



PRAYING BIBLICALLY

for Your Missionary

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Before we consider the matter of how to pray biblically for missionaries, let us think about why we should do that, laying the foundation for our considerations with the concept of indebtedness. Paying a debt by praying seems odd, so let me explain the connection. Paul stated that he was a “debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise” (Rom. 1:14). In other words, he was a debtor to all men. He elaborates in the next verse that what he owed to every person in the world was not money, access to health care, educational opportunity, agricultural advice, or safe drinking water. No, rather he owed the glorious Gospel of Christ. A natural question at this point is, “Do you and I have this same debt?” The answer is, absolutely!

The next question is “How do I pay such a staggering debt?” One way, of course, is to witness directly to a lost person. However, that clearly has its limitations, especially when we contemplate that there are currently 7 billion “wise” and “unwise” people inhabiting this world. Another way to pay the debt is to give to support missionaries as they go to the far and near corners of the earth. But again, my pocketbook has its serious limitations, and thus I still find myself able to pay only a fraction of my debt to the world. So what other options exist for paying this debt? Maybe you have anticipated where I am going with this and have thought, “I can pray for missionaries, and there is no limit to how far those prayers can reach.” Exactly right! Maybe the most effective way for us to meet our obligation to the world is to pray for missionaries. So, how should we pray?

Over the years I have read many suggestions on how to pray for missionaries. Those lists are helpful, but they are also usually practical suggestions that may or may not have a biblical basis or emphasis. There is a way, however, for us to derive directly from Scripture how we should pray for missionaries, and that is what we want to consider in this section for the next several editions of *Sowing & Reaping*.

Nothing is better than knowing God’s mind on a subject, so we will search the New Testament for texts where Paul, unquestionably an exemplary missionary, asked prayer specifically for himself and his missionary team. Paul gives several examples and exhortations about how Christians should pray generally, but in only a few texts does he say “pray for me/us that ...” It is these texts where he asks prayer for himself AND where he actually tells us what to pray that we want to milk for all the truth we can get about this topic. Though such references are few, they provide a beautifully balanced and amazingly thorough list of vital prayer topics related to missionary life and work. As we will see, even the progression of the texts follows a divinely-guided pattern. If you want to get a head start on the next issue, why don’t you start looking for those texts yourself? In the next article we will begin an in-depth study of these points, so get your Bible out and stay tuned.