

PRAISING

for

MISSIONARIES



- Workers on far-flung mission fields do not need your pity—but they desperately need your prayers.

- Here is advice to help you become the true prayer warrior for missions.

TALK TO missionaries and you'll find they have this in common: an unshakeable confidence in the power of prayer—the prayer of people back home.

“I’ve felt the actual force and effect of your prayer,” wrote a young missionary in Ecuador. “When circumstances have been trying I knew it wasn’t my strength and character which kept me going. It was the power of Christ generated direct from loving hearts of praying friends. I *knew* that someone was upholding me in prayer.”

A returned missionary in Israel relates time after time when his prayers and the prayers of supporters mingled to bring about almost miraculous results.

A missionary to China interned by the Japanese during World War II testifies: "We knew when supporters were really praying. We recognized the difference in our heart experience. It brought strength, peace, courage."

Praying for them is the simplest thing you can do for missionaries. But sometimes it's easy to forget.

Christians are more likely to pray about physical trials such as sickness and persecution than about spiritual battles.

Adds the missionary who told what prayer had done for him while he was a prisoner of the Japanese: "Now, when we are facing spiritual battles, fighting against the power and principalities of the air, often that prayer strength we had during our internment has been lacking."

And when prayer falls off, so does material support.

Recently a missionary in Japan had to go without heat in his home for weeks in mid-winter. Reason: lack of funds. A family in the jungles of Brazil had to eat monkey meat for months. They once had to sell their gun to have money to go up river to reach a tribe. Then they had nothing with which to kill game for food. They almost starved to death.

Of course you do not want to be guilty of neglecting prayer for missionaries. What are some principles to guide you in becoming a real missionary prayer warrior?

Queried missionaries throughout the world gave some suggestions:

1. *Find out all you can about the missionary for whom you are praying.*

A furloughing missionary was shocked to find that her pastor's wife did not know the names of the missionaries her church supported. "With effort she could recall the

names of most of the men, she had a fairly good idea of where they were located, but she didn't know what type of work they did," the missionary said. "She knew some of the wives' names, but didn't know how many children they had. How can she pray for them by name if she doesn't know their names?"

Says a missionary in Hong Kong: "I always thought that the missionary was a person who lived in a mud hut and ate herbs and honey like John the Baptist. But when I came to the field I found myself in a modern city with every convenience plus sin just as rampant as in Chicago, New York or New Orleans."

The circumstances of the missionary in Rome are markedly different from those of a missionary in New Guinea. Remember this when you pray.

2. *Pray regularly.* Don't wait for some particularly heart-tugging story to stimulate you to prayer.

A missionary in Algiers writes: "When nothing visibly happens the missionary sometimes feels he has to 'make up' some exciting news to tell his prayer supporters. The truth is, a missionary's life is not always full of 'great' events."

Even if you don't hear any news, go ahead with regular prayer.

A woman in Iowa has the pictures of the missionaries of her denomination on the window over her sink. She prays for each of them while she washes the dishes each day. "Now dishes are something I look forward to, not a drudge," she says.

One family pastes the pictures of missionaries on 3 x 5-inch cards. These are put into the Scripture promise box used at daily devotions. A card a day is pulled out and passed around. Then prayer is offered. Next day a new card is chosen.

Other families use a denominational prayer-reminder list. Some churches place the name of a "missionary of the week" in their bulletins.

3. *Be specific in your prayer.* "Lord bless the missionaries" is not enough.

Prayer letters from overseas can help. Admittedly, sometimes they are not always as attractive and informative as you'd like. But consider the obstacles: lack of reproduction facilities, lack of time, insufficient writing ability.

A missionary to Japan admits: "The more intimate problems that characterize the mission field seldom make the pages of a prayer letter. The promising convert who suddenly becomes a target of the Enemy and relapses into heathenism; the petty jealousies and rivalries among missionaries; the delicate problem of strong nationalism; and personal defeat or discouragement are real problems in which they need much prayer help."

Another says: "The missionary is capable of becoming discouraged, of feeling lonely and of even having doubts regarding his own spiritual experience. It is difficult to write home about these things, when normally one does not even mention these matters except to a very intimate friend."

Then, too, sometimes the missionary cannot reveal the most urgent problems. For instance, at the time of peak violence in Morocco, a North Africa Mission publication stated: "Frequently the same conditions which make facts hard to obtain also make the need for prayer most urgent. This is abundantly true now in North Africa. Violence may break out at any moment."

There are government obstacles about which the missionary dare not talk or write. If he did, he would be expelled from the country.

But often you *do* know of specific needs. A convert recently won; a newly opened church; the sickness of a missionary; the need for blessing on an evangelistic campaign. These things missionaries do write about—and you can remember them specifically in prayer.

Write and ask the missionary what his needs are. Often you may be able to meet them!

4. *Try to anticipate needs.* (Often by the time you hear of a need, the need is past.)

Think of the spiritual problems that plague you. Perhaps they are bothering the missionary.

When a new worker goes to the field, you can ask God to keep him healthy and strong, to enable him to adjust to the climate, to learn a new language. Later on, you pray that he may be led to people whose hearts are prepared for the Gospel. And you can pray that his relationships with fellow missionaries may be happy and mutually beneficial.

5. Be persistent and persevering in prayer.

When you pray for something that requires a specific answer—don't give up until you know the answer has come. Even then, continue praying.

The Algerian missionary phrases it this way: "You prayed for an African to become converted. You prayed once or twice and results came. Then you stopped praying. Satan attacked. The native backslid. His testimony was lost. The missionary became discouraged. The church lost a leader. Be consistent in prayer. Make those foreign Christian brothers members of your family whom you remember constantly in prayer."

Every once in a while, get off the beaten track. Pray about needs others may not think to pray for. For instance, pray for the following:

- For victory over mental stagnation. The missionary may have little time for reading and study. He may miss the intellectual stimulus which kept him alert before he went to the field.
- For freshness in prayer and in Bible teaching. Quite likely there is no inspired preacher of the Word nearby, no chance for a spiritual "refresher."
- For guidance in how to present the Gospel to some foreign person with whom the missionary may have fleeting contact.
- For deliverance from the temptation of pride. Missionaries are looked up to. They are supposed to be the last word in knowledge and in Christian example. So it is easy to become conceited—and hard to confess

sin before the people. So pray that the missionary may remain humble.

- For wisdom in relations with other missionaries—victory over irritations, resentments, criticisms.

- For strength to overcome the temptations of loneliness. Did you ever think that an unwise marriage might be a severe temptation to a lonely young missionary? Well, it is. Pray about it.

- For a saving sense of humor. "A missionary must guard against becoming unbalanced," a Christian worker in a hard field remarks. "In the midst of filth and terrible sin he must be refreshed and have a healthy outlook. One can become morbid. We need to pray as never before at such times, and always depend upon Him, but we must not forget to have a good laugh once in a while—perhaps at ourselves."

Of course, while you are praying for missionaries, don't forget nationals, many of whom are taking direction of the church. Pray that the missionary may deal wisely with these new leaders, being willing to give up authority and become an adviser. And, certainly, pray for native Christians in lands closed to missionaries.

Most missionaries don't feel sorry for themselves. Not at all. Says one: "When we hear talk of our giving up so much, we think of the poor folks at home who have to stay in the homeland when we have all the privileges of bringing folks to Christ."

Nevertheless, missionaries are doing a work especially commanded by Christ. The Enemy will do all he can to frustrate it. So we must pray for the missionaries unceasingly as well as victoriously.

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