

How to pray for unsaved people

Although this topic deals specifically with the principles of interceding for an unsaved person, the same principles can be applied to just about any other problem area in spiritual life.

Before we pray for an unsaved person, it is important to know what God says about the matter. It is God's will that all people should be saved. Read the following portions of Scripture carefully: *"Do I take any pleasure in the death of the wicked?" declares the Sovereign Lord. Rather, am I not pleased when they turn from their ways and live?" (Ez.18:23) "In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should be lost" (Mt.18:14). "If anyone sees his brother commit a sin that does not lead to death, he should pray and God will give him life" (1Jn.5:16). "The Lord is not slow in keeping the promise as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance" (1 Pet.3:9) "This is good and pleases God our Saviour who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim.2:3-4).*

We can see from these portions that God the Father wants to save sinners. Therefore, when you pray, take these promises and all the other promises in Scripture that concern this matter and pray to God on the grounds of these promises. The reason why we pray for the salvation of people, is because God wants to save them. It is also God's will that we should pray for their salvation. 1 Jn.5:16 says clearly that we should pray for the salvation of the unsaved. It is clear from 1 Tim.2:1-6 that God connects people's salvation and prayer with each other.

Here are a few tips to keep in mind when praying for people's salvation. You must pray for the complete person.

- Look for negative or sinful habits in the person's life and pray for them.
- Look for sinful, negative and unconfessed behaviour patterns and pray against them. Pray that the Holy Spirit will open his/her heart for the truth.
- See who influences the person's life negatively and pray for the breaking of that negative influence and/or the breaking of this friendship that draws/keeps the person away from Christ.
- Determine what influences the person's life negatively (e.g. certain activities). Pray that they will be replaced with positive activities and/or that the negative influence becomes powerless.
- Determine what experiences from his past contribute to his behaviour. Pray for healing - that he will be able to forgive and pray for resignation and acceptance.
- Pray specifically for conviction of sin and the realisation that he cannot live without Christ.
- Pray for an opportunity to talk to him about Jesus yourself or that the Holy Spirit will lay it on someone else's heart to talk to him about the Lord Jesus.

Six questions

Pray specifically that the Holy Spirit will lay these questions on the person's heart and that he will start looking for answers to these questions. (*1)

- a) Whom can I trust?
- b) What is my purpose in life?
- c) Where will I go when I die?
- d) When will I be free?
- e) Why do I hate God? Why do I flee from God?
- f) How can I handle my problems?

Position of authority

It is vitally important to know your position of authority in Christ when doing the work of intercession for the salvation of unsaved people. Read Eph.1:19, then verses 20-22, and also Eph.2:6 where it says that every believer has a position of authority with Christ in heaven, above all authority, power, force and dominion and every name mentioned, not only in this age but also in the one to come. *"I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know...his incomparably great power for us who believe" (Eph.1:28-29). "...which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church..." (Eph.1:20-22) "And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus..." (Eph.2:6).*

As Moses stretched out his hand over the sea until the water parted, and as Aaron and Hur held Moses' hands high until the Amalekites were conquered, and like Joshua held out his spear over Ai and did not withdraw it until they had triumphed, in the same way we must take authority in Christ over all the works of the Evil One in a person's life until the victory has been gained. We can stand against any form of demonic activity in a person's life from this position of authority. We can pray in Jesus' Name that God will lift the veil from that person's eyes so that he can see and accept the truth as it is in the Bible and in Christ. We can pray in this way against any spirit of deception (false religion), fear or spirit of disobedience, unbelief, bitterness or whatever the case may be. Important: We can take authority over any powers of the evil that are blinding a person, but it is only God Himself who can regenerate that person.

Therefore:

- Bind Satan's works in Jesus' Name, rebuke him and resist him (Mt.16:19; Jas. 4:7). *"I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Mt.16:19). "Submit yourselves, then to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you" (Jas.4:7).*
- Release the person in the Name of Jesus (Mt.16:19).
- Pray that the Holy Spirit will work in that person's heart at that moment and convict him of sin. *"When He (the Holy Spirit) comes, He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgement" (Jn.16:8).*

- We must pray for unsaved people on the grounds that Jesus has already come and paid with His blood for the sins of the world. *"But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us"* (Rm.5:8). Pray that Jesus will bring people from death into life. *"For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom He is pleased to give it"* (Jn.5:21).
- Always remember, the Father Himself draws people to Christ. *"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him and I will raise him up at the last day"* (Jn.6:44).
- Jesus brings unsaved people to life by the working of the Holy Spirit. Man cannot revive himself. It says in Jn.6:63: *"The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are Spirit and they are life."*
- Pray specifically that people will see how much Jesus loves them, that they will see that He shed his last drop of blood for them on the cross, that He became man for our sins, that He first loved us. Once again, God Himself saves people. We cannot save them. While wrestling for someone in prayer, make sure that you do not become anxious and try to change the person with soul-force. You have to trust in the Lord Jesus. It is your work to pray and it is the work of the Lord Jesus to change people's hearts through the Holy Spirit. Any anxiety or unbelief on your part can prevent God from working. We must learn to rest in the Lord while praying, to trust Him and allow Him to work as He wants to.
- You must pray in faith. *"And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him"* (Heb.11:6).
- Believe in God's omnipotence to recreate and save people.
- Believe that God wants to save people.
- Believe in the Lord Jesus who came to save people and that He paid the full price for our sins with His blood that flowed on the cross.
- Stand in faith on the promises of God in connection with the salvation of people.

Take Five: A Prayer-care-share lifestyle

This is a very simple but effective strategy to reach people who need the blessing of God in their lives.

This is a very simple concept to help you reach people with the gospel of Jesus Christ. In some places it is called prayer evangelism. This is a very effective strategy that all Christians can use to reach out to friends, family, colleagues and neighbours.

Step 1 - Select 5 friends/families to pray for

Pray and ask the Lord for the names of five friends, family members, colleagues or neighbours that you know that need the blessing of God in their lives, and who need more of Jesus in their lives.

Write down their names:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Do not make this a law. If you feel five people are too many, start praying for two or three; it is fine if you want to pray for more than five people. We simply suggest you start with five.

Step 2 - Pray five blessings for them, five minutes a day, at least five days a week

When you pray for them, pray for five things:

- **Body** - health, protection, strength
- **Labour** - work, income, security
- **Emotional** - joy, peace, hope, love
- **Social** - love, marriage, good relationships with family, friends, neighbours, at work
- **Spiritual** - salvation, faith, grace, mercy, spiritual growth

You can add other things to pray for, but start by using these five prayer pointers as you pray for your five people/families.

When you pray for the salvation of people, you can also ask God that, through the power and work of the Holy Spirit, people will start to ask themselves the following questions:

- Whom can I trust?
- What is my purpose in life?
- When will I be free?
- Where will I go when I die?
- Why do I hate God? / Why do I run away from God?
- How can I handle my problems?
- Where will I be safe? / Who can protect me?

Step 3 - Care for people through attending to their felt needs

Can you do more than pray? Yes! Once you have started to pray for your five families/friends, you start to look and ask the Lord for opportunities to practically care for them. One of them may become ill: cook a meal, take their children to school, do the laundry. Someone's car may break down: give them a lift to work, lend them a car. Every time they have a felt need, offer to pray for them. Do not make a fuss about it, simply ask them if they would allow you to pray for them and then lift them up to the Lord. Ask the Lord to help and bless them.

Step 4 - Share with them about Jesus and the goodness of the Lord

The next step is to look for "natural" opportunities to share your faith with them. Do not push it down their throats. Simply drop a Scripture verse, tell them about an answer to prayer, offer to pray for them. As you pray for them and care for them and your friendship grows, more opportunities will open up to share your faith with them.

Step 5 - Persevere for one year

Keep praying for your 5 friends for one year. Remember, you will be praying with millions of other Christians in Africa.

Implementing these five steps in your prayer life, should lead to what is called a prayer-care-share lifestyle. It is a simple, practical, non-threatening form of evangelisation - even children can do it. It is an effective way of reaching people with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Number of Christians tripled in one year

In the 1960's the Republic of Central Africa had about 180 000 Christians. They were in agreement and in small groups over a period of one year prayed - each person prayed for three unsaved people. The number of Christians grew to 600 000 in one year as a result of this strategy.

Why must I bless my neighbours?

God said to Abraham that He will bless Abraham and that all the nations of the earth will be blessed through him (Gn.12:3). In Nm.6:24-27 God taught Aaron how to bless the people. In Jn.1:16 we are taught that through Jesus we receive grace upon grace. In Gn.1 we read that after God created the whole earth, He blessed it. God wants to bless people and wants them to be blessed. Less than 10% of all people are open that you can speak to them about Jesus at a first meeting. But statistics show that more than 98% of all people are open that you can pray for them so that God will bless them.

Why is this a very effective strategy?

There are several reasons for this:

- Not all people have the gift of evangelism, but all of us can pray, even the introverts and people that find it difficult to speak to other people about their faith.
- This is a non-threatening way of praying for people and building friendships with people, and in a very "normal" way start to share with them about Jesus.
- More people are open to listen to what you want to share with them about Jesus if they can see in a practical way that you care for them and love them. Our deeds are stronger than our words.

Your attitude in Prayer

- Pray with faith - God answers prayer (Heb.4:16; Heb.11:6).
- When you pray you should know that nothing is impossible for God (Mk.10:27).
- Pray with compassion (Mt.9:36).
- Persevere in prayer (Lk.18:1).
- Pray with a clean heart (Pr.28:9, 13).

Praying with others

You can pray alone, but it is always better and a great encouragement if you can find other people that will also Take Five and pray with you. You can encourage your family to pray with you or your cell group can do this together, or you can find 2-3 other fellow Christians at work/school to pray with you.

Scriptures for prayer

Some more Scripture verses that you may use in your prayer time: Jn.3:16; Jn.6:63; Jn.6:44; Jn.5:21; Jn.16:8-11; 2 Cor.4:3-4; 2 Cor.10:3-6; 2 Pe.3:9; Mt.18:14; 1 Tim.2:3-4.

Will my prayers make a difference?

Millions of Christians around the world are using this method/strategy (in a variety of ways) to reach their unsaved neighbours and friends with the gospel. Everyday people come into a new or deeper relationship with Jesus, because of praying and caring Christians.