

# How to Pray for the Lost

By Leonard C. Albert

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Many of us - if not all of us, owe our conversion to friends and family who prayed us into the Kingdom. Prayer is the big weapon for the salvation of souls. Argument and debate without prayer is dry and fruitless. Do not spend all your time bashing your head against the arguments of people. Instead bash into Heaven with strong prayers on behalf of those you want to be saved.

Why should we pray for the lost?

1. Out of love - if we love our neighbor as ourselves we will want him or her to know Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior too.
2. Out of holy fear - if we realize that Hell is for real and for eternity then we will not want our friends, family or neighbors to go there.
3. Out of knowledge of the nature of God - who loves to be merciful and desires that all men should be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth.
4. Out of knowledge of the power of prayer - prayer often succeeds when all else has failed. It is the only way we have of asking God to move in someone's life and heart. We know that the prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. We know that prayers according to God's will are answered. This is not spiritual manipulation from a distance. Rather prayer grants the person the ability to see clearly and make a free and informed choice, free from the manipulative bondages and blindness that the Devil tries to impose. We can legitimately pray that a person may be able to freely choose between the mercy and glory of God and the temporary trash of this world. We can pray that their blindness be removed and Christ shown to them convincingly and clearly. Imagine if we could present every non-Christian with a clear convincing presentation of the facts. Imagine they were made to choose between the love of Jesus Christ, eternal glory, a magnificent resurrection body, life in heaven etc. versus pain and torment and death and disgrace for all eternity. Only a crazy person would choose to remain a non-Christian. Prayer allows the unbeliever to glimpse the facts for what they are and to make a sensible choice. It is not unfair or manipulative -it is the fairest, most freeing way we have.

Praying for Structures

Paul writes to Timothy about his FIRST PRIORITY in 1 Tim 2:1-8

I Timothy 2:1-8 I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone-- 2 for kings and all those in authority, that we may

live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. 3 This is good, and pleases God our Savior, 4 who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. 5 For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, 6 who gave himself as a ransom for all men--the testimony given in its proper time. 7 And for this purpose I was appointed a herald and an apostle—I am telling the truth, I am not lying—and a teacher of the true faith to the Gentiles. 8 I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands in prayer, without anger or disputing.

God wants us to pray - for kings and all those in authority . . . in order that people may be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. This points out a sometimes forgotten aspect about praying for the lost - that governments can do a lot to help or to hinder the process of evangelism. For instance in Albania, one of the world's most atheistic communist states a generation of people has been raised without the remotest awareness of Jesus Christ or the gospel. Albania is in ruins as a result and is without the social services or human compassion that the influence of the gospel brings. On the other hand Samoa and some of the Pacific nations are very Christian and the Government actively encourages participation in Christian activities. Everyone has some knowledge of the gospel and many are saved.

God wants "all people everywhere" - that means the lot of you without exception - to pray for those in authority so that we may openly have permission to preach the gospel without hindrance. Please pray that:

Our school system may remain open to Christian chaplaincy and R.E.

That tax concessions for some areas of Christian work may remain in place and that more areas e.g. donations to missionary societies may be made tax exempt.

That anti-Christian laws in some States may be repealed.

That the Government recognize the contribution that true Christianity can make to Australia.

That we change from being a secular country to a Christian nation.

That we may remain able to proclaim Christianity, in all its truths, in all areas of our society.

That people such as nurses who have difficult issues of conscience be allowed to be truly Christian and abstain from practices they consider inappropriate to their faith.

Also as issues such as pornography laws, etc., pop up from time to time we can make them a matter of prayer by "all people everywhere." I look upon such praying as paving the way for the gospel - it is very hard to sow the seeds of faith in a mind filled with pornographic trash. Pornography greases the path to Hell and banning it is a positive action not a negative one.

So part of our praying for the lost is praying for structures that block the spread of the gospel to be removed. The second part of praying for the lost is praying for individuals / families/ villages and nations to be saved.

How to Pray for the Lost

The following ideas have been pinched from a small pamphlet called "How to Pray for the Lost" which I discovered years ago and have found very useful. I have also added in a few practical hints of my own.

The first thing you need to understand when praying for the lost is that the price has been paid. When Jesus died upon that cross He paid the price for every single sinner on the earth. When you are praying for the lost remember that the price has been paid and make that the starting point for prayer.

"Lord you bought Joe Bloggs at Calvary, he is yours and so is his wife Joanne Bloggs and now we are asking You to claim Joe and Joanne for yourself, to remove the chains that bind them. Don't let the Devil have those you have bought Lord, be glorified in them and through them Lord. Take them back to yourself, set them free; Christ has done it, now we claim it. Amen. "

Knowing that Christ has paid the price gives us confidence to pay boldly. It is not as if we have to bargain at all. The price is paid - that person rightly belongs to God who has bought them back out of slavery and sin. The technical name for this is "praying on the basis of redemption" or in some circles "praying for the lost in the power of the blood of Jesus." Stand before God, confident that He wants your friend saved and confident that He has already paid the price for that to happen.

**PERSISTENTLY AND REGULARLY** - praying for people to be saved can at times be a very long battle. We need to pray persistently and regularly for those we want to be saved. In Luke 18:1 ff Jesus makes it clear that persistence pays off and tells us that we ought to "pray and not get weary..."

**PRAY WATCHFULLY** - It pays to be alert to the spiritual state of the unbeliever and to pray appropriately - are they curious about God yet? Are they convicted about their sin? Are they attracted to Jesus? Are they involved in something they would find very difficult to give up if they became a Christian? Pray specifically for where the person is at spiritually so they can take one or two steps closer to faith in God. "Lord you know how Joe finds it hard to believe your Bible - please show him it is true and that it can be relied on..."

#### **SPECIFIC THINGS TO PRAY FOR:**

1. That God will make them curious about spiritual things. The first hurdle is often sheer apathy with regard to the truth. Pray that God will stir them up to search out the truth about Life, The universe and Everything -for themselves.
2. Pray that God will surround your friend with witnessing Christians. Pray that they will feel absolutely surrounded and unable to escape from God. This forces people to consider Christ and the difference between their lives and the lives of true Christians.

3. Ask that they may clearly grasp that they are sinful. Unless there is a clear perception of sin there can be no true repentance from sin. They must know that they are in the wrong.
4. That God will grant them an almighty thirst for God's Word. That even as unbelievers they will want to read the Bible especially Genesis, Psalms, Isaiah and the Gospels.
5. Plead for a clear understanding of Jesus as Savior and Lord. With some of the heresies abroad today Jesus is often misunderstood. Pray that your friends may see Jesus as real and historical and also as divine. Pray that God may clear up any misunderstandings in these areas and be prepared to answer questions. Be clear about Jesus being the only way to a true and favorable relationship with God.
6. Intercede for your friends at any points where they are being held under Satan's power. Ask for release from wrong ways and bad influences. Their friends may be a real obstacle to their salvation, pray that they may not give in to them but may instead have the courage to believe in God. There is today an increasing interest in the occult and some people are badly hooked -pray for their release from this dark addiction so that they may be free to believe.
7. Ask for grace toward your friends so that they may develop godly tastes which lead them toward God and salvation. Pray that they may start liking Christian music or if they are literature buffs that C.S. Lewis, John Donne, Milton and T.S. Elliot may hold a fascination for them. If classical music - pray that the great Christian works of Bach and Handel may intrigue them. If rock music that the contemporary Christian rock bands with good messages may become their passion. Pray that in everything from bushwalking to building models that somehow their tastes will be drawn to that which witnesses to Christ.

CHALLENGE I am going to leave you with the challenge of making a list of people you will pray for. Also get your home groups to buy a small notebook, rule it up, "Person," "What We Will Pray", "When It Was Answered." We can really see things happen when we persistently pray for the lost on the basis of what Christ has done on the cross.