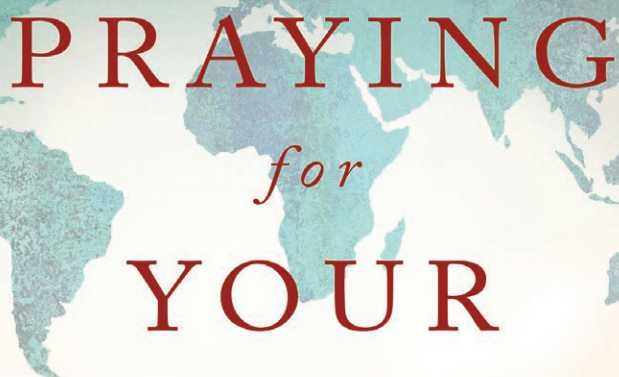


EDDIE BYUN



PRAYING
for
YOUR
Missionary

HOW PRAYERS FROM HOME
CAN REACH THE NATIONS



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Pray for More Workers to Finish the Mission

MATTHEW 9:35-38

MY STOMACH WAS HURTING from laughing so much. Amir kept doing his impersonations of famous American actors and presidents with great accuracy. He was a gifted entertainer! I had only known Amir for three days, but he opened up his home and his life to me. Whenever we were waiting for his wife to finish making lunch, he would act out scenes from famous Hollywood movies and leave us in tears with laughter. I couldn't get over how kind he was. Amir fed me like a king and loved me like family. He didn't know the Lord yet, but his heart was so open I sensed it was only a matter of time before he received Jesus as his Lord and Savior.

After leaving Amir's home, my friend Amy, who was a missionary in that city, said to me, "Eddie, I wish you could be here serving with me and our team. You connected with Amir and the other men in ways I never could because I'm a female. Their hearts are so open right now, but there are so few believers here."

Amy and her team had been in this part of the Middle East for the past two years building relationships with the women of the area. She was noticing how the Spirit had been opening many hearts to the gospel in ways that were never seen before. But unfortunately she knew of only ten believers in that city, and four of them were the missionaries on her team—and they were all female. I returned home with a new resolve to not only support Amy’s work but to challenge our church to prayerfully consider being a part of Amy’s team. The harvest was ready, but the workers were few.

So where do we begin? We begin by making sure we keep the main thing the main thing. The first prayer request in this series is to pray for more workers to finish the mission. Part of every church’s purpose is to finish the mission Jesus gave us, and that is to make disciples of all nations.

Why do we need to pray for more workers? One reason is because Jesus commands us to. In Matthew 9:37-38, Jesus tells his disciples how huge the harvest is but also how few the workers are. So he tells them to pray to the Lord of the harvest to send out workers to his fields. We must begin with prayer because he asks us to pray.

There also is a great need in this hour for more laborers to love the nations. According to the Joshua Project, there are still 3.14 billion people out of reach of the gospel, and less than 1 percent of Christian resources are directed at reaching the least reached and unengaged people groups of the world.¹ Another study found that there are 4.19 million full-time Christian

workers, but 95 percent of them are working in the Christian or reached world.² This great call from Jesus and the great need in this hour confirm the importance of having this prayer request as a high priority in our lives.

So we want to pray for more workers, but what kind of workers should we pray for?

WORKERS WITH A PASSION FOR THE KINGDOM

One thing to pray for is that God would raise up and send out workers in the mission field with a passion for the kingdom of God. Matthew 9:35 says, “Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction.” We must pray that God would raise up, release, and unleash people with a burning passion for his name to be known in all the nations.

We live in challenging days. Christians are dying in many parts of the world. Terrorist attacks are spreading throughout Africa, Europe, and into the West. The moral compass of nations is eroding. It can appear bleak, but as people of faith, we do not worry; instead, we pray and trust in a good and sovereign God. As the days grow darker in a world that does not love God, we must pray for the Light of the world to burn brighter through the church.

As Jesus went through all the cities and villages, he was teaching and preaching the kingdom of God. Pray for men and women who have a passion to do the same. Pray for a people

whose love for Christ and passion for the kingdom will also bring them to the cities and villages of the world—teaching the kingdom; preaching the gospel; and bringing hope, healing, and love to a broken world. In other words, pray for a people who will declare and demonstrate the gospel through kingdom living. We want to pray for people who understand that their lives are created to be lived for the kingdom of God and to the glory of his name. Pray that in this generation God will revive a people who take the Great Commission seriously and who, as followers of Jesus, want to make the Great Commission great again.

This means we are interceding for God to stir up a people who know that the Great Commission is not optional. We are living in the last days before Jesus returns! Hear the words of Jesus again:

Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”
(Matthew 28:18-20)

Pray for a people who *will obey* this call to go! To go! To make disciples of *all* nations, *all* people groups, *all* tribes, and *all* tongues. Since these are some of the final words of Jesus before he ascended to heaven, these last words hold great meaning. He clearly focuses the mission for his followers: “make disciples of

all nations.” All the nations matter to God! All nations are called to turn from their sins and find life eternal through trusting in the person and work of Jesus Christ. That is why we must pray for workers who have a passion for his kingdom.

The enemy seeks to diminish our kingdom passion by tempting us to stay in our comfort zones. The temptation to pursue the American dream: pampering, prosperity, and white picket fences. Sometimes I wonder if the American dream is heaven’s nightmare, taking away passion, people, and resources from kingdom advancement. Few things have done more to water down passion for God’s kingdom than the lure of building our own kingdom where the throne is a La-Z-Boy chair in the living room, and men dream of building a man cave with multiple big screens while souls perish, angels plead, and God weeps over this generation.

Sometimes I wonder if the American dream is heaven’s nightmare.

Few things have done more to weaken affection for God than *affluence*. It’s so easy to fall into the lure of comfortable, self-centered living. This is why we must spur one another toward love and good deeds until the day of Christ’s return (Hebrews 10:24). We can do this by surrounding ourselves with people who can sharpen our love, character, and passion for Christ—as “iron sharpens iron” (Proverbs 27:17). I’m so thankful for people like my good friend Eddie Kim, who I met in seminary. Whenever we met, I left wanting to love Jesus more. He had a deep love for the Word of God and meticulously studied

the original languages. His passion was contagious. His unwavering devotion to the kingdom keeps fanning the flame of my own heart to burn when I want to fade away.

Likewise, let's pray for God to raise up workers in this hour who have an unwavering, single-minded focus and passion to see the name of Jesus known and spread throughout the nations.

Spiritual powers will oppose us, which is why Jesus reminds us in his Great Commission that all authority belongs to him. We need to be reminded of that because life is war. Life is a battle that tends to keep us off our mission with God. It is a battle of faith. It is a battle over what our souls will treasure more. It is a battle because the eternal destiny of souls is one of the highest priorities of God's kingdom. And the only way we will finish Jesus' mission is for God to raise up a generation who will love him more than life, more than death, and more than comfort. Pray for it. And pray that we will be that generation.

WORKERS WITH COMPASSION FOR THE LOST

Another thing to pray is to ask God to raise up people who have a deep love and compassion for the lost. Matthew 9:36 says, "When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." Jesus genuinely cared for those who were spiritually lost. Pray that God would send out workers who have his heart of compassion for those who don't know Jesus. Pray that the church would become concerned for the billions who are harassed and helpless because they are sheep without a shepherd. Pray for

This window represents the ages between four and fourteen, when children are most open to receiving the gospel message. One study found that 85 percent of adult Christians in the United States came to faith in Christ from the ages of four to fourteen.⁴ We'd be wise to make these children our priority. When our church was preparing for a church plant in Thailand a few years ago, the 10/40 Window and the 4/14 Window were two key filters determining where we began. We wanted to be in the 10/40 region of the world and knew we placed a high priority on the children in that community.

I also encourage you to become familiar with the Joshua Project (joshuaproject.net), which publishes updates on missions' progress in the least reached parts of the world. Currently there are 6,898 unreached people groups still without a Christian witness. These statistics should affect how we pray, who we pray for, and how we plan and prioritize our missions strategies.

Some of the top unreached people groups right now include

- the Aimaq Taimani of Afghanistan with 0.00% who are evangelical Christians out of a population of 592,000
- the Arab Yemeni in Yemen with more than six million people and no known evangelical Christian population
- the Najdi Bedouin of Iraq: 1.4 million people
- the Tay of Vietnam: 1.7 million people

One of our church members shared with me how her friend from college felt called to go on mission. He looked at the list of least reached people groups from the Joshua Project and

simply picked the least reached group on the list. From that point on, he dedicated his life to being a witness to the least reached parts of the world. I was so blessed and challenged by that devotion. Let us pray that God will raise up more people with a passion for his kingdom and compassion for the lost.

Those who love Jesus will do all they can to prepare for his second coming. This means lovers of Jesus need to strategize well to reach this goal. Missions must be put intentionally into his disciples' plans if it's going to be a priority in their lives. Plan to partner in missions through your giving, praying, going, and sending. Plan your vacations around going on mission trips, visiting missionaries, and blessing them. It could be something as simple as babysitting for them so they can have a long-overdue date, or it might be cooking meals for them. Ask how you can help serve them, and commit to being their friend, supporter, and servant for the days that you are there.

A family in our church used their vacation time to visit missionaries our church supported. Though they could have gone to Disneyland or some other vacation destination, they wanted to teach their two young children about the importance of the kingdom of God by serving our missionaries in Thailand. The experience was such a blessing for them that the next year they organized another trip with five other families, and all of them went to serve these missionaries. They were happy to serve, but an added benefit was how the parents and children bonded as they served together for the first time in their lives.

It's also important to plan your giving around missions. Tithe to your local church, but also get in the habit of giving a portion of your income to missions on a regular basis. Some of you might be thinking, *I can't give to missions! I don't have that much money.*

But did you know

- If you make \$1,500 in a year, you are part of the richest 20 percent in the world?
- If you make \$25,000 a year, you are the richest 10 percent of the world?
- If you make \$50,000 a year, you are the richest 1 percent in the world?⁵

We are a wealthy generation. But instead of planning for our giving, we more often dig through our cars and pockets and sofas for loose change and then say, "Here, God! All for you! Use it to save the world!" But those transformed by grace understand that *all* we have is from God and belongs to God. And all of it is to be used for the glory of God.

We must also learn to plan our future around missions: our next contract, our career, and even our sabbatical. It has been said that missionaries are simply doing what God has called them to do, with the gifts he gave them to use, in a place where there are no Christians. I've been pastoring an expat congregation in South Korea for the past eight years, and I repeatedly give this challenge to our congregation. I tell them, "When your work contracts expire, don't assume that your home country is

your default destination. Instead, pray about doing the same job you did before but in a country that needs a Christian witness.” I was thrilled to see many people taking this challenge. We had one couple who were English teachers in South Korea. As their two-year contract to teach was coming to an end, they looked for teaching opportunities in other parts of the 10/40 Window and ended up moving to a country in the Middle East to teach *and* to be witnesses. Others responded as well, with several moving to Thailand and Cambodia, and others going to different parts of the Middle East. It was exciting to see them living for the mission of God.

Another thing to consider is tithing not just your money but also your life to the Lord. I’ve heard many people say, “I’ll wait until I retire and then I’ll give those years to the Lord.” We don’t know when God will take us home, so why not prayerfully see how God wants to use your life *now*? How about tithing six, seven, or eight years of your life to God—living, working, and serving in nations where few know Jesus? Several years in Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam, or Iran. That’s not a waste of life; that’s an investment of life that honors Jesus as worthy of it all. That may not be a viable option for many, but I know God is calling some to make that kind of sacrifice for Christ and his kingdom.

Just as the breaking of the alabaster jar was wasteful to the world but sweet worship to Jesus (Mark 14:3), so is a life that gladly gives it all for him. Give your life, your degrees, your careers completely as an offering to Jesus. Declare to him, “Here, God, this is yours! Use it all for your glory. It’s all for you.” Pray

for this kind of heart and these kinds of workers to be released into the nations.

Having grown up a lifelong Chicago Cubs fan, the 2016 baseball season was an incredible journey. When it looked like the Cubs were going to make the postseason and possibly win their first World Series championship since 1908, a number of my friends asked me if I would be okay if Jesus came back right before the Cubs won it all. Some friends replied, “Hmm, that’s a tough one.” Now, I know the question and even the response were just a joke, but sadly for a lot of Christians today, that *would* be a tough decision. It’s a difficult decision because our love for sports, games, and personal pursuits are in competition with our love for Jesus.

We need to pray for a people whose love for Jesus and for the lost burns brighter than their love for anything in this world, because those who love Jesus long for his return. And if reaching the nations with the gospel will signal the return of Jesus, then our priority must be to reach the nations with the gospel. Pray that this generation will be the one that completes the Great Commission.

WORKERS WITH INTERCESSION AS A PRIORITY

One more thing to pray for concerning the kind of workers to be sent out is that they would be people who put prayer as a priority in their lives. Matthew 9:37-38 says, “Then he said to his disciples, ‘The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to

send out laborers into his harvest.” Jesus declares the great need for people to get on mission with God, therefore pray! He doesn’t say, the need is huge, so hurry up and get out there! He says pray. Pray and ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest fields. So before we go to the nations, we are to go before the throne of God and intercede for the nations.

We must pray for missionaries who prioritize prayer in their lives. Why? *Because prayer and missions go hand in hand.* I don’t think it’s a coincidence that at the peak of the Korean church’s influence around the world it was known for its prayer and missions. In a place of prayer and worship Isaiah saw a vision in Isaiah 6, and from that place before God he received his call to go and be the Lord’s messenger.

And later on in Isaiah 56:7 the Lord says,

These I will bring to my holy mountain,
and make them joyful in my house of prayer;
their burnt offerings and their sacrifices
will be accepted on my altar;
for my house shall be called a house of prayer
for all peoples.

God’s house will be called a house of prayer for all nations. Prayer and mission are connected in the kingdom of God because those who dwell in his presence gain his heart and receive his assignments. His heart cries out for the lost to know saving grace. So pray for people to pray for the nations.

PRAYER IS THE COMMUNICATION
LINE IN THIS BATTLE FOR SOULS

In his book *Desiring God*, John Piper refers to prayer as a wartime walkie-talkie calling in troops and asking for protection. But we don't seem to use it that way anymore.

Could it be that many of our problems with prayer and much of our weakness in prayer come from the fact that we are not all on active duty, and yet we try and use the transmitter? We have taken a wartime walkie-talkie and tried to turn it into a civilian intercom to call the servants for another cushion in the den.⁶

That is why we must pray for workers who understand that we are not yet home. Instead, may they live in such a way that prayer becomes their home.

The following are a couple of excellent tools that can help increase your prayers for missions:

Operation World.⁷ This is a prayer book published by InterVarsity Press that guides us through praying for every country in the world. I have used this for many years for my personal prayer times. We have used it in our church too. I make this a required resource to pray through for everyone going on short-term and long-term mission trips for our church. A version is also available online (operationworld.org).

Global Prayer Digest. This daily prayer guide highlights unreached people group to pray for each day. You can order a physical copy or view it online (globalprayerdigest.org). I learned

about this resource through a John Piper sermon. He encouraged families to use this during family devotions. Read through the story of an unreached people group and have your children become involved in interceding for them. It will help them grow in prayer and also grow a heart for missions.

I encourage you to use both of these resources. Your prayers will impact lives for eternity.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- Do you agree with the author's statement that "sometimes the American dream is heaven's nightmare"? What do you think he means by this statement?
- Does sending more workers into the mission field mean simply sending more traditional missionaries? Who else would be considered workers?
- Why are the 10/40 and 4/14 Windows so important for missions work?

PRAYER POINTS

- Ask God to give your missionaries increased passion for the kingdom and the lost.
- Pray that God would send out more workers specifically to the unreached and unengaged parts of the world. Pray for God to send many to the 10/40 and 4/14 Windows of the world.
- Ask God to increase your and your church's financial giving for missions.

ACTION PLAN

- Print a map of the 10/40 Window (or visit eddiebyun.com to download a graphic), put it in your Bible, and begin praying for the nations located on the map.

- If you're not serving in a ministry at church, prayerfully consider serving with children age four to fourteen in order to minister to this important age group.
- Buy a copy of *Operation World* or *Global Prayer Digest* and begin praying through those important resources. Also consider buying a copy for your church library if it doesn't have one.

BUY THE BOOK!

ivpress.com/praying-for-your-missionary