And when they were come up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: and he went on his way rejoicing.⁹

He came to Jerusalem to worship and had a copy of the Scripture for that era, and he admitted that he could not understand “except some man should guide me.” Review the story of Cornelius (Acts 10). He was “A devout *man*, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway.”¹⁰ He was much better than most Christians we know, and yet, he was still lost – he did not understand the way of salvation. He was instructed by an angel, “Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter: He lodgeth with one Simon a tanner, whose house is by the sea side: he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do.”¹¹ Cornelius and those with him were so open to the gospel that as soon as they heard “the word,” the Holy Spirit fell on them and the got saved while Peter is still preaching! Ask the Lord to open the minds and hearts of the lost - He will! Then they can be gloriously saved.

5. Save

We are ready to ask the Lord to save them. However, we must be willing for God to do “whatever it takes” to facilitate their salvation, for God orchestrates events their life designed to bring them to repentance. Some people will resist until dire circumstances brings them broken to the cross, others will succumb to urgings of the Holy Spirit willingly. Once the individual is ready to receive the gospel, someone must share it with them. So the natural thing to do is to pray for the Lord to send someone to do that. That is exactly what Jesus tells us to do:

Matthew 9:37-38 (KJV)

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.¹²

Because the laborers are few (ὀλίγοις), *little, small, few of number/multitude/quantity/size, of time: short, of degree or intensity: light, slight*¹³, we must pray for God’s help in this area. We pray for God to send out more workers. We must ask the Lord to equip them with the essential qualities that will make these workers effective

⁹ *The Holy Bible : King James Version*. electronic ed. of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version. Bellingham WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ James Strong, *The Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible : Showing Every Word of the Test of the Common English Version of the Canonical Books, and Every Occurrence of Each Word in Regular Order*. (Ontario: Woodside Bible Fellowship.), G3641.

witnesses. However, we must also understand that all of the equipping comes through the Holy Spirit. That is why Jesus commanded His disciples to tarry in Jerusalem in Acts 1:4-5.

Acts 1:4-8 (KJV)

4 And, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me.

5 For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.

6 When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?

7 And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power.

8 But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.¹⁴

Many souls around us are plunging into hell and we are powerless to stop them without a mighty endowment of God's Holy Spirit. Therefore, we must pray for the Lord to fill His workers with His Spirit, equipping them with power (ability and force), boldness (Acts 4:31), wisdom (Proverbs 11:30), zeal (Colossians 4:12-13), compassion (Jude 22-23), and divine insight (Jeremiah 33:3). And souls shall be saved!

We have prayed for the individuals to be saved, and for the laborers to witness to them. We now pray for the Word of God that is to be shared with them. The reason we pray for the Word of God being shared is two-fold: First, no one gets saved without hearing the Word of God. Second, Satan hates the Word of God, continually and viciously attacking it in his diabolic efforts to prevent people from receiving it. Since the Word of God is necessary to convict (Acts 2:37), to free (John 8:23), and to save (1 Peter 1:23) the lost, Satan vigorously opposes it with distractions (Luke 8:11-15), fortifications (II Corinthians 10:4-5), and substitutions (II Corinthians 11:3-4).

If we really want to see multitudes saved, then we need to pray for revival. During times of revival, all prayer is almost exclusively for others. When people are saturated with the Holy Spirit, they are more concerned about others than themselves. God's passion for souls becomes theirs! Finney describes the prevalence of prayer during times of revival.

The spirit of prayer that prevailed in those revivals was a very marked feature of them. It was common for young converts to be greatly exercised in prayer, and in some instances, so much so that they were constrained to pray for whole nights, and until their bodily strength was quite exhausted, for the conversion of souls around them.

There was a great pressure of the Holy Spirit upon the minds of Christians and they seemed to bear about with them the burden of immortal souls. They manifested the greatest solemnity of mind, and the greatest watchfulness in all their words and actions. It was very common to find Christians whenever they met in any place, instead of engaging in conversation, to fall on their knees in prayer.

Not only were prayer meetings greatly multiplied and fully attended, not only was there great solemnity in those meetings, but there was a mighty spirit of secret prayer. Christians prayed a great deal, many of them spending many hours in private prayer.

If you want to see souls saved, pray for revival!

If you want revival, pray for souls to be saved!

¹⁴ *The Holy Bible : King James Version.* electronic ed. of the 1769 edition of the 1611 Authorized Version. Bellingham WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995.