

Prayer for the Nations

By Alicia Wong

Pre-Session Assignments

One week before the session, participants will take the following assignments.

Assignment One

Read 1 Timothy 2:1–4; Psalm 2:8; and Hebrews 7; then read the comments related to 1 Timothy 2:1–4 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: Why do we need to pray for the nations? What insights did you gain from the Bible verses you studied?

Assignment Two

Read 1 Timothy 2:5–7 and Ephesians 1:18–19; then read the comments related to 1 Timothy 2:5–7 in the section **It's in the Book**. Prepare to share your answers to the following questions: What is most important when praying for the nations? What insights did you gain from the Bible verses you studied?

Assignment Three

Research the www.imb.org website. Click the *Pray* tab. When you are on the *Prayer* page, click on both *Pray Daily* and *Pray Weekly*. Write down five prayer requests from different people groups or nations. Prepare to share about the website and the requests with the group.

Scripture to Memorize

Ask of Me, and I will make the nations Your heritage, and the ends of the earth Your possession. Psalm 2:8

Session Goal

Consistent with God's Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit—by the end of this session, disciples will understand why it is important to pray for the nations and how to pray for the nations.

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It's in the Book

30 minutes

Real-Life Scenario

This is a true story: A group of us on an international mission trip had been hiking for hours, going from one village to the next. Our mission for two weeks was to discover where a certain people group was located. We were lost, hungry and between villages. A man appeared along the pathway and we asked if he could take us to the closest village. Instead, he invited us to his house and he fed us all.

When I returned to the U.S., I shared the story with a friend. She said she woke up in the middle of the night and started praying for us around that time. I know by experience how prayers impact the work of missionaries who are trying to win the nations for Christ.

Read 1 Timothy 2:1–4 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Paul emphasized the importance of prayer by using four different elements in his call to prayer.

Verse 1. Supplications. This word carries the idea of a plea and is used when a person has a specific and deep spiritual need. **prayers.** This term is used for all types of general and specific prayers to God. **Intercessions.** Intercessions are made when someone wants to make a request for something on behalf of someone else. **thanksgivings.** One is to be motivated by gratitude in his or her prayer to God. **all people.** Everyone should be lifted up in prayer.

Verse 2. for kings . . . high positions. Because these people make important decisions for their country, Paul noted it was important for us to pray for them specifically.

Verse 3. This. “This” refers to the prayers mentioned in verse 1. The expression indicates that believers are to pray for all people, not just for themselves or for Christians only. **good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God.** This verse announces that the act of prayer pleases God.

Verse 4. all people to be saved. This is the object of the prayers mentioned in verse 1. **to come to the knowledge of truth.** This phrase refers to conversion.

Assignment One Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment One** during the week can now share answers to the following questions: Why do we need to pray for the nations? What insights did you gain from the Bible verses you studied?

Discussion Questions

Why do you pray? After studying the passage above and hearing from the person who had assignment one, why should you pray for the nations?

Read 1 Timothy 2:5–7 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 5. one mediator. Paul was trying to address misunderstandings concerning who Christ is and what His purpose was on earth.

Verse 6. ransom for all. Paying a ransom in New Testament times meant a sum of money was paid to free a slave from his owner or to set a war captive free. This term helps us understand that Jesus died on the cross so we are free from the captivity of sin. This ransom was paid for all people.

Not only are we, as believers, to pray for *all* nations (without discrimination), but we are to pray specifically for the nations to be saved.

Assignment Two Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Two** during the week can now share answers to the following questions: What is most important when praying for the nations? What insights did you gain from the Bible verses you studied?

On Your Own

In the space below, write down at least five nations and their leaders that come to mind. When everyone is finished, each person can share about a nation, without repeating what others have shared. Then that disciple can pray for that specific nation and leader.

Read Colossians 4:2–4 out loud.

Studying the Passage

Verse 2. Continue steadfastly. This Greek term denotes that one is to persist or continue to do something with an intense effort. **being watchful.** Disciples need to be ready to pray at any time. When something happens, the first response should be to pray.

Verse 3. open to us a door. Missionaries reaching out to the nations need much prayer so peoples' hearts will be open to hearing the gospel.

Discussion Questions

Based on Colossians 4:3–4, what should we pray about for our missionaries? (Note: Two requests are found in v. 3 and one in v. 4.) What else do you think missionaries would like us to pray about?

Assignment Three Feedback

The person who completed **Assignment Three** during the week can now share how to use the IMB website to pray for the nations and can share some prayer requests from the website.

On Your Own

In the space below, write the name of a missionary, country, or people group that you will commit to pray for starting this week. Ask someone to keep you accountable to praying consistently.

Heart and Hands

8 minutes

Read again the **Real-Life Scenario** near the beginning of the lesson. Consider whether your answers have changed during the session.

Be silent for two or three minutes. Thank Jesus for His sacrifice and for the gospel. Adore Him for His glorious reign on the throne of heaven. Then ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you:

1. A way the Scriptures you studied today will change your heart for the glory of Christ.
2. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to stop doing something for the glory of Christ.
3. Or a way those Scriptures will lead you to do something for the glory of Christ.

Write what the Spirit reveals to you below, and then be ready to share what you have written with the group.

Since Last Week

5 minutes

Give the group this update: "In our last session I made a commitment to . . . I want to let you know how that turned out. On that same issue I think the Holy Spirit now is leading me to . . ."

Grace-Filled Accountability

5 minutes

Disciples can agree on a way to hold one another accountable. Confessing faults with other disciples allows them to offer grace, insights, and encouragement. Even more important is confession to Christ, the source of true forgiveness and cleansing.

Planning for Evangelism, Missions, and Service

5 minutes

Groups of disciples always are making preparations for evangelism, missions, and service. Use these minutes to work on the next plan.

Prayer

7 minutes

Every disciple will pray aloud, offering praise to Jesus, thanking Him specifically for His gracious acts, making heartfelt confession, committing to actions flowing from the Bible study, praying toward evangelism locally and globally, and interceding for others as prompted by the Holy Spirit.

At Home: Nail It Down

Praying for the nations is not only important to the global harvest, but it also pleases God for us to do so. He desires for all nations to be saved. God will hear from heaven and forgive sins when His people humble themselves and pray and seek His Face and turn from their wicked ways (2 Chronicles 7:14). In John 17, Jesus was praying for Himself, His disciples and future believers as they minister to the nations.

Praying for the nations should be part of a disciple's typical day. When you come across a country or people group on the news or the Internet, stop and pray for the harvest in that place and pray for the believers there. Also, start a list of nations or missionaries that cross your path. Begin to record prayer requests from them.

Perhaps start or join a weekly prayer group that includes prayer for the nations. See if your church is already supporting a specific missionary or has adopted a specific people group. Make a commitment to pray for them. Great things can be accomplished through your prayers. Like Anna in Luke 2:36–38, your life can be marked by fasting and praying. Here is an outline you may use to pray for the nations:

Praying for the Nations

(Adapted from *Praying Toward His Passion Bookmark* by J. Chris Schofield, www.prayNC.org)

- H** - Pray for the nations' *hearts* to be receptive (Luke 8:5–12).
- E** - Pray God will open their *eyes* and *ears* (Matthew 13:15).
- A** - Pray that they have God's *attitude* toward sin (John 16:8).
- R** - Pray for the nations to be *released* to believe (2 Corinthians. 10:3–4).
- T** - Pray for the lost to have a *transforming* life in Christ (Romans 12:1–2).
- S** - Pray for God to *send* missionaries into the nations (Matthew 9:35–38).

Follow up Question

Why should you pray for the nations, and how will you go about it?

The Making Disciples curriculum is a gift from Southwestern Seminary to those who, for the glory of the Father and in the power of the Spirit, will spend a lifetime embracing the full supremacy of the Son, responding to His kingly reign in all of life, inviting Christ to live His life through them, and joining Him in making disciples among all peoples.