

(This can be shared with your prayer partners.)

What Do Missionaries Really Need?

OUR PRAYERS!

Does this prayer sound familiar? "Lord, please bless the missionaries. Be with them each day. Protect them and give them strength to do their work."

Perhaps you've noticed that much of the intercession made for missionaries is general or shallow. Yet prayer is the most important service we can render in fulfillment of the Lord's Great Commission. Every Christian should be involved in world evangelism through faithful, biblically-based prayer.

But just what is it? How should we pray for missionaries? Here are some suggestions:

1. Love For God

The most important commandment for all Christians, including missionaries, is "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."

Missionaries are usually overworked. There are far more responsibilities than can possibly be attended to. As a result, like Martha of Bethany, a missionary can become service-oriented, rather than love-oriented.

Pray, then, that the supreme motivation for obedience to the call of Christ is love for Him.

2. Genuine Love For Others

The second great commandment is "Love your neighbor as yourself."

A major difficulty for many missionaries is getting along with the other missionaries with whom they serve. One mission board discovered that 80 percent of its missionaries who did not return to the mission field had had problems with their co-workers.

Pray also that missionaries have a Christ-like love for nationals. One missionary couple was well-instructed in the Scriptures, but nevertheless returned home because they "could not learn to love the nationals."

Paul's prayer for the Thessalonian believers is a model for today: "May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else."

3. A Deeper Relationship With God

Missionaries, with schedules packed tighter than the equipment in their shipping drums, are tempted to skip or skimp on their time alone with the Lord. The only result is failure.

Moses instructed Joshua to meditate on God's law day and night and to be careful to obey all the commandments found there. Only then would his way be made prosperous and successful.

It is hard to imagine any missionary having a busier life than Jesus did, yet He consistently went to a secluded place to commune with His Father.

4. **Spirit-Controlled Lives**

Missionaries, like all other Christians, have a tendency to do the Lord's work in the energy and ingenuity of the flesh. But "the flesh counts for nothing."

To be "filled with the Spirit" means every aspect of one's being - motives, will, emotions, thoughts, actions - is under the control of the Holy Spirit. Missionaries who are so guided and empowered will see the results of the work of the Spirit in the lives of those with whom they come in contact.

5. **Fruit Of The Spirit**

Bad tempers are not uncommon, but bad tempers and characteristics like them can be a deterrent to people coming to trust and serve Christ. Nationals will not heed the message of Christ if they cannot see His likeness in the life of the messenger.

Christ perfectly manifested each of the fruits of the Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Pray, therefore, that the fruit of the Spirit, the very beauty of Jesus, will be evident in the missionary's life.

6. **Wisdom And Knowledge**

Missionaries are usually strong-willed people; otherwise they would never have overcome all the obstacles in getting to the mission field. What happens when two such persons sit in the same field council meeting and express diametrically-opposed viewpoints, both of which are adamantly described as "the will of the Lord?"

James wrote, "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, Who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him." James also described the characteristics of the wisdom of God: "...first pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere."

Pray missionaries will be granted this wisdom and be "fill[ed] with the knowledge of His will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding" when establishing priorities, facing decisions, and solving problems.

7. **Courage**

Paul made an earnest prayer request in his letter to the Ephesians: "Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the Gospel." When Peter and John were commanded to cease preaching and teaching in the name of Jesus, the early church prayed: "Lord ...enable your servants to speak your Word with great boldness."

Pray for courage for missionaries to share the truth in the face of opposition.

8. **Receptive Hearts**

The Book of Acts contains thrilling accounts of God's amazing providence in bringing His messengers in contact with prepared people. God led Philip to speak to the Ethiopian eunuch, who was reading Isaiah 53. God guided Peter to the Gentiles, Cornelius and his household, [who were] waiting to hear words whereby they would

be saved. God sent Paul to the Philippian jailor who cried out, "What must I do to be saved?"

Only the Lord, by His providence, can create situations in which His servants are brought into contact with seeking and receptive people of His choosing, at the time and place of His choosing. Pray for it.

9. **Disciples**

Christ commissioned His followers to "go and make disciples of all nations."

Pray that missionaries will experience the joy of leading others to salvation, and "teaching them to obey everything [Christ] commanded."

10. **A Strong Faith**

The apostles once made a direct request of Christ: "Increase our faith!"

Before Christ fed the multitude, He asked Philip, to test him, "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" Philip saw the greatness of the need, but not the greatness of the Lord.

Pray that missionaries will have great faith able to lead them to ask great things of our great Lord.

11. **Steadfastness**

Discouragement is a favorite device of the devil. The temptation to leave the work on the field and enter "greener pastures" of service at home is great.

Pray that missionaries will follow Paul's instructions to the Corinthians: "Stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."

12. **A Strong Family**

A missionary doctor wrote: "If you were praying for me, I would want you to pray specifically about my relationship with my wife. ...I find it amazing how living in a foreign society causes silly little things to become major irritations. Ask God to help us maintain a loving relationship that is an outstanding testimony to the grace of God."

Children as well as parents need prayer in this way, enabling all family members to carry out their responsibilities to each other in love.

13. **Protection**

Like soldiers on the front line, missionaries are prime targets of the enemy. The Lord prayed to the Father: "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one." Paul asked the Christians at Rome to join him in his struggle by praying for him. "Pray that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea."

Missionaries need this support. Pray that the Lord will grant His powerful protection to His servants.

14. Material Needs

In recent years the United States has experienced double-digit inflation and its negative effects. Can you imagine what triple-digit inflation is like? Some nations, such as Brazil and Argentina, actually have had inflation rates exceeding 100 percent!

Missionaries, as do the countries they serve, face a time of unprecedented financial crisis. Pray that God will supply all their financial and material needs, "according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus."

15. Health And Strength

First-time missionaries are particularly susceptible to disease as they come into contact with an environment they have never encountered before.

One mission board discovered several of its missionaries came down with serious illnesses in the final year of their term just before furlough. It concluded they were physically drained, and thus their resistance was low.

God may purposely send "thorns in the flesh" to keep His workers humble - so that His sufficient grace may be manifested and His strength "made perfect" in human weakness.

The next time you sit down to pray for your missionary brothers and sisters, stay away from the generalizations you've heard all your life. Instead, use this simple, biblically-based list to help you pray as specifically and consistently as you can. The reward will be worth the effort.

Article By: Paul G. Zimmerman
Reprinted by Permission
Eternity Magazine/May 1984