

Praying for Unbelievers



Instructor Guide

Church Renewal Resource
Evangelism Ministries USA/Canada Region
Church of the Nazarene

Acknowledgments

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Preparation Checklist

The following information will help you prepare to instruct this module.

- Review the material and make notes of specific areas for special emphasis.
- Check to ensure the following materials are available:
 - PowerPoint presentations
 - Participant booklet (copy as needed)
- Gather the following materials:
 - Pens and/or pencils
 - Other material you want to use
- Check the classroom for:
 - Projector
 - Sufficient number of tables and chairs for the participants
- Arrange the room so each church team sits around an individual table and you have ample room to move among the teams.

Praying for Unbelievers

Module-at-a-Glance

The table below identifies each module section, the time allotted for each section, and a brief description of the section's objective. When you are familiar with this module, you may want to teach from this page.

SECTION	TIME	PAGE	BRIEF DESCRIPTION
I. Introduction	5 mins.	P. 5	Introduce module, purpose, and objectives.
II. Lecture	25 mins.	P. 7	Facilitator presents basic elements for developing and active prayer life of praying for unbelievers. The emphasis is on personal development among laity.
III. Individual Exercise	15 mins.	P. 13	Participants work individually to reflect on the information presented in the lecture and begin applying the concepts.
IV. Discussion	5 mins.	P. 13	Participants share thoughts and ideas developed during the lecture or personal application time. Two possible questions to start the discussion are: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• What new ideas or thoughts did God reveal to you?• What new techniques will you begin using as you pray for unbelievers?
V. Action Planning	20 mins.	P. 14	Participants begin preparing for their homework assignment: Conduct a minimum of three activities where the laity participate in praying for unbelievers. In preparing for these activities, participants discuss how, who, when, and expected results.
VI. Module Wrap-Up	5 mins	P. 15	Close the module with your final comments regarding the topic.
Total Module Time: 75 mins.			

I. Module Introduction

(5 minutes)

Notes

Let the participants know the material is theirs to keep and encourage them to take notes.

- Purpose
- Objectives
- “Fill-in-the-blanks” for the lecture
- Application exercises

The purpose of this module is:

To urge church leadership to pray for the lost.

The objectives for this module are:

- pray together;
- understand the need for praying for people who reach lost people;
- identify tools for leading a church to pray for unbelievers.

Did any of you come to know Christ specifically because of the prayers of another person? Or share a story about someone who prayed for an unbeliever for a significant period of time.

Ask the question:

Have you ever wondered if someone you loved, someone you cared about would ever come to know Christ? Have you ever questioned:

Does it do any good to pray?

Is there any connection whatsoever between prayer and evangelism?

You say, “Oh sure, the Bible speaks of both.” And yet, isn’t it difficult to just keep on praying when you see no results? We would all answer, “Of course it is.” It’s hard to do anything if you don’t see results.

Slide 2

I. Introduction (cont.)

Let's take two passages written by the Apostle Paul to examine his instructions on praying. We'll look not only at the relationship between our prayers and unbelievers coming to know Christ, but we'll also discuss how to pray for both the unbeliever and the witness.

Ephesians 6:19 Pray also for me that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it fearlessly as I should.

Colossians 4:2-6 Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. 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. Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.

Discuss the following points from Ephesians 6:19:

There is a definite relationship between prayer and the work of the Holy Spirit in bringing people into a relationship with God.

There is a direct relationship between one's prayers and the number of people who come to know Christ as Savior!

Paul was saying, "Would you pray for me? I'm talking to people about God and I need you to pray for me."

How do you pray about people coming to Christ? The lecture will address a few ways prompted by scripture.

II. Lecture

(20 minutes)

How to Pray for People

1. Pray for the **RIGHT** words.

In Eph. 6:19, Paul says, "Pray also for me that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me..."

Have you ever wondered what to say to someone? Of course you have:

- How can I start this conversation?
- How can I get into it?
- How can I bridge this gulf between us?
- How can I introduce spiritual things to other people?

It's a question Christians ask themselves again and again. Here Paul is saying, "I need you to be praying for me to achieve that very thing."

Now you might think Paul would be the last person on earth who would need prayer in that regard.

- He had had the finest of spiritual training.
- He was by personality a dominant, aggressive person.
- It seemed as though words just flowed from him, for his thoughts were not only significant, as we read the many books of the New Testament written by him, but the thoughts are deep and penetrating . . . and yes, even mysterious to us.
- We think surely this man, who had such a grasp of knowledge and insight and who was very fluent in his language, could have easily communicated about Christ. But here, this dominant, brilliant, educated and assertive Christian says, "Pray for me. Pray for me so that when I open my mouth I will have words to say."

2. Pray for the fear to **DIMINISH**.

"...that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel."

Oh, we've experienced that. Fearless? Well, not until it was over and a couple of weeks had passed.

Notes

Slide 3

Slide 4

II. Lecture (cont.)

Notes

Paul had some reasons to be fearful though. You notice he was in chains. He'd been thrown into prison because he was talking about the Lord Jesus.

We fear something horrible. We don't have a long history of terrible things happening to us as he did for having spoken up, but our imagination runs wild and chasing it are our emotions. And so we are frightened—so frightened that fear takes over and we hesitate to speak.

Oh, how we need people to be praying we will be fearless, full of courage and boldness.

3. Pray for clear **SPEECH**.

Now, it is not because Paul had a speech impediment. The gospel is very mysterious, clouded, and not easily communicated. Think as an unbeliever thinks! Jesus Christ died 2000 years ago... a Jew in a foreign land... for we affluent North Americans. Somehow, His death supposedly makes a difference in the eyes of God so the sins I have sinned here can be forgiven by a man who died 2000 years before I lived. Now isn't that rather mysterious? How can it be?

So our task is indeed a difficult one to make the gospel clear when so much of it is mysterious and strange.

4. Pray for a sense of **OUGHTNESS** to compel you.

“Pray that I may declare the gospel, the mystery of Christ fearlessly as I should.”

Paul experienced a sense of oughtness that we also experience. Although there are times when we would like to excuse, intellectualize, and talk our way out of the necessity of talking to others about Christ, there's always the inner, “I should” when it seems that “I cannot.” There's that prevailing inner, “I should.” The “I should” is not an ought to be discarded. It is a duty to be embraced. It is a step of faith which one must take.

Colossians 4:2-6

1. **DEVOTING** yourself to prayer is key for seeing unbelievers come to Christ.

The one who would speak for God requires a devotion to prayer—commitment.

Devotion means to be deeply committed and persevering.

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Slide 5

Slide 6

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Praying for Unbelievers

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II. Lecture (cont.)

2. Pray there will be open doors.

Illustration My personal experience is that as I pray for open doors, more doors are opened. I think doors swing both ways. The more I pray, the more there are open doors. The more I pray the more I see the open door. For the less I pray for the open door, the more I am apt to walk down the hallway of life unaware doors are ajar.

3. Pray for wisdom regarding actions toward outsiders.

Illustration How embarrassed I am again and again to hear the report of unbelievers. While we Christians are well-intentioned, and I believe we are graded lower than we should be, I find legitimate, embarrassing evaluations by unbelievers. The casual work, the careless word, the temporary relinquishing of ethics, the lie results in the outsider saying, "There's no difference."

Where the church has existed for a half century or more, outsiders find difficulty in becoming an insider.

4. Strive for right **ACTIONS**.

Those times when we think we have a right to be angry with people, let us relinquish that right for the more noble purpose of leading the unsaved into a right relationship with God. There are times when Christians stand for principles, so they think, but they are evaluated as being perfectionists.

5. Make the most of every **OPPORTUNITY**.

Making the most of every opportunity means I direct a person (to the degree they are open) into a closer relationship—a right relationship—with God.

Seize the opportunity. Our inclination may be to quit before the opportunity has been exploited. Never, never are we to push. Never is it appropriate to pressure. Never is it right to put people down. But, oh, there is much that can be done when there is an opportunity God presents.

6. Let your **CONVERSATIONS** be full of grace.

That means loving and redemptive. Take to heart the welfare of others.

Slide 6

Slide 7

II. Lecture (cont.)

7. Season your conversations with **SALT**.

The idea is you create a thirst in the person during your conversation.

“Seasoned with salt” has another meaning, too. It is “sprinkled with humor.”

Illustration Do you enjoy being with people who say funny things, enjoy a laugh, and who are light hearted? Of course you do. I seek them out.

Conversations with humor in them draw the unbeliever to a place of openness. Is your conversation seasoned with salt? That is, does it make a person thirsty? Is there humor that invites them into a relationship with you?

That’s the kind of thing Paul suggests we pray about. “Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.”

Illustration While sitting in a restaurant with Terry one day, he said, “In the last 30 seconds of my life, I’m going to repent.” After I left the restaurant, I went home to tell my wife. There in the living room, beside the couch, we began to pray for Terry. When I got up from that time of prayer, I was surprised. We had prayed for an hour and fifteen minutes. It seemed like only a few moments had passed.

In that time of prayer something happened inside me. When I got up from my knees—stood to my feet—there was a deep inner certainty Terry would be saved. (I cannot explain it to you. Again this happens rarely in my life. I’m not about to convey to you this situation is normative to me.)

Arising from that time of prayer, I knew somehow Terry would be saved. Within two weeks he came over to our home and said, “I need you to know, I’ve accepted Christ into my life.”

II. Lecture (cont.)

Conclusion:

Review the following as you close this portion of the lecture:

1. There's a direct relationship between the prayers we pray for the outsiders and the number of people who become insiders.
2. For some, prayer and evangelism are new.
3. Some of you will see an unusual harvest over a lifetime as you begin to pray and see people come to know Christ.
4. Begin **now** to engage in prayer for others. The process may take weeks, months, years, or decades.
5. You have in scripture some guidelines as to how to pray.
6. As you pray, know the Spirit of God who hears each prayer is working even when you are asleep. Perhaps when you have given up praying, He continues to work.
7. Prayer registered with God is prayer dealt with by a God who is consumed with reaching lost people.

(The information for this portion of the lecture was adapted from a conversation with Glaphré Gilliland in February 1995.)

Let's move to the next step and talk about how to engage the people of your church in praying for unbelievers. You could try to tackle praying for the unbelievers in your congregation or community on you own and see good results. But think about the results if you were to join in prayer with 10, 20, even 50 other people for these unbelievers.

Encouraging a Local Church to Pray

1. Begin with the **LEADERS**.

Start with the pastors and one or two others in the church. Although there are others, this is a big enough group for starters.

2. **PREPARE**

- **READ** one or two books that focus on pray-ers effective in evangelism. One example is *The Autobiography of George Mueller*. Give the participants other suggestions from your own reading.

Slide 8

II. Lecture (cont.)

- **LIST** scripture to study—ask God to open your heart to them.
 - Pray you will have the same **HEART** Jesus has for the lost.
4. **PRESENT** the idea to your congregation.
 5. Conduct mini **LESSONS** on prayer.
These lessons can be taught in Sunday school, evening worship, Wednesday night, etc.
 6. **CREATE** an awareness of the need to pray for the lost.
 7. Begin to **ACCEPT** the part God wants you to play in praying for unbelievers.

Start praying for the lost -- begin with your **FAMILY** and then move to:

- **FRIENDS**
 - **CITY**
 - **STATE**
 - **COUNTRY**
8. **COORDINATE** opportunities for others to participate in prayer and increase their awareness of the need to pray.

Passing This Information on to Others

1. **WRITE** a prayer.
2. **SING** prayer songs (directed toward God).

An example of a prayer song is *Lord Lay Some Soul upon My Heart*. You might suggest some other songs. If you sing, you might even lead the group in singing a prayer song at this point or just before they begin their individual exercise.

3. **PRESENT** mini-devotionals frequently.

As you move to the individual exercise, tell the participants you have some handouts with suggestions on ways to pray for unbelievers.

Distribute the material.

Notes

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Slide 9

Slide 10

Slide 11

III. Individual Exercise

(15 Minutes)

While this module focuses on leadership praying for unbelievers, the process is very personal and begins with each person increasing his or her desire to pray for unbelievers. This exercise gives participants an opportunity to develop (or review) their list of unbelievers and renew their commitment for praying for these people.

Here are some prayer suggestions:

1. Ask God to guide you in your thoughts over the next few minutes as you focus on praying for unbelievers.
2. Pray for your pastors and one or two of your leaders.
3. Pray you will have a heart like Jesus had for the lost.
4. List your unsaved family members.
5. Ask God, “What is the part you want me to play in leading my church to pray for unbelievers?”
6. Write down what **you** will do this week in praying for unbelievers. *I will . . .*

IV. Discussion

(15 Minutes)

The discussion portion of the module provides an opportunity for people to share their thoughts about praying for unbelievers. Assess your group to determine which method you want to take:

If the group is not very talkative or you have a few very dominant participants, instruct the participants to share their thoughts among their teams. If the group is comfortable sharing and no one dominates the group, open the discussion to the entire group.

Possible questions to get the discussion started are:

- What new ideas or thoughts has God revealed to you?
- What new techniques will you begin using as you pray for unbelievers?

When the discussion slows or the time is up, move to the Action Planning/ Reporting section.

Slide 12

V. Action Planning/Reporting

(20 Minutes)

This section gives the participants an opportunity to discuss their plans for using this information in their churches, as well as how they will share the information with others.

The homework assignment for this module is:

Conduct a minimum of three activities where the laity participate in praying for the unbeliever. Suggested settings for these activities include Sunday school classes, Sunday evening services, Wednesday evening services, small group meetings, etc. Choosing a variety of settings will allow you to involve those who do not regularly attend a particular activity.

You've had a few minutes to reflect on this topic. I know you will want to spend more time on your individual application of these ideas; however, before you leave I want you to spend a few minutes with your team members talking about how you will use this information in your church and how you will share this information with others.

In your material there, is a section titled Action Planning/Reporting. In that section is your homework assignment. Review the assignment, and in your teams, discuss how you will go about completing this assignment.

Move among the groups to answer specific questions. Listen for discussions that are not focused on developing a plan and guide them into developing a plan. Let the group know when there is five minutes remaining and ask them to begin to conclude their discussion.

Slide 13

V. Module Wrap-Up

Notes

(5 Minutes)

This section provides an opportunity to close the module.

End the module by praying together. Based on your group, you may want the entire group to pray together with different people leading, or you may want to instruct the participants to pray in their teams.