

Prayerwalking



Taking Your Faith Into The Real World



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VOLUME 3

JANUARY/FEBRUARY, 2011

ISSUE 1

Let's Take A Look At Your Heart

While driving to a Bible conference, my car began making unusual noises. I don't know much about cars. You will never hear my name connected with the phrase "mechanically inclined." I can put gas in a car and change the oil. My ability to work on a car stops at this point. Yet, from the racket coming from under the hood, I knew that my car had a significant problem.

After much prayer and slow driving, I finally arrived at the Bible conference. I told the pastor about the problem with my car. After one of the services, he introduced me to one of the mechanics in the church. This mechanic asked me to describe the problem. I did my best to describe what the car did. I did my best impersonation of what sounds the car made. The mechanic thought for a moment and finally said, "Well, I guess we'll just have to open the hood and look in there to see what's going on."

The mechanic had to look inside of the car. He couldn't start work on the car until he first examined the inside of the car. We will have to do the same as we begin this journey of learning how to pray for the lost. Before we can pray people to Jesus, we have to look inside. We have to examine our hearts. Building a life of prayer for the lost begins with your heart – a heart that passionately loves and desires the salvation of sinners.

What kind of heart do we have to have in order to pray people to Jesus? We have to have a heart like God's. God's heart beats for

those who do not know Him through His Son Jesus Christ. His heart provides us with the example for our attitude concerning the lost. It also shows us what we must cultivate in our lives if we want to pray people to Jesus.

God has revealed His heart concerning the lost in **Luke 15**. In this chapter, Jesus shows us God's heart for those who are lost and in need of salvation. This is the heart – the attitude – that we need concerning the lost. We need Him to reproduce the same heart in us. This is the foundation of praying for the lost.

God's Heart For The Lost

Jesus reveals four basic truths about God's attitude – His heart – for the lost.

(1) God loves sinners.

I know that this appears simplistic. You might think, "I already know that. I already understand this." Do you? Have you grown accustomed to hearing this without seeing its application to you? Have you grown so familiar with the truth that God, the eternal, almighty God, loves sinners, that it no longer stirs your heart for sinners? One can easily confess this without being moved by the power of its truth. One can know this truth and yet fail to make the connection with praying people to Jesus,

Jesus reveals this startling truth in **Luke 15**. He does this by contrasting God's attitude with that of the Pharisees. The Pharisees slander Jesus in **Luke 15:1**. On the other hand, at least, they believe their criticism slandered Jesus. Their criticism stands as one of the best descriptions of Jesus' heart and that of God's. They accuse Jesus of receiving and eating with sinners. They declare that Jesus welcomed sinners and showed love to them. The Pharisees could not believe what they saw. They could not accept the fact that Jesus loved sinners and associated with them.

Luke 15:1-2 contrasts the attitude of the Pharisees and God concerning sinful people. The Pharisees held sinners in contempt. They looked down on sinners. They had no love for sinners. They wanted to avoid sinful people. The Pharisees believed that any contact with sinners would defile them.

Read and meditate on **Luke 18:9-14**. Write out a sentence or two that sums up what the verse teaches about the Pharisees attitude toward sinful people. How is God's attitude different? Write out a sentence showing how God's attitude differed from that of the Pharisees.

Luke 15:1-2 teaches that God had the exact opposite attitude toward sinful people. God's attitude bore no resemblance to the Pharisees. The Pharisees portrayed God as a God who despised sinners and wanted nothing to do with them. However, Jesus wanted people to know that the God of the Pharisees was not the true God. The true God is not a spiteful, self-righteous Being who despises sinners. He is the loving God whose heart beats for sinners. He loves sinful people. He has great compassion and mercy for them.

(2) God reaches out to sinful people.

In **Luke 15**, Jesus gives us three parables. The parables deal with a lost sheep, a lost coin, and a lost son. Although they are three different stories, they present one basic principle – God reaches out to sinful people. What a life-transforming truth! God Himself reaches out to lost people! God desires to rescue sinful people from their lostness and bring them into relationship with Himself. These parables teach us that God seeks out the lost. He does not sit and wait for lost people to come to Him; He reaches out to the lost in grace and mercy. God actively pursues the salvation of those who are lost and headed for an eternity in hell.

Read these parables and meditate on them (**Luke 15:2-24**). Answer the following questions about the parables:

What is lost?

Who seeks after these lost things?

What kind of a search is made for the lost things?

In these parables, a shepherd goes looking for a sheep, a woman searches for a lost coin, and a father looks for a prodigal son. In each of these parables, there is an intense search. The shepherd leaves the ninety and goes out to look for the one sheep. The woman takes a light, sweeps her house, and carefully looks for coin. The father patiently waits for his prodigal son to come home. Although he did not seek for his son, his heart did. This father's heart was searching for the prodigal son. In all

these stories, an intense search goes on by someone for something that is lost.

This is Jesus' point! God is a seeking God. He intensely searches for the lost. He reaches out in grace to rescue and save those who are headed for an eternity of misery and damnation in hell. He desires to save the lost. He takes no pleasure in the lostness and eternal misery of the lost. He works to call and draw sinful people to Himself.

How does God reach out to and search for the lost people? Read and meditate on these verses. Write out the ways that God works to bring sinful people to himself.

John 6:44

John 16:7-8

Romans 10:15

Romans 2:4

Romans 10:1

Acts 1:8

Romans 5:8

God reaches out to sinful people in a variety of ways – the work of the Spirit in drawing and convicting sinful people, the preaching of the Word, His goodness and kindness, the prayers of His people for them, the loving witness of believers, and the sending of His Son to die on the Cross. God actively works to save sinful people from their lostness and to bring them into a relationship with Him. He does not sit and wait for the lost to come to Him. He passionately reaches out to those who are lost.

(3) God rejoices over the salvation of sinners.

In each of these parables, the lost object is found. The shepherd finds the sheep. The woman finds her lost coin. The prodigal son returns to his father. Yet, the story does not end there. Jesus goes on to tell us how they responded when they found what was lost. How did they respond when they found what was lost?

Luke 15:5-6

Luke 15:9

Luke 15:22-24

In each case, the people rejoiced. Joy filled their hearts. When he found the sheep, the shepherd rejoiced and called His friends together to rejoice with him. The woman calls her friends and neighbors together to rejoice with her. The father throws a joyous party for the son who has now come home. The New Living Translation renders **Luke 15:25** this way, “The party began.” That sums up how the people responded when they found what was lost – the party began!

Jesus uses this to illustrate God’s response to sinners who come to Him. When a sinner comes to Him, the party begins! All of heaven rejoices. Moreover, God leads the rejoicing. Like the shepherd, the woman, and the father, He rejoices over finding what was lost. No one in heaven rejoices more than He does when this happens.

Read and meditate on **Luke 15:7** and **10**. Who does God rejoice over?

In both verses, Jesus says that God rejoices over “one” sinner. This gives us a stunning look into God’s heart. He genuinely rejoices over every sinner who repents. His heart glories in the salvation of every lost person who turns to Christ. He is not a cold, impersonal Deity who wants nothing to do with sinful people. He is the loving God who wants to save sinners and rejoices over their salvation. This is the God of the Bible!

What About Your Heart?

In this study, we have examined God’s attitude towards lost people. Now you must examine your attitude towards lost people. Praying people to Jesus begins with your heart. The more you develop God’s heart for the lost, the more power you’ll have in praying people to Jesus. Be honest; you know what the right answers are. Yet, how do you really

view lost people? How do you really feel about sinful, lost people? Is your attitude more like God or the Pharisees’?

Question 1: Do you love lost people – caring about their condition and genuinely desiring their salvation?

Loving lost people means caring about their condition. It means having concern about their lostness and eternity in hell. Loving lost people also includes genuinely desiring their salvation. It is having the burning desire to see people turn to Christ and experience true salvation through Him.

Question 2: Do you reach out to the lost – praying for their salvation, ministering to their needs, and sharing the good news of Jesus?

God reaches out to lost people in a variety of ways. When you develop God’s heart for the lost, you will do the same. You will strive to make a difference in the lives of lost people by praying, ministering, and sharing.

Question 3: Do you rejoice in the salvation of sinners? Alternatively, could you be content without ever seeing anyone experience true salvation?

Charles Spurgeon once said, “If you can be content without the conversion of sinners, you will be.” Before you can rejoice over the salvation of sinners, you have to hunger and long for their salvation. Hungering for their salvation precedes rejoicing over their salvation. These things go hand in hand.

Asking God For His Heart

Worship God today for His loving heart towards lost people. Thank Him for being the compassionate God that He is. Pray now for the following aspects of His heart:

- A heart of love for the lost
- A heart to reach out to the lost
- A heart that hungers for and rejoices over the salvation of the lost.

Call on God to produce these things in your heart. Pray also that He will produce these things in your church. Ask that your church will have God's heart for the lost.

Your Church: A House Of Prayer For The Lost

In **1 Timothy 2:1**, the Word of God reveals that the church is to be a house of prayer, "Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men." The church is to pray for "all men" – for all kinds of people with all kinds of needs. As the church prays, God will unleash His transforming power into the lives and circumstances of people.

It is God's will for the church is to pray for all kinds of people and their needs. Yet, praying for lost people is the greatest prayer concern of the church. Our God is the saving God. His great desire is to deliver people from their sin and eternal punishment and bring them into a right relationship with Himself. Of all the needs that people have, this is their greatest need. This must be our priority in prayer. Nothing can substitute for this. God desires that your church be a house of prayer for the lost.

You may be wondering, "How can I lead my church to be a house of prayer for the lost?" You might consider the following suggestions:

- ✓ *Pray that God would give your church a spirit of prayer for the lost (**Matthew 7:7**).* Ask the Holy Spirit to burden your church and to unleash a spirit of prayer for those who need Jesus.
- ✓ *Preach regularly on praying for the lost (**Romans 9:1-3, Romans 10:1**).* Strive to keep this before the people.
- ✓ *Lead your church to pray the Scripture for the lost (**John 3, 6**).* Help your members forsake superficial prayer for the lost by showing them how to pray the Word for the lost.
- ✓ *Prayerwalk throughout your city or area (**Matthew 9:36**).*

- ✓ *Establish prayer triplets that pray specifically for the lost (Matthew 18:19-20).*
- ✓ *Have a "Praying For the Lost" Sunday or weekend.*
- ✓ *Encourage your members to pray for specific lost people.*
- ✓ *Develop a Fishbowl Ministry (**Luke 5:10**).* Ask your members to write down the names of lost people on slips of paper. Place these in a fishbowl. Have your members draw out a slip of paper. Ask them to pray for the lost on the slip. After a month, have them put their slip back in the bowl and draw another.

The following prayer guide is designed to help you pray for a house of prayer for the lost. This prayer guide is based on the acrostic "**BURN**." Your prayer and goal is that your church will "**BURN**" with a passion for the lost and a fresh desire to reach out to them.

Burden – Pray that the Holy Spirit will create a heavy burden for the lost in the hearts of the people. Ask Him to stir your church with a fresh concerning and burden for the lost – across the street and across the world.

Understanding – Ask the Holy Spirit to teach the believers of your church how to pray for the lost. Pray that they will seek to practice praying for those who need Jesus.

Removal – Plead that God will remove any indifference and apathy that your church has toward those who need Jesus. Call on God to take away anything that might hinder your passion for the lost.

Need – Pray that God would grant the power of the Holy Spirit to pray and witness. Our great need is the power of the Spirit. The disciples were told not to depart from Jerusalem until they were empowered by the Spirit of God (**Acts 1:4, 8**). Their witness was useless apart from the work of the Holy Spirit.

As it was with them, so it is with us also. We cannot pray or witness apart from His work and power. We need the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish the Great Commission.

Prayerwalking People To Jesus

The heart of prayerwalking is bringing people to the Lord Jesus Christ. In **Luke 10:1**, Jesus sent out the seventy to the places that He would eventually go. The responsibility of the seventy was to prepare the way for Jesus. That's what's prayerwalking is all about – preparing people to come to Jesus. The following Scripture prayers can help you do this as you prayerwalk:

Father, open the eyes of the people here to their sinfulness and lostness apart from Jesus (**Romans 3:23**).

Father, cause the people of this area to know that they deserve eternal punishment for their sins (**Romans 6:23**).

Father, teach the people here that good works cannot earn or merit Your salvation (**Ephesians 2:8-10**).

Father, tear down and remove all the false ideas that the people here have about Jesus and His salvation (**2 Corinthians 10:3-5**).

Father, shatter the spirit of empty religion in this area that keeps people from coming to Jesus Christ (**John 5:40**).

Father, bind and destroy Satan's work of hindering people here from coming to Jesus (**2 Corinthians 4:4**).

Father, deliver the people in this area from the power of the enemy so that they can come to Christ (**Colossians 1:13**).

Father, create within the people of this area a hunger for and interest in Christ and His Word (**Psalms 42:1-2**).

Father, unleash the convicting power of Your Spirit in the lives of the people here (**John 16:8**).

Father, by Your Spirit and Word, reveal who Jesus is to the people of this area (**John 16:14**).

Father, teach the people here their absolute need of Jesus Christ (**Romans 6:23**).

Father, grant the people of this area genuinely repentant hearts that hate sin and are willing to turn from it (**Acts 11:18**).

Father, I plead that the people of this area will embrace Jesus Christ by genuine faith (**John 3:16**).

Father, I pray that the people of this area will believe that You sent Jesus and that they will trust solely in Him for salvation (**John 5:23-24**).

Father, lead the people here to commit themselves wholly to the Lord Jesus Christ (**Romans 14:9**).

Father, I plead that the people of this area will love and cherish Jesus above all else (**1 Peter 2:7**).

Father, I ask that the people here will not let anything keep them from coming to Christ (**1 Peter 2:7-8**).

Father, draw the lost in this area out of sin to trust in Jesus for salvation (**John 6:44**).

Father, I pray that the people here will know the truth about Jesus and that they will be set free from their bondage (**John 8:31**).

Father, open the hearts of the people here to believe the good news of Jesus Christ (**Acts 16:14**).

Father, lead those who believe in Jesus to confess Him before men through baptism and their lives (**Matthew 10:32-33**).

Father, I pray that those who believe in Jesus will join and actively participate in His church (**Acts 2:42-47**).

Praying For The Long Haul

Praying for the lost requires commitment. Interceding for those outside of Jesus Christ demands that you pray for the long haul. Seeing a person come to Christ is a process saturated with prayer. When a person surrenders his or her life to Jesus Christ, it is only because a believer or believers have prayed fervently for his or her salvation. Over a period of time, these believers pled with God to save the person.

The same is true for your intercession for the lost. You must be committed to praying for lost people for the long haul. Over a period of time, you must saturate the lives of lost people with prayer.

Read the following verses and write out what they teach you about your prayer life.

Luke 18:1

James 4:2

Matthew 7:7

Galatians 6:9

These verses teach that the believer must persevere in prayer. They declare that you must be persistent in your praying. God honors and blesses persistence in prayer.

Now, take these truths and apply it to your praying for the lost. Look back at what you wrote about these verses. What do these verses tell you about praying for those who need Jesus Christ?

Plead with God today to give you a spirit of persistence in your praying for the lost. Ask Him to empower you to pray for the long haul for the lost. Thank Him today for those believers who labored in prayer for you and did not give up on you, but kept praying.

PLEASE SHARE!

Our goal is to encourage believers to pray for and reach out to the lost. Please feel free to share this material with others. You can print it out and use it in your churches and small groups. Please feel free to forward it to others. Our desire is to equip and stir believers to pray and witness that countless numbers of people will be brought to saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and His church.

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