

A PRACTICAL PRIMER ON PRAYER

by

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The Moody Bible Institute of Chicago

CHAPTER SIX -

PRAYER FOR OTHERS

"**Brethren, pray for us**" (II Thessalonians 3:1)

"PLEASE PRAY FOR ME." "Please pray for my son." "Please pray for my Sunday school class." "Please pray for the young Chinese believers." "Please pray that we may reach the Lisu tribes people."

So the requests come, one after another, day after day. Our hearts, full of love, respond. We want to pray, and we want to pray effectively; so we start the long road of learning to pray for others.

Many of us, when we pray, still retain our childish way of praying, "Lord, bless So-and-so." This may be all right if we understand what is meant when we speak thus and keep the true meaning of the word "bless" in mind.

When you ask the Lord to bless the non-Christian, you are asking Him to bless them in turning away every one of them from his iniquities. There is no other way the Lord could bless the person who is not His child. And when you pray GOD to "bless" the Christian, you are not praying that the Lord will prosper him materially, but that he will lead a life of obedience, for in Deuteronomy 28, where a long list of blessings is recorded, all of them rest on obedience.

To ask the Lord merely to bless our friends, however, is praying second-best, because the Lord said, "**What wilt thou that I should do unto thee?**" and He is still asking us to be definite in our prayers, not only for ourselves, but also for others.

"Pray in a business-like fashion, earnestly, definitely, statedly," is the way Mary Slessor, missionary to Africa, asked her friends to pray for her.

Use a section of your devotional notebook for your prayer list. You have heard missionaries say, "Please put me on your prayer list." Be assured they mean it. Paul must have had a prayer list to remember all the people for whom he said he prayed. We human beings forget too easily.

Outstanding men of GOD have found that they have to have a prayer list. J. O. Fraser, who went to the Lisu tribes in southeast China, said,

"I also find it helpful to make a short list, like notes prepared for a sermon, before every season of prayer. The mind needs to be guided as well as the spirit attuned. I can thus get my thoughts in order and, having prepared my prayer, can put the notes on the table or chair before me, kneel down and get to business."

You will probably find that there are so many who need prayer that you will not be able to pray for them all every day. You might have to have a different list for each day. For instance, pray on Monday for those who need JESUS. On Tuesday, pray for your friends. On Wednesday, pray for that part of the world called the "home field." On Thursday, pray for the part which is called the "foreign field."

On Friday, pray for your own church, from the cradle roll through each department to the minister. On Saturday, pray for those who don't fit into the other lists, for those like your former Sunday school pupils.

Head each day's list with an appropriate verse. For Sunday you might use, "**This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it**" (Psalm 118:24). On this day, instead of asking for anything, just praise Him for His goodness and rejoice in His love. For Monday's list of unsaved, you might use, "**The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance**" (II Peter 3:9). You will often cling to this verse, as some names remain on the unsaved list year after year!

We should be especially vigilant in praying for our own unsaved loved ones. Too often, because they are our loved ones and we know their good qualities, we hope they will slip into Heaven somehow, and we grow lax in our prayers. If you have a deep conviction of sin and of their need of CHRIST, you will pray night and morning until GOD saves them.

In praying for the same people, it is easy to fall into a rut and pray for the same things; so, instead of asking the Lord each day to save these people, suppose you pray around their lives, for their friends, their work, their home life. And when you transfer one of these to Tuesday, how your heart will rejoice since they have become Christians!

For Tuesday, you might use the reminder, "**Pray one for another**" (James 5:16). This is a solemn trust and the test of how much you really think of your friends. It is also helpful to place special verses after as many names as possible.

You want the time you spend in prayer to count; therefore, you should pray according to Scripture. You will have greater faith in your prayers if you find a verse which indicates that your prayers are in the will of GOD.

Why pray for things for your friends? It is true that many people consider the blessing of the Lord to be either the acquisition of things or the escaping of trouble, but it is much more than that. GOD does supply the material needs of the just and the unjust alike. The far greater need for all of us is the spiritual. How must it sound to GOD, who hears all prayers, if we ask continually for things? So your friends, if you pray according to scripture, will receive the material things they need plus the spiritual things for which you have prayed.

For the one who has not been a Christian long, you might pray that he may "**grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ**" (II Peter 3:18). One model prayer is this: "**that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God**" (Ephesians 3:16-19). Or, "**And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God**" (Philippians 1:9-11).

We have mentioned before about praying according to the Scriptures, but I cannot emphasize too strongly the need of prayer that is guided by the revealed will of GOD. This alone can give you confidence that your prayers will be answered. "**And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us**" (1 John 5:14).

On Wednesday, which you might take to pray for the home field, you might remember this Scripture, "**For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me**" (Matthew 25:35, 36). Prayer is one way of obeying these words. You may not be able to go at all; but you can pray for the churches in the rural districts, for the missionaries in Kentucky among the mountain folks and for those in hospitals and jails.

Thursday might be your day to pray for the foreign field. A good verse to use is, "**Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance**" (Colossians 4:3). Those who go need our backing. There is a story told of a young missionary whose church promised to pray for him when he went to the field. Though he worked hard in his service far from home, he felt himself a failure. Furlough time came; and he went home, slipping quietly into the first home church prayer meeting after his arrival. Not one voice was raised in prayer for him and his work that evening, and then he realized why his term as a missionary had seemed so hard and why he had felt himself a failure.

A North China missionary wrote in desperation "Please tell me, is anyone praying for me?" Another missionary wrote, "We have enough money for our work, but we need prayer that we may have conversions."

A missionary on furlough, hearing the few prayers for other missionaries, remarked, "It discourages me to think that this is all the prayer backing I will have when I return to the field."

Unless you have been in a position of attack by the enemy, you do not know how frantic a person can become in his need of prayer. Prayer becomes the most important thing in the world.

The missionary goes into the strongholds of Satan, and only prayer will win the battle. He desperately needs your prayer help.

You may be unable to go "**unto the uttermost part of the earth,**" but your prayers most certainly can go.

It is your Christian privilege to have missionary fellowship all over the world. If a missionary goes out from your church, adopt him. A friend of mine left a church with a membership of 5000 to go to the field. When she returned, six years later, only one person in that church was still writing to her!

If you hear a missionary speaker, adopt him.

Perhaps your more missionary-minded friends can suggest a missionary to you, or you can secure a list of missionaries from the missionary society of your church. You can write either to the mission board of your denomination or to a faith board; either will gladly send you the name of a missionary. Mission boards know the value of prayer and do everything they can to stimulate prayer.

After you have selected your missionary, then "**add to your faith... knowledge.**" Learn all you can about the missionary, the country in which he is serving, and his problems. If you can get a picture of him, hang it in a conspicuous place in the kitchen or the bedroom, wherever you will see it oftenest and be reminded most frequently to pray for him.

We take our conveniences so much for granted. It may surprise you to learn the inconveniences of the different countries. There are neither tomatoes nor ice cream in China. In Mongolia, the missionary must live in a tent.

There is no day of rest in India, except where the Cross has gone. Mail reaches Point Barrow, Alaska, but twice a year; and in some places in Africa, it is quite cold.

Write to your missionary, and ask to be put on the circular letter list. Most missionaries do not have the time to write many or frequent letters, but send carbon copies of a letter to their different friends and prayer helpers. Or some times they write this general letter to a friend or relative at home who takes the responsibility of retyping or mimeographing it and sending it on to interested and praying friends. Some missionaries write such a letter once a month; others every three months; and still others, only every six months.

Most mission boards put out a monthly pamphlet or magazine with articles about the different parts of the field. Either the letter or the magazine will keep you informed of the needs of the field so that you may pray definitely and effectively.

Here is a list of things for which to pray for the missionaries. (It was suggested by Mr. and Mrs. Allyn Cooke, missionaries to the Lisu in southeast China.)

I. Spiritual life

- a. Their spiritual growth
- b. Their prayer life

Spiritually the missionaries give out daily and need constant refreshing; yet they have very little Christian fellowship. Often they are the only Christians for hundreds of miles. Think of the steadfast faith needed to be the only believer among thousands of heathen!

II. Health

- a. Their general health
- b. Their mental health

Missionaries undergo a greater physical strain than the average person because of the abrupt changes in climate, the strange food, and the unsanitary habits of the heathen. Pray that they may be kept from having colds. You know how your work is neglected if you have a cold, and the same is true on the mission field. Often the missionary lives in a house which is not properly heated or among natives who do not understand how easily germs are scattered. Prayer lightens all these conditions. And pray for the protection of the minds of missionaries, that these workers in foreign places may not become morbid or morose or allow their constant contact with native life to undermine their spiritual convictions. Then there is the strain of knowing that the eternal destiny of those about them may depend upon them and the strain of living under the constant watchful eyes of the natives.

III. Wisdom

- a. What to do
- b. When to do it
- c. What not to do
- d. Where to go

Usually the missionary is the only Christian for miles. He sees hundreds of souls without CHRIST. The needs are so great and lie in so many directions that he cannot reach them all. It takes wisdom to know where to preach.

IV. Material needs

- a. Food
- b. A suitable place to live
- c. Means of travel
- d. Literature

Financially, missionaries have not only the average needs, but also the need for money, for Bibles, for churches and hospitals, for caring for the destitute, and for medicine.

V. Study

- a. Time and inclination
- b. Language mastery
- c. Lessons and messages

If you consider how many things interrupt and interfere with your quiet time, you have a slight conception of the daily battle missionaries must fight, not only to have a quiet time, but also to study; and again, not only to study the message they must bring, but also to learn the language in which they must speak it.

VI. Contacts

- a. With the authorities
- b. With other missionaries
- c. With the unsaved
- d. With the Christians

You know that the authorities often misunderstand the missionaries' motives and put obstacles in their way, but you probably wonder why you have to pray for the relationship among missionaries. Consider for a moment - are you congenial with every Christian that you know? And while you know that the unsaved delight in finding fault with the Christian, you must also remember that after the native has become a Christian, he has still much to learn; so you must continue to pray for the relationship between the missionary and the Christians.

VII. Helpers

- a. GOD's choice of help in the home and in the church
- b. A real missionary vision for the helpers

Extend your prayers to the natives, that they may be converted and that they may live consistent Christian lives. They are used to the low standards of heathendom and are often loath to give up their heathen practices. It is also trying for them to take a stand against their friends and relatives. Some, indeed, face intense persecution. Pray that they may have the desire and the courage to win their friends and relatives to CHRIST. All too often the natives, like ourselves, desire the forgiveness of sins that is found in the Cross, but shrink from telling others of Him. Also since the heathen is often prejudiced against a "foreign" missionary, the best way for him to be won is by the other native converts.

VIII. Correspondence

- a. That contact be maintained with the home helpers
- b. That nothing be lost or stolen en route

You can help answer the first prayer by writing to the missionaries. Mail means a great deal to them in their isolation. They will understand if you do not have much to say; but they would appreciate even a card saying, "I am still praying for you."

On Friday you might pray for the home church, and a good verse to use in that connection is, "**Help those women which labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow-laborers**" (Philippians 4:3).

Since the church is the instrument which GOD uses most often to help people find CHRIST, the devil is always trying to undermine the reputation of those who work in it. The Christian should consider it his duty to pray for the workers of the church in which GOD has placed him. He should pray not only for their teaching, but also for their preparation and their conduct.

On Saturday you might pray for people who did not fit into the other days, people who would come under the heading of "**God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you**" (I Samuel 12:23). Perhaps these would be people whom you seldom see, and yet for whom you feel you should continue to pray.

The suggestions I have made about the different days are not to be considered a set rule. This is only a general plan to encourage you to widen your prayer vision.

Prayer must be under the guidance of the HOLY SPIRIT, for we "**know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us . . .**" (Romans 8:26). It is convenient to keep a prayer list in a loose-leaf notebook so it can be changed as the Spirit leads.

Sometimes the Spirit will move you to take a person off your list. Even though that person's life does not give you assurance, He may give you assurance in your spirit. At other times, He may tell you something to do for some person for whom you are praying.

You will notice that we have not set aside a day for your family. CHRIST said, "**Whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother**" (Matthew 12:50). When we come to GOD, we do well to give everyone and everything the value He would give. You could divide your family among others. If they are unsaved, they may be put with the unsaved. If they are Christians, they may be put with your Christian friends. If they serve the Lord, they may be considered with the Lord's other servants in the church, in the home field or in the foreign field.

If you pray for another Christian, let him know. It will encourage him to realize that someone is praying for him. You may think, because of the passage in Matthew where we are told to pray in secret, that we should not tell people we pray for them; but there are other Scriptures which indicate that we should. It is true that the Christian will not be showy about prayer, but it is a kindness to let others know that you pray for them.

Sometimes people feel discouraged until they know someone is praying.

We have an example in the Lord's telling Peter, "**I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.**"

There are a few more commandments about prayer to which I should like to draw your attention. JESUS said, "**Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest that he will send forth labourers into his harvest**" (Matthew 9:38).

This is as much a commandment as that which says not to steal. The fields are white unto harvest. The cry for leaders, from Sunday school teachers to missionaries, is heard from every

quarter. The least we can do is to pray unto the Lord of the harvest to thrust forth the needed laborers. If you know a young person whom you think the Lord could use, I suggest that you pray for that young person by name, that the Lord will thrust him forth.

Another verse to remember is, "**My heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved**" (Romans 10:1). Let us be constant in our prayers for the salvation of the Jew.

If we do not know a Jew by name, we can make a general petition; but if we do know one or two Jews, we should make them our special burden.

There is every reason to be encouraged to pray for the conversion of GOD's ancient people. The American Board of Missions to the Jews says, "Jewish conversions are phenomenal, for GOD's conditions always work. The actual ratio of Jewish converts as compared to heathen converts is 7 to 2! These figures take into account the proportionate populations of the Jews and Gentiles and their expenditures for missions."

Yet another prayer command is, "**I exhort, therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life**" (I Timothy 2:1,2). Scripture does not tell us to pray for peace, but for the leaders that we may have peace. Our prayers should include the President, the Senators, the Representatives, the Supreme Court judges, the local magistrates, and many others, all the way down to the sheriff.

They need to be surrounded by prayers. Prayer is the cure for petty politics, for bribery, for lobbying.

We should pray for the leaders, whether we like them or not. The early Christians were instructed to pray for despots like Nero. If you love your country, don't criticize it; instead, pray for the leaders, ever remembering that "**the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will**" (Daniel 4:25).

Family Prayers

You say you are "busy this morning
In the maelstrom of family cares,
And someone must rush to the office,
So there isn't a moment for prayers."

Then the children are sent to the school-room,
And the grind of the day thus begins,
With no word from GOD's Book to remembrance
Nor the echo of strengthening hymns.

What wonder the burdens are heavy,
And the hours seem irksomely long!
What wonder that rash words are spoken,
And that life seems discordant and wrong!

And at even, discouraged and wearied,
You carelessly go to your rest,
Forgetting that JESUS is waiting
To pillow your head on His breast.

He longs for a word of thanksgiving,
And to hear your love spoken again;
He asks to review the day's record,
And to cleanse it of blotches and stain.

But if you forget Him so often,
Sometime you may knock at His gate,
And awaiting the summons to enter,
You may hear, "You are praying too late."

So pause for a little each morning,
And again at the close of the day,
To talk with the Master who loves you
Remember, He taught us to pray.

- Laura Hubbard Jaccard

~ end of chapter 6 ~
