

40 Days of Prayer
Three Lakes Evangelical Free Church
Day 29

Praying for the Salvation of the Lost, Pt. 1
Matthew 9:35-38

We all know the last words of Jesus were a challenge for us to engage in the enterprise of evangelism. He told us that all authority was given to him in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18), and that he is now delegating that authority to us to speak for him as we go and make disciples of all nations. He also assured us that, as we represent him and his gospel, we will have the power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8), giving us the assurance that we will be successful in this ministry. So, with his delegated authority and the Holy Spirit's power, everything is in place for a great harvest of souls for his glory. Yet, a casual survey of the average church will reveal, not many of us are going. There is great apprehension even to give our testimony when our culture might be listening. To actually share the points of the Gospel and invite someone to place his/her faith in Jesus for the forgiveness of sins and the gift of eternal life is not the norm. Oh, we say that we might not have the gift of evangelism. Yet, the Apostle Paul tells timid Timothy, who evidently was not gifted in evangelism, to "*do the work of an evangelist*" (2 Timothy 4:5). Is there an ingredient that might be mixed into our lives that would give us the courage to speak for Jesus?

We have learned in this series of meditations that prayer is a dependent responsibility in the life of a follower of Jesus. Today I am suggesting that this responsibility applies to evangelism. Over the next three days, I would like to unpack how to pray for the successful enterprise of evangelism, or to put it another way, how to pray for the salvation of the lost.

Let's start with a passage that shows the heart of Jesus for evangelism.

³⁵Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. ³⁶When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. ³⁸Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."
(Matt. 9:35-38 NIV)

The first thing we notice about this passage is that Jesus is involved in evangelism and that he is doing everything he can to touch as many people as possible. But his influence is limited. He can only do so much on his own. He had great compassion on the lost, who were like sheep without a shepherd, but he could only do so much. That is why he mobilized the disciples, sending them out on campaigns, once as a group of 12 and another as a group of 70. To reproduce himself in their lives gives a much greater

exposure of the truth to many more people—exponentially so. But Jesus also knows that even the 12, or the 70, or those who might join the 1st Century Church could not successfully touch the whole world. Therefore, he said to them, PRAY.

Here is our dependent responsibility in evangelism.

First - Pray that God, the Lord of the harvest, would send out workers into his harvest field.

Second – Pray that God might reveal your own personal harvest field and give you a desire for them to know the Lord. Perhaps it is your family, your work associates, your classmates, or those in your neighborhood.

Third – Pray for opportunities to share the gospel with them. Ask God to make you sensitive to openings, aware of their needs that you might be able to meet, or that he would orchestrate a “divine appointment” where it is so natural to talk about the gospel that you cannot avoid doing so.

Finally – When God answers these prayers – pray for boldness to follow through and to share your testimony or the content of the gospel.

More tomorrow.