

Prayers That Impact the Globe

✖ Using a map of the world as an aid to prayer helped me discover several keys for influencing both those residing in my “Jerusalem” as well as those living at “the ends of the earth” (see Acts 1:8).

1. The Motivation Key: biblical purpose. Having a map in my hand motivated me to move beyond mere “bless me” prayers to touch multitudes that have never heard the good news of Jesus. More specifically, it added a biblical purpose to my praying. Purpose is defined as “something set up as an object or end to be attained” or “what one seeks to achieve.”

When I first began praying for the nations I was driven by God’s promise to His Son, “Only ask, and I will give you the nations as your inheritance, the ends of the earth as your possession” (Ps. 2:8, NLT).

I almost stopped using this promise as a basis for my praying after a Bible professor, who heard me quote it in a seminar as a foundation for praying for the nations, suggested the verse was given exclusively by God to His Son. It wasn’t for us, he said.

Thankfully, I read the rest of my Bible before tossing the promise aside and discovered in Romans 8:16-17 that any promise God gave His Son is ours as well. That’s because we are co-heirs with Christ of all the Father has given Him.

Paul wrote: “The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:16-17, NIV). The New Living Translation reads, “Everything God gives to His Son, Christ, is ours, too.”

That settled it! I could ask God for both my neighbors and the nations. This has provided me with a biblical purpose and a powerful motivation. And holding before me a map of both my nearby neighborhood and the distant nations brings this

purpose alive every day.

2. The Ministry Key: biblical passion. The second key helped release in me a biblical passion. For many people, prayer provides a specialized ministry when other popular callings may seem out of reach.

Most followers of Jesus won't become apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors or teachers (see Eph. 4:11). The majority won't serve as bishops, deacons, or elders, or even sing in a church choir. But all can embrace a twofold ministry that truly has eternal implications.

First, every follower of Jesus can minister to the Lord. This concerns our personal worship. It focuses on a passion for the Lord. There is no higher calling than ministry to the Lord.

Second, every follower of Jesus can minister to the lost. This concerns our personal witness. It focuses on a passion for the lost. It involves not only praying for those who don't know Jesus but also developing a plan to share our faith in Christ with them. This includes supporting missionary endeavors in distant nations with our resources.

Notice how the psalmist links these two themes in a single psalm: "Sing a new song to the Lord! Let the whole earth sing to the Lord! Sing to the Lord; bless His name. Each day proclaim the good news that He saves. Publish His glorious deeds among the nations. Tell everyone about the amazing things He does. Tell all the nations that the Lord is king" (Ps. 96:1-3; 10, NLT).

Holding a map of the nations (and our neighbors) before us in prayer and saturating that map with worship and intercession brings Psalm 96 alive in our praying.

3. The Mandate Key: biblical pattern. All true followers of Jesus have been given a mandate to help fulfill the Great Commission. Praying over a map of the world (that includes a map of our neighborhoods) brings new life to this mandate. It also provides us with a biblical pattern to help carry it out. A mandate is defined as "a resounding directive" or "a clear and focused objective given by a person or persons in

authority.” Another definition reads, “To put into one’s hands; to command or entrust.”

We discover our mandate from Christ in such commands as, “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations ... teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt. 28:19-20, NIV).

Luke provides a description of the biblical pattern for fulfilling this mandate when he tells in his gospel how the early church responded to Christ’s command: “Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ” (Acts 5:42).

4. The Mission Key: biblical plan. The final key introduces to each believer a biblical plan that enables us to truly affect both our neighbors and the nations for eternity. This model for missions is increasingly being described as the “prayer, care, share” plan.

Based largely on such Scriptures as Luke 10:5-9, it has been embraced by Mission America, a coalition of 80 denominations and 400 parachurch ministries, as its primary objective for influencing our communities as well as nations.

They include:

Prayer focus. When Jesus commissioned the 70 to go forth with the gospel, He admonished them, “‘When you enter a house, first say, “Peace to this house”’” (Luke 10:5). Prayer for our neighbors (and nations) is the primary blessing we can give them. Prayer additionally prepares the way for the rest of the plan to be effective.

Care focus. Next in the Luke 10 model, we read Jesus’ commands to “‘Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you,’” and “‘Heal the sick that are there’” (vv. 7,9). His words speak of a willingness to fellowship with those around us as well as to look for ways to meet their needs (such as through healing the sick). These qualities embody the care focus.

Share focus. Finally, Jesus said, “‘Tell them, “The kingdom of

God is near you"" (v. 9). God's kingdom, of course, is revealed only through Jesus Christ. Thus, to witness to a lost person about Christ is to point that person in the direction of God's kingdom. To lead him to Christ is to bring him into the kingdom. What began with prayer and was nurtured in care now opens the door to share who Christ is and how He can transform that person's life.

We have an urgency to vastly increase an army of those who are focusing prayer on all the nations of the world, especially in light of intensifying global tensions. Therefore, we encourage believers to pray daily for their neighbors and the nations.

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