

Prayer missionaries

The one theme that has occupied me increasingly over the past number of years and which in my opinion is of fundamental importance for the church of our Lord Jesus Christ, is intercession for those groups in the world that have not yet been reached with the gospel.

Almost 70% of all progress in mission work since the ascension of Christ has been made after 1900. Approximately 70% of that progress occurred after the Second World War. And again 70% of that took place within the 36 months from the beginning of 1990 to the end of 1992. To put it differently: 30% of all expansion in mission work since the ascension of Christ took place in these 36 months. This means that there is an unprecedented increase in the spreading of the gospel - and this is related to a larger amount of purposeful intercession focused on the reaching of the unredeemed by the gospel of Christ Jesus.

The aim of this chapter is to provide guidelines to intercessors about how they should execute the Great Commission by means of prayer. There are different ways in which the Great Commission can be carried out: We may testify where we are, we may qualify ourselves for the Christian ministry and go out and preach the gospel, or we may make ourselves available for the mission field and physically go there. These are all commissions by the Lord that become clear in The Bible. However there is still one other way in which to do mission work and that is by means of prayer.

The new term that has come into common use over recent years is prayer missionaries. Dick Eastman of Every Home for Christ and Change the World School of Prayer uses the concept "world prayer missionaries" in his book *Love on its knees*. (*1) I am using his term and some of the information in the following paragraphs are taken from his books.

A prayer missionary is someone who takes on, or adopts a country or geographical area and starts praying for that country on a daily and systematic basis. A prayer missionary is someone who does not physically go to the mission field but who performs the work of prayer from his house and in this way does mission work. The prayer missionary prepares the harvest field through prayer so that the seed sown by the missionary will fall on good soil. His work can be compared to that of a threshing-sledge: "See, I will make you into a threshing-sledge, new and sharp, with many teeth. You will thresh the mountains and crush them and reduce the hills to chaff" (Is.41:15) A threshing-sledge is used to prepare the soil so that the seed may be sown. Look at Is.62:1 and 10: "For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, for Jerusalem's sake I will not remain quiet till her righteousness shines out like the dawn, her salvation like a blazing torch...Pass through, pass through the gates! Prepare the way for the people. Build up, build up the highway! Remove the stones. Raise a banner for the nations."

The prayer missionary walks ahead, preparing the way. He is part of God's fighting team in the struggle against the kingdom of the darkness. He acts with authority in this struggle against the darkness so as to prepare the way for the gospel: "See, today I appoint you over nations and kingdoms to uproot and tear down, to destroy and overthrow, to build and to plant" (Jer.1:10) The prayer missionary and the missionary are co-workers. The one cannot go without the other.

The advantage of being a prayer missionary is that one manages to get into places and countries where the preaching of the gospel is prohibited. No-one can prevent the prayers of the prayer missionary having their effect across borders of countries or over large distances.

The following may serve as guidelines for anyone who wishes to become a prayer missionary:

1. A prayer missionary may be any believer who sees his way open to do the work of prayer as commissioned by the Lord; a believer who has retired from his work, a school pupil, a student, a business man, a secretary or a clerk in a shop. And do not forget the children.
2. Buy a copy of the book *Operation World* by Patrick Johnston. Pray to God and ask Him in which country He wants you to do "mission work." Pray for the different countries every day. You will gradually develop an affection for specific countries. In this way you will eliminate certain other countries and eventually one or two countries or specific geographical areas will remain for which you may pray. Sometimes an entire country is too big. Concentrate in such a case on a smaller geographical part of that country. Much prayer is needed for countries that are under the influence of Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism and Shintoism. Prayer missionaries may play a key role here. Only 2% of all missionaries in the world work in Muslim countries, while 20% of the world population belong to the Muslim faith. The door to the Muslim world is gradually opening. Now more than ever before prayers are need for these countries.
3. Your next step is to conduct thorough research on the specific country for which you wish to pray. Get a map of that country, mark the most important towns and pray each day for one or two of these towns. Visit the library, watch television, read the newspaper and be sensitive to any information on that country that may come through. What population groups are found in this country? Who is the president and the most important leaders in the country? Which religion/s is/are practise there? Which are the churches in the country, the mission organisations that work there, and who are the missionaries? Write down all relevant information so that you may use that during your intercession. Use *Operation World* for basic information on the country in which you are going to become a prayer missionary. You may even subscribe to a newspaper or magazine in that country in order to obtain information on a regular basis. Get yourself a file or even a scrapbook in which you may file or paste all relevant information on your adopted country.
4. Pray for the leaders of that country, the government and all those in positions of authority.
5. Pray for the spiritual workers of the Christian churches in that country. Make contact with believers, missionaries, local churches or mission organisations in that country; obtain more information on them and pray for them purposefully.
6. Pray specifically that the Lord will send out spiritual workers (harvesters) to that country. Pray for these spiritual workers and also pray that the believers in that country will start to take the lead in spiritual matters themselves.
7. Pray for the unsaved in that country.
8. Pray for the believers and new converts in that country.
9. It is essential that you identify with that country, that you learn to love the country and its people. Fast and pray on a regular basis for that country. Perform the work of prayer the same way as if you were actually and physically in that country. Do not regard your prayer mission work as optional; do not think that no-one will know that you have not prayed. Pray as if there is no-one else praying for that country. Take spiritual

responsibility for that country.

10. Conduct spiritual warfare for that country. Pray that the Holy Spirit will show you the strongholds of evil in that specific country.
11. Pray for the ill, those in prison, the oppressed and the starving.
12. Pray for revival in the church in that country. When one prays for revival, one should at least pray
 - a) that the church will cleanse itself and that the members will confess and turn away from their sins: "If my people, who are called by my Name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land" (2 Chr.7:14).
 - b) that in the church there will be a longing for the Lord: "You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart (Jer.29:13).
 - c) that a new generosity will develop in the church; that members will give their tithes and even more for the work of the Lord: "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the flood-gates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it" (Mal.3:10). "...and if you spend yourselves on behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness and your night will become like the noonday" (Is.58:10-12).
 - d) for the unity of the body of Christ in that country: "I pray...that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you" (Jn.17:21).
 - e) for penitence among the believers: "For this is what the high and lofty One says - He who lives forever, whose Name is Holy: "I live in a high and holy place, but also with him who is contrite and lowly in spirit to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite" (Is.57:15).
 - f) that the believers will have the confidence to testify and express their faith boldly: "Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your Word with great boldness" (Ac.4:29).
13. Pray for open doors so that the Word may take its rapid course in that country: "And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. Pray that I may proclaim it clearly as I should" (Col.4:3-4).
14. Pray for the missionaries and ministers/pastors who are engaged in preaching the Bible. Pray for spiritual fruit that will last. Pray for the seed that is sown, for religious programmes over the national radio of the country, for the transmitters of TWR, for tracts and other literature that are distributed, for the work of evangelisation teams and for the testimonies of individual believers.
15. Pray for the salvation of entire families. In many countries young converts find it extremely difficult to remain standing since there is so much pressure and persecution involved when someone becomes a Christian. It helps tremendously if the whole family, or even only two persons in a family are Christians.
16. You have to make a decision and commit yourself to being a prayer missionary. The ordinary missionary takes a decision to do mission work in a particular country

for a year, two years or a lifetime. The prayer missionary has to make the decision to go and do mission work in a specific country for a year, two years or longer by means of prayer.

17. To summarise, we can say that the task of the prayer missionary is basically to do the following by means of prayer:
 - a) Prepare the harvest field for the seed to be sown.
 - b) Support spiritual work/workers and also the work of the Lord.
 - c) Protect the work of the Lord, i.e. conduct spiritual warfare against the attacks of evil.
 - d) Attack the stronghold of evil, Satan's plans and false reasoning, so that the kingdom of God may be expanded.
18. There are four basic prayer topics for which the prayer missionary should always pray:
 - a) for the workers in the harvest field, as well as for more workers in the harvest field (Mt.9:38);
 - b) for open doors so that the gospel may take its rapid course (Col.4:2-3);
 - c) for lasting fruit as a result of spiritual labour (2 Th.3:1);
 - d) for the necessary funds to spread the gospel (Rm.10:14-15; Php.4:19).
19. Do not disregard the children 8-12 years of age. Children are faithful intercessors. For them the book by Jill Johnstone, You can change the World may be used. Parents can help their children to make a scrapbook and get hold of photographs of missionaries or of a particular country which will stimulate them to pray for these. The Spirit of the Lord is calling children all over the world to intercede in an extremely powerful manner.
20. Consider undertaking a prayer journey to the particular country together with two or three other Christians so as to go and pray physically in that country. Such journeys provide intercessors with a better understanding of how they should pray.