

Prayer: The Fuel For Mission



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Introduction

Prayer. It's our opportunity to communicate with the living God. Whether this communication is done by speaking, listening, writing, drawing, focusing on Holy Scripture or just being open to the Lord's presence, it's a gift that can be done at any time or any place. God's Word tells us that Jesus frequently went off to a quiet place to pray. When the disciples asked Jesus about prayer, he taught them the foundation of the Lord's Prayer. Even Martin Luther taught his own barber, Peter, a simple way to pray.

Whether done individually or corporately, prayer is our access to the Triune God. Christ himself compels us to pray for all our needs, with the assurance of our intercessions being heard and responded to. Even when we don't know how to pray, Scripture tells us that the Holy Spirit will intercede on our behalf as our prayers rise as incense before the Almighty.

Simply, we're called to pray for everything! Pray first, and always! We're called to pray for our enemies and those who are sick. We're called to pray for our governmental leaders and the spreading of the Gospel. We're called to pray for the casting out of demons and for God's will to be done. We're called to pray for boldness through God's Spirit and for faith. We're called to pray for strength and protection, and to be thankful for all of God's blessings in our lives. And, according to God's Word, we are called to pray for the central aspect of ministry in Christ's Church, and that is *MISSION*.

Session 1: Prayer is the Fuel for Mission

Please read and discuss Luke 10:1-12.

As Jesus provides instructions to the 72 who are being sent out to expand the Kingdom, Christ shares some important words:

"The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

What do we surmise from these words? The harvest of souls is massive and ongoing, but there are few to share the Gospel. So, what is the action needed to turn this around? Prayer! Praying to God to send more disciples to make Christ known. *That's why prayer is the fuel for mission!*

Please consider and discuss the following questions:

- In what ways do you and your congregation pray for mission?
- When we pray, who do we expect that the Lord is going to “lift up” to share the Good News with others?
- Why do you think that the mission of Christ is lacking workers?
- What have you seen happen when we pray for Christ’s mission in the world?
- As disciples of Jesus, what is our responsibility in making Jesus known to our friends, relatives, associates and neighbors?
- How do you think the Holy Spirit is involved in our “mission praying?”

Session 2: The Church Praying for Mission

Please read Acts 13:1-2.

When Saul (Paul) and Barnabas were present at the church in Antioch (it was in Antioch that the believers were first called Christians), the Holy Spirit came over some of the prophets and teachers in the church and gave them the following message, “Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” During fasting and prayer, the church laid hands on these men and sent them off to share Jesus. The church was praying for mission.

And times haven’t changed at all today. When the church prays, mission happens.

Why is this “missional prayer” so important?

- For disciples to be made (Matthew 28:19-20).
- For the Good News to be preached and heard (Romans 10:14-15).
- For the witness of Christ (Acts 1:8).
- For others to boldly share the Gospel (Ephesians 6:19-20).
- For God’s Word to be shared at all times (II Timothy 4:2).
- For missionaries to be supported (II Corinthians 11:8-9).
- For individuals to be saved (Romans 10:11-13).

At its worship services, small groups, Bible studies and social events, the Church is compelled to pray for the mission of Jesus to go forward—for the Gospel to advance throughout the world and for churches in our own country to be planted and renewed.

Please read and discuss the following Scriptures:

Colossians 4:2-6

How can the prayers of the Church “help to open doors” for Christ to be shared?

II Thessalonians 3:1-2

Why is it important to pray that the Word of the Lord may “speed ahead?”

Why does mission need to be protected from evil?

I Timothy 2:1-7

If Jesus desires “all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth,” then how does the Church’s prayers impact upon that?”

Acts 12:1-19

“So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church.” How did the prayers of the Church keep Peter safe?

While the Church was praying, Peter was released from jail by an angel. What role did prayer have in this result? How does prayer have that kind of power? How will our prayers effect missions and the persecution of believers today?

The praying Church is essential for the furtherance of Christ’s mission. Instead of thinking that our prayers don’t have an effect, just see how the Holy Spirit is moving and touching hearts. Before Jesus’ ascension, we are reminded that through the power of the Holy Spirit the mission of Jesus will be done locally, regionally, nationally and globally. And this will only be possible through the prayers of the people.

Session 3: The Individual Praying for Mission

Please read I Samuel 3.

In this Scripture passage, the Priest Eli realizes that the Lord is calling the young boy, Samuel, for his service. Eli tells Samuel that when God calls again he should be open to the Lord's words and follow his commands. Simply, be ready and willing for the Lord's mission.

And that's exactly what we should be praying individually. Praying that we would be open to Jesus' call in our lives to serve him, to witness him, and to make him known to the generations. Only in prayer can we hear Christ's call for action, and only in prayer and discernment will we receive the strength, power, and fortitude to make this happen.

But that is certainly easier said than done, isn't it? Instead of being open to the Spirit in prayer, we sometimes like to place our own "conditions" on how we're going to do mission. "Lord, don't send me there because I don't want to move. Lord, don't have me reach out to these people; they aren't like me. Lord, it isn't time for me to go. I've got too much to do. Can someone else take my place?" We don't have a God of excuses, but of action! When we are truly praying for our involvement in God's plans, then the Lord will equip us for the task.

Please read Ephesians 3:14-21.

The Apostle Paul talks about getting on his knees (praying), and receiving power through the Spirit. It's the Holy Spirit that will equip us for witness and making disciples.

Let us pray for the gifts of the Holy Spirit (I Corinthians 12:1-11, Romans 12:3-8, and Ephesians 4:11-12). And let us pray for the fruits of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22).

As we receive God's Spirit, we are ready to be "sent out" to do mission and ministry for Jesus.

As it is written in I Peter 2:9:

"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light."

The following scriptural texts describe individuals praying for mission. Please read and discuss.

Acts 9:1-18

After his conversion with Jesus on the Damascus Road, Saul is praying for the future as he is visited by Ananias. Ananias lays hands upon Saul and baptizes him. Saul receives the power of the Holy Spirit, and his mission begins.

Acts 16:6-10

During the night Paul has a vision, a living prayer of a man calling him to come to Macedonia, which is part of modern day Greece. Paul immediately wants to go to Macedonia, believing that Jesus is calling him to share the Gospel in that region.

John 17:1-26

Before his crucifixion, Jesus prays this remarkable prayer to his Father. A large portion of this prayer is focused on his mission to the disciples, that they would receive the Word, be protected from evil, be one with one another, and be filled with joy. In verse 18 it says, "As you (father) sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world."

As individuals, we are called to pray for mission. The Holy Ghost will specifically equip and empower us for this opportunity to share the saving love of Jesus Christ in our communities!

Prayer: The Fuel for Mission Additional Resources

Never Stop Praying

Video resource from Rev. Dr. Gemechis Buba on Colossians 4 (originally broadcast live by Forkyndertv.dk at Hjallerup Bible Camp in Denmark, July 2017):
vimeo.com/227663418

Creative Prayer Resources

Originally inspired by creative prayer stations at past Mission Festivals, a collective formed to share these resources for free. To connect, please visit:
abidaheartsonfire.com

Prayer Calendar

Keith Strohm writes in *Becoming a Parish of Intentional Disciples*: “Intercessory prayer disrupts the ‘infrastructure’ of the enemy, by which I mean it weakens and destroys the network of lies, fear, intimidation, and confusion – the tools and strategies used by Satan to keep persons and situations away from God’s peace, clarity, and redeeming love.” Wrestling in prayer for our Ministry Partners, Recognized Ministries, Global Workers, and GCS Partners, we invite you to integrate this digital calendar into your own! Each day of the month you will be given a name of an individual serving on the front lines to pray for. Additional information can be found by clicking on their website to receive updates about mission, ministry, and specific prayer needs.

This calendar subscription will integrate into your current digital calendar: Google Calendar, Outlook (Office 365), iCal, etc. To access this calendar? Paste this calendar subscription link into your calendar of choice: <http://bit.ly/GCSPrayer>

Unfamiliar with how to add a calendar subscription? Please feel free to access the following tutorials:

- Adding an iCal feed to an Apple Calendar: <http://apple.co/2BLxjzm>
- Adding an iCal feed to a Google Calendar: <http://bit.ly/2aDk1qJ>
- Adding an iCal feed to Microsoft Office: <http://bit.ly/2Bh4xpk>

Don’t have a digital calendar? Please contact: Jenny Brockman (jbrockman@thenalc.org) to receive a paper copy.

Additional Resources from the Renewal Team

- **Books**
 - *The Small Catechism* by Martin Luther
 - *Prayer: Experiencing Awe and Intimacy with God* by Tim Keller
 - *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home* by Richard Foster
 - *The Renewed Mind* by Larry Christenson
 - *Praying the Prayers of the Bible* by James Banks
 - *Healing* by Francis McNutt
 - *Diary of Private Prayer* by John Baillie
 - *The Power to Heal* by Francis McNutt
 - *Daring to Draw Near: People in Prayer* by John White
 - *Deliverance from Evil Spirits* by Francis McNutt
 - *On Prayer* by E.M. Bounds
 - *The Centered Life* by Jack Fortin
 - *A Powerful Joy* by Joseph K. Acton
 - *How To Pray for Spiritual Growth* by Theodore E. Dobson
 - *The Secret to Abundant Living* by Herb Miller (<https://goo.gl/LfzBZS>)
 - Psalms
- **Prayer Rhythms**
 - Faith5 – The steps include: 1) Share; 2) Read; 3) Talk; 4) Pray; 5) Bless. For more information on the Faith5, go to faith5.org.
 - Lectio Divina – The steps are: 1) Lectio - reading; 2) Meditatio - reflection; 3) Oratio - response; 4) Contemplatio - rest.
 - Luther's version – Oratio, Meditatio, Tentatio.
 - ACTS – Adore; Confess; Thank; Supplication
 - SOAP Bible Study method
- **Drops From the Well and Drops in Focus** – See resource list for more information. Use the “Drop” each week to:
 - Turn the “drop” into your prayer.
 - Write the “drop” on a notecard and keep it in your pocket so that when you touch it, the “drop” is brought to the forefront of your mind.
 - Set the alarm on your phone to ring at a 4:14 PM ET each day (a reference to the general theme verse of John 4:14). When the alarm goes off, read the week's “drop” again, as the entire NALC gathers to read Scripture and pray together at the same time every day. (Or choose a Bible verse and corresponding time for your congregation and Mission District.)
- **Navigators' Resources on Prayer** (<http://bit.ly/2IB1Fv4>)

- **Pray As You Go** – An online guided Taizé service on your phone that includes music, Scripture, reflection, questions and prayer. Available on Google Play, the App Store or online at <http://bit.ly/2s4a6Ur>.

Prayer Ministry

We encourage congregations and/or Mission Districts to have a prayer ministry. We wanted to share two examples:

1. A New Thing Christian Church in Lithonia, Georgia. Each day, they gather via conference call at 12:00 pm ET for a devotion and time of prayer. If you're interested in learning more or would like to join, please feel free to dial in! Dial 1-641-715-3680 and enter code 816322 when prompted.
2. The town of Midlothian, Texas, has a wonderful prayer movement that has transformed their community. NALC pastors, Joel and Wendy Berthelsen share that for 18 years Christian communities have come together weekly, led by Rev. Edsel and Beverly Dureus, to pray with associated people at a local school, business, government entity or church. They gather in Midlothian every Friday night from 10 to midnight. If you are interested in learning more or joining them, please contact Pastor Wendy Berthelsen at pastor.wendy@sbcglobal.net.

We will be featuring other types of prayer ministries throughout the fall. To share about the work in your congregation or Mission District, please send a message to Jenny Brockman (jbrockman@thenalc.org).



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