

# PRAYING THE MISSION

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## Colossians 4:2-4

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*At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison—*

(Colossians 4:3, ESV)  
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## Introduction

The church exists for mission. Everything else that we do as a church, we could do better if we were in Heaven. The one opportunity that we have now but won't have in Heaven is to share the gospel with people who do not yet love Christ. The word that is most commonly used for this is "evangelism." Many Christ-followers hear this word and instantly feel guilty or defeated. Why is this?

First, Christians have an incorrect perception of what an evangelist is. They usually perceive them as either superstars or jerks. This misconception often leaves us with a sour taste in our mouth and the desire to not be associated with pushy evangelists, let alone be one ourselves.

Also, Christians easily forget that the evangelists God typically used in our lives tended to be 1) people we already had relationships with, 2) ordinary people who were fruit-filled and real relationships with God, and 3) people who were NOT in "full-time ministry." The people who have made such an impact in our lives were just ordinary people doing ordinary things with gospel intentionality.

Finally, we often forget all the work that God is doing and that it is by God's design that we are the tools he uses to bring others to faith. *We are the plan* of world evangelization and it is no surprise to God. He made it that way. Surely, our infinitely wise God could have come up with any way to spread his good news of saving grace. And what he picked was *us*—frail, broken, weak, troubled, and a little pathetic. So it makes sense that he does the work for us and through us.

If God is doing the work through us, then we should be eager to pray for his power to work in our evangelism.

# Investigation

Read Colossians 4:2-4.

1. Paul tells the Colossians to “Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving” (4:2). What do you think it means to “be watchful”?
2. Why does Paul want the Colossians to pray for open doors for the word?
3. Why does Paul emphasize his need for clarity in declaring the gospel?
4. Based on this passage, how does Paul view God’s role in his evangelistic ministry?

# Implication

1. Though most Christians know that prayer is an important part of fellowship with God, many still struggle to “continue steadfastly in prayer.” Why do you think this is? (*Note: look at both surface and root causes*)
2. In what ways does continually praying for people who are not yet followers of Christ impact our ability to share Jesus with them? Does prayer make a difference?
3. Paul talks about his need to speak the gospel clearly. In your own words, how would *you* clearly explain the gospel?
4. Who are three people that you interact with on a regular basis that you would like to see God bring to faith in Christ? Spend some time (as an individual or as a group) praying for these people.

## Other Issues

### **Do our prayers for the salvation of our friends and family make a difference?**

YES! Consider the example of George Mueller, a British Christian and social reformer. He writes in his diary:

In November 1844, I began to pray for the conversion of five individuals. I prayed every day without a single intermission, whether sick or in health, on the land, on the sea, and whatever the pressure of my engagements might be. Eighteen months elapsed before the first of the five was converted. I thanked God and prayed on for the others. Five years elapsed, and then the second was converted. I thanked God for the second, and prayed on for the other three. Day by day, I continued to pray for them, and six years passed before the third was converted. I thanked God for the three, and went on praying for the other two. These two remained unconverted.

Thirty-six years later he wrote that the other two, sons of one of Mueller's friends, were still not converted. He wrote, "But I hope in God, I pray on, and look for the answer. They are not converted yet, *but they will be.*" In 1897, fifty-two years after he began to pray daily, without interruption, for these two men, they were finally converted— but *after* he died! Mueller understood what Luke meant when he introduced a parable Jesus told about prayer, saying, "Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up" (Luke 18:1).<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Patterson, Ben, and David L. Goetz. Vol. 7, *Deepening Your Conversation With God*. Minneapolis, Minn.: Bethany House Publishers, 1999.

# Sermon Notes