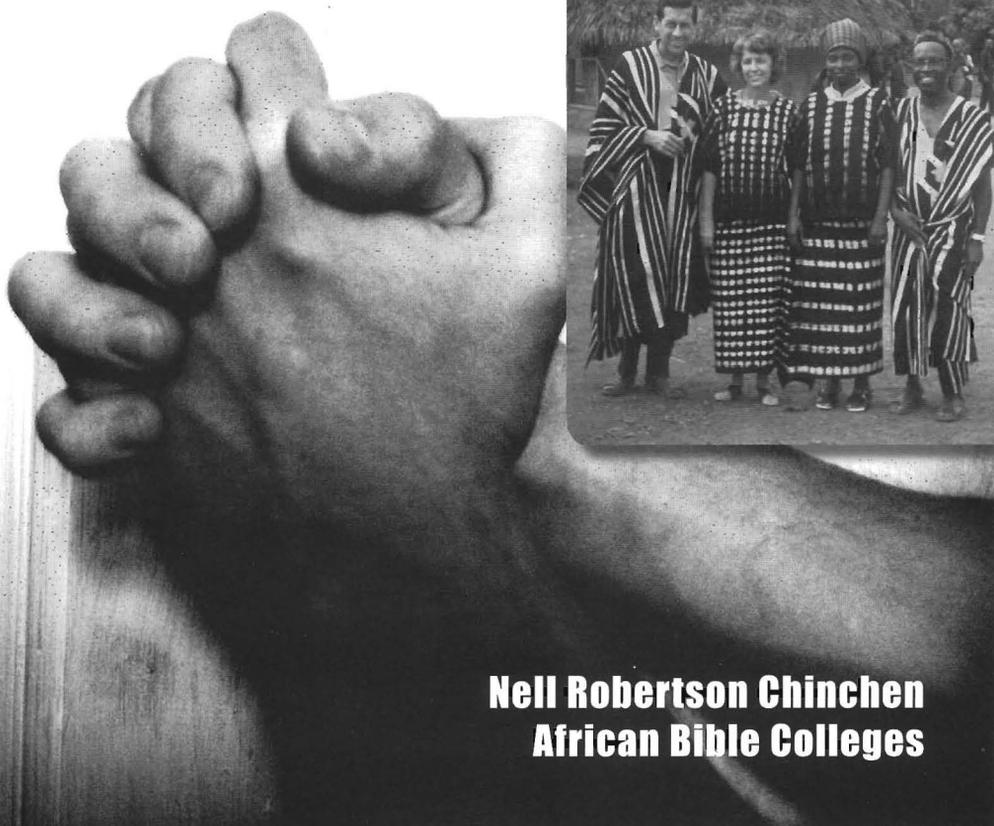


PRAYER:

*God's Greatest
Imperative in Missions*

TEN WAYS TO PRAY FOR YOUR MISSIONARY



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African Bible Colleges**

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There are two very important reasons why **PRAYER** is God's greatest imperative in missions. First of all, it is prayer that **GETS** missionaries out on the mission field...and secondly, it is prayer that **KEEPS** missionaries out on the mission field. I'd like to consider both of these aspects of prayer with you.

PRAYER GETS MISSIONARIES OUT ON THE MISSION FIELD

In Matthew 9:37, 38 we read the words of Jesus to his disciples: "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few. **PRAY** ye, therefore, the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest."

There's nothing wrong with the harvest...it's plentiful. There's just not enough laborers. And so, the followers of Jesus are told to pray for laborers to be sent out into that harvest. There's only one problem with that prayer...we cannot pray with any conviction or power that missionaries be thrust forth to the mission field until we have first presented ourselves as possible candidates for the answer to that prayer. We must first gain the ground of intercession.

In our own experience, we faced exactly this situation. My husband was pastor of a Presbyterian Church in the south when we began to feel that God was calling us to the mission field. We came up with the usual run of excuses...first, that we were "too old" (he was 45); then that we had too many children (we have 7); and the best one of all, that he was a "preacher" and we would just stay home and encourage other people to go to the mission field! That sounded sensible until we remembered what Reese Howell had said, "You cannot ask others



to do what you yourself are not willing to do.” And so, we knew we had to first at least offer ourselves for the foreign field before we could pray for others to be sent out.

Yes, the fields are white unto harvest...but there’s approximately one missionary for every 50,000 people – 500 million who have never heard once the Name of Jesus Christ. And yet the prayer that laborers be sent is rarely prayed by the Church.

Prayer GETS missionaries out on the mission field. It is the work of the Spirit to call forth men in response to the exercise of His power. This is released in proportion with the prayers of God’s people that laborers be sent forth.

PRAYER KEEPS MISSIONARIES OUT ON THE MISSION FIELD

By its very nature, prayer must be specific to be effective. The familiar, “Lord, bless all the missionaries” can hardly be considered prayer that will KEEP the missionary out on the mission field!



I’d like to share with you TEN areas out of our own experience as missionaries to Africa for many years that might help you pray in such a way as to KEEP your missionary out on the mission field.

1. THE ADVERSARY

1 Corinthians 16:9 tells us that “A wide and effectual door has been opened unto me...and there are many adversaries.” In Africa, for instance, Satan has kept the people in darkness for some 2,000 years. He is not going to give up easily! We need to pray for the DEFEAT OF THE ADVERSARY.

2. HIS HEALTH

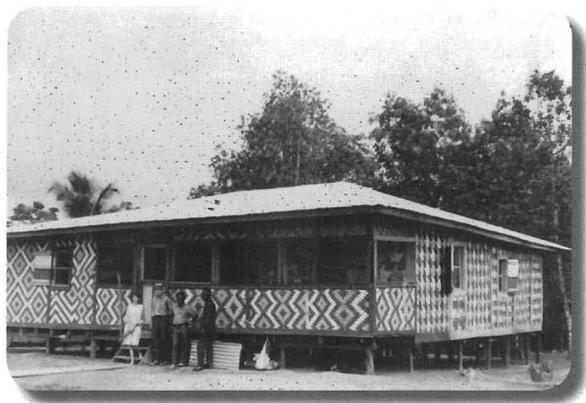
Most missionaries are in a hostile environment. Where we were in Africa, there were parasites in the ground, parasites in the water, parasites in the air, and parasites in the food...no way to avoid them! And, there

were many tropical diseases for which we had to be constantly on guard. Pray for the health of your missionary...and their children.

I remember the time one of our children became very sick...and as he became worse we were faced with the decision...should we try to get the mission airplane to fly into our jungle station and take him to the hospital in the nearest city, or would he be better off to stay right where he was? We got on our little short-wave radio and finally reached another missionary. We asked her to try to locate the doctor there and ask him what to do. After what seemed like hours, she radioed back that the doctor said to leave him...and continue with the medication we were giving him. The national pastors who were attending our training school, came and knelt around his bed and prayed...and we prayed... but I couldn't help but wonder, "Are the people at home praying?!" It was about two o'clock in the morning that his breathing returned to normal and we knew he was going to be alright, but it made us keenly aware of the need for prayer for **OUR HEALTH AND THE HEALTH OF OUR CHILDREN.**

3. HIS TESTIMONY

We were stationed in a little African country called Liberia. There the people are not "people-eaters", they are "people-watchers"! When they built our bamboo house, they included a ledge all around the front of the house that enabled



them to see better through the screen. We lived in that bamboo house for two years...and the day it caught fire and burned to the ground along with all our possessions, medicines, and books...we didn't realize they were watching us to see what our reaction would be. The people had come wailing and crying from all the nearby villages and we ended up having to comfort them! But a few days later, one of the native pastors came and asked to talk to us. He had us bring all our children and as we sat around him, he said, "Our people want to thank you." And we said, "For what?" He said, "For what you taught us. When your house burned down and you lost everything you owned, you weren't crying..."

you were smiling! You showed us that all the things you had were not as important to you as the God you have been telling us about.”

We didn't realize that the people were watching us! You need to pray for the TESTIMONY of the missionary before the people.

4. HIS PHYSICAL NEEDS

Days are long and hot...nights are often interrupted. The missionary many times is tired and yet, because there's no one else to relieve him of the multitude of responsibilities, he must carry on with what little energy he may have. Soon after our bamboo house burned down, my husband was trying to build a septic tank. In the process, our D-4 tractor backed into the hole. A few days later, a country taxi came roaring up to our door (by then, we were beginning to feel like Job) with the news that our new dump truck had fallen upside down in the river when a bridge collapsed. Frustrations like these drain physical resources in a hurry!

Many times at night there would be the “Bop-bop” on the door... “Mother, come quickly”...I remember one night in particular. A doctor had just arrived from the states to spend some time doing medical work on our mission, when there was that urgent knock on the door, “Mother, come quickly...Anna's dying-o”. I was relieved the doctor was there to go with us to the village, but as we made our way to the native hut with all the people crying and rolling on the floor...I could sense this was a shock to him. It was a far cry from a modern American hospital! We stepped over the people on the dirt floor of the native hut and found Anna lying in a pool of blood over in one corner. She was covered with mud...and with only the light from the kerosene lantern, it was difficult for the doctor to examine her. But he stood up finally and said, “I think she's going to be alright.” Anna had had a complicated delivery...with too much help from the native midwives...too late really for the doctor. We went back home, but it wasn't long before there was the knock again. “Mother, come quickly, Anna's dying-o!” And this time we could hear the death wail from the village...the wail of utter hopelessness. As we went back into that



hut, we found that Anna was dead. The sense of lostness of those people rose up with one great sob. Tiredness and sorrow enveloped us as we crawled back into bed that night for a few hours sleep before the activities of a new day rushed in upon us.



Pray for the **PHYSICAL NEEDS** of your missionary!

5. FOR WISDOM

Many times your missionary is faced with making difficult decisions. He needs wisdom that these be the right decisions. Often he is not able to have a “multitude of counselors” and the responsibility is squarely on his shoulders.

I remember the time one of the mission students was playing in our house with our children. He came to me and said, “Mother, I have a sore on my leg that won’t get well.” When I looked, I knew it was the dreaded disease, leprosy. We took him to the nearby leper colony, expecting to leave him there in isolation but after the testing was done, the nurse in charge said, “We have good news for you...you’ve caught this early enough...you’ll be able to take Solo back with you and treat him yourself.” Certainly that was good news...but I needed wisdom! Should I put Solo back in the dorm with the other students, allow him to have close contact with the children on the mission? In this decision, we believe God led us, as it was through this experience, through the love and acceptance Solo received when we took him back to the mission that he came to know Jesus Christ as his Savior.

And then, I remember the time four of our little mission girls were hit by lightning. Two were killed instantly and the other two injured. As they brought one of the little girls to our house with her legs almost paralyzed, hemorrhaging from her nose and mouth, I was faced with the decision: should I keep her here where she can be quiet and I can watch her closely...or should we send her into the nearest hospital over 50 miles of bumpy, dusty road? We decided to keep her...and when a few days later she asked for a peanut butter sandwich, I knew we had made the right decision!

But, do pray for **WISDOM** for your missionaries!

6. FOR HIS FINANCIAL NEEDS

In our particular denomination, the churches and individuals support their missionaries generously. But this is not so for all mission groups. There was a young couple in another section of the bush of Liberia that had a heartbreaking experience...because they didn't have the \$95 needed to charter their mission plane. Dave's wife was expecting another baby and because it would cost them \$95 to charter the plane to fly his wife to the big hospital in the capital city, they decided she should go to a smaller bush hospital. They didn't anticipate the complications...and she died...because they didn't have \$95.

Pray for the FINANCIAL NEEDS of your missionary.

7. FOR HARMONY

"Can two walk together except they be agreed?" This is true on the foreign field just as much as it is here in America. In order for the Spirit of God to do His work, there must be unity and harmony between God's people. The isolation, the frustrations, the disappointments all contribute to the hardened spirit that sometimes comes between fellow-workers...missionaries and nationals alike. You need to pray that your missionary will maintain the true Christ-like attitude of humility and yieldedness and a sense of humor! How tragic to see God's Work hindered by a bitter spirit, or angry words...when we have a world to win and need all the power available to us!

Pray earnestly for HARMONY among your missionary families.

8. FOR THEIR CHILDREN

It is true that the children of missionaries fill the pages of "Who's Who" ... more than any other profession ... and yet the MK's are not without their problems! Often these children must be sent away to school at very early ages...sometimes they are in isolated situations without their own peers... sometimes they're moved around so much they have no place to really call "home." And, yet...by and large...I would venture to say that the children of missionaries are





the best adapted, most “normal” children I’ve ever seen.

I taught three of our children for years using the Calvert Correspondence Course and I am convinced they received a better education than most of the students in American schools. Whether they did or not, I

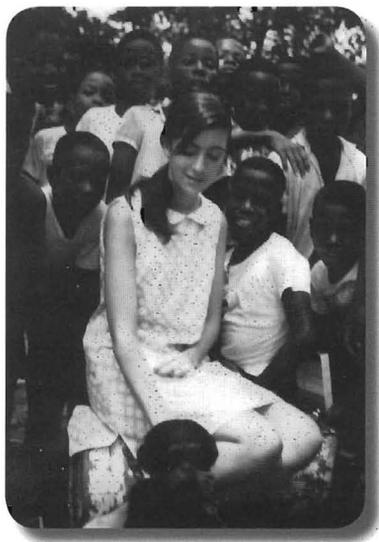
wouldn’t take anything for the opportunity I had to train my children, for the opportunity to give them even one hour a day of my undivided attention.

The CHILDREN OF MISSIONARIES do need special prayer, however, for their health, for their protection, for their sense of security in so many strange situations, for them to have the same zeal for reaching the lost that their parents do.

9. FOR SOULS TO BE WON

After all, that’s what the missionary is there for...to win souls for Jesus Christ. But the conviction of sin does not come upon the heathen by our telling them that it’s wrong for them to have “jujus”; that it’s wrong for them to have 15 wives; that it’s wrong to drink cane-juice and get drunk...the conviction comes through the power of the Holy Spirit convicting them because they do not believe in Jesus. Prayer is intimately connected with the releasing of the power of the Holy Spirit who alone can bring conviction of sin... and regeneration.

In the book, “Who Cares About the Missionary?” by Marjorie A. Collins, I read the story of a returning missionary. His home church had supported him financially and had promised to pray for him. He had had many difficulties and opposition. His wife had died of blackwater fever. He finished his first term of service...and walked into his church during a mid-week prayer service. The prayer period was held. There was concern for the Sunday School picnic, the



new building program, the women's conference... but no mention of missionaries, no pleading for souls, no apparent concern for a lost and dying humanity beyond the confines of their little group. Following the service, the brokenhearted missionary stood at the back of the church. Most people did not recognize



him. As the pastor finally approached him, the missionary cried out, "Now I understand. This is the reason." "What do you mean?" asked the pastor.

"Those years on the field. The difficulties. The pain. The lack of results. This is the reason. You forgot to pray."

The pastor listened...but soon excused himself to meet with the board concerning new cribs for the nursery.

Pray for SOULS to be won to Jesus Christ that your missionary may have the joy of reaping those fields that are white unto harvest!

10. FOR THE MISSIONARY TO LOVE THE PEOPLE

1 Corinthians 13:1-3 reminds us that, "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not love, I am become as sounding bronze, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains and have not love, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profits me nothing."

I am thankful God has given me this love for the Liberian people. Without this love I could not serve them.

But because of this love...

I can reach my arms around them,
I can dress their festering tropical ulcers.

Because of this love...

I can sleep in their native huts
and eat their food
and walk their jungle trails.

Because of this love...

I can leave my children, my friends, family, security and comforts and count them as nothing next to the joy of serving these people.

Because of this love...

I can even risk my life and the life of my children...
knowing that it is not folly to give what you cannot keep
to gain what you cannot lose.

Because of this love...

I can stand in the tropical sun to teach the Bible to those
that will listen.

I can suffer the chills and fever of malaria...

The flies, the mosquitoes, the incessant tropical rains,
The danger of flying in little planes over thick
tropical forests...

Or the discomfort of riding over dusty, bumpy roads

Or trudging through mucky jungle trails

With the fear of snakes and spiders...

The noise of the jungle drums that make the
hot, tropical nights even more restless.

Because of this love...

When we come on furlough...

I feel like a pilgrim passing through...

Until I go back

HOME.

HOME TO AFRICA...

home to the people God has given me to reap for Him.

I need your prayers. Missionaries around the world need your prayers. Will you gain the ground of intercession?

Not just for my sake.

Not just for your sake.

Not just for the sake of the lost.

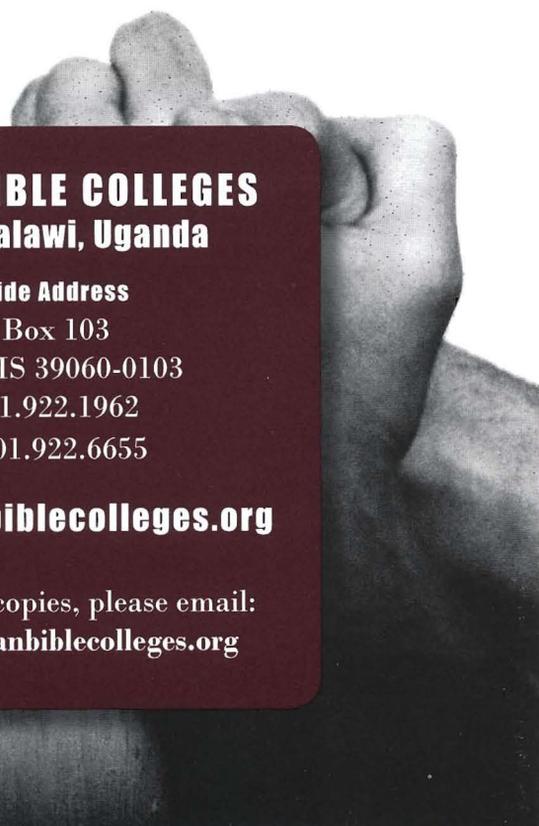
BUT FOR THE SAKE OF JESUS CHRIST...

WHO HAS COMMANDED US TO CARRY

THIS WORD OF HIS DYING INTO ALL

THE WORLD.





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