

PRAYER EVANGELISM

Information based on an article by Ed Silviso, Argentina native, and author of *That None Should Perish*, titled "Prayer Evangelism"; published in the *Perspectives on the World Christian Movement Reader*, 3rd Edition, Edited by Ralph D. Winter.

Sometimes on a mission-field visit, a significant amount of unstructured time is available, leaving team members and especially leaders with the question, "What do we do now?" We want to be both serving and helpful to the nationals – considering them better than ourselves and willing to do whatever might further along their church and community-outreach. The challenge in leading a mission team is that at the same time we want to be sensitive to God's leading in how we can facilitate an experience that is both a major blessing to the nationals and also helpful to our own team members. One such option that accomplishes all of the above is "Prayer Evangelism".

We are always encouraged to be spiritually minded by praying all the time. This is true all the time – but especially true on the mission field! The Acts 2:42 model gives us helpful insight into the Early Church and how their obedience to the Great Commission was accomplished: praying continually. Silviso writes: "I suggest that prayer—this kind of prayer—is *the* key to successful fulfillment of the Great Commission, then and now." What better way is there to spend time on the mission-field than in "continual prayer"? But this must be intentionally taught and practiced in order to be mastered!

Paul (the most effective church planter in NT) gives Timothy (his close associate) his instructions regarding prayer and evangelism: 1 Timothy 2:1-6,8 (NLT)

"I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. As you make your requests, plead for God's mercy upon them, and give thanks. Pray this way for kings and all others who are in authority, so that we can live in peace and quietness, in godliness and dignity. This is good and pleases God our Savior, for he wants everyone to be saved and to understand the truth. For there is only one God and one Mediator who can reconcile God and people. He is the man Christ Jesus. He gave his life to purchase freedom for everyone. This is the message that God gave to the world at the proper time...So wherever you assemble, I want men to pray with holy hands lifted up to God, free from anger and controversy."

To clarify, Paul was telling Timothy to organize the church so that prayers are said everywhere on behalf of all people in particular cities. The first assignment, then, was to make sure that everybody in town was prayed for. Paul then says that the outcome of this prayer is that we could live in all godliness and dignity. Silviso says there is only one way for Christians to live in an environment characterized by all godliness and honesty: it is for many unbelievers to become Christians, and those who don't, to become aware of the existence of God and begin to fear him. Then, and only then, all godliness and honesty will permeate the city where the church exists.

The objective of Paul's instructions to Timothy is very simple and extremely clear: pray that everybody in your city, and especially those in authority, will become Christians! What shall we pray for all people? We must become aware of the difference between the most important need a person has and what the person feels is his most important need—

“felt needs”. Lost people are obviously unaware of their most important need—salvation! When we pray for felt needs and God answers, their eyes are opened to the reality and power of God, and this in turn leads them to recognize their need for salvation. We usually limit ourselves to asking God in private prayer that people will accept Jesus. Silvano suggests that we go beyond this first step—we must discern what they consider important and pray for that need to be met by God. When this happens, it acts as an eye-opener as far as the gospel is concerned. We know that although it is a paradox, it is God’s will that all should be saved (2 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:4-6, etc.), though this is not the reality!? This is His will, and we must frame our prayers accordingly!

- **Make sure that everybody in town is prayed for (prayer walks, drives, etc.)**
- **Pray for many unbelievers to become Christians, and those who don’t, to become aware of the existence of God and begin to fear him.**
- **Pray specifically that those in authority will become Christians! (Government, community, leaders, police, etc.)**
- **What shall we pray for all people?
Pray for felt needs – and pray that these God’s power in answering the felt needs would be a door to the gospel in their lives.**