



# PRAYING BIBLICALLY

FOR YOUR MISSIONARY

## *Opportunity*

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In the last issue of *Sowing and Reaping*, I suggested that you do your own spade work to find New Testament texts that tell us specifically how we should pray for missionaries. You were to look for the tip-off wording where Paul says “pray for me/us that . . .” The New Testament is full of texts about praying, but these that specify the content for praying for a missionary are few.

The first one we will consider is Colossians 4:3, where Paul makes this request: “Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds.” The first matter of prayer for a missionary then is to ask God to give him open doors or opportunity to give the Gospel and, by implication, for the Lord to give that opportunity with someone whose heart He has opened.

This seems basic (and it is), but on the other hand, nothing could be more difficult without the intervention of God. Think about it – how easy is it for you to get good opportunities to give the Gospel? When is the last time you shared the Gospel? You know your culture and language, so that makes it somewhat easier, but you still cannot button-hole people with the Gospel. The difficulty can be multiplied many times over for the missionary, who is most likely a foreigner and often is also learning not only the culture but also the language.

Besides the task of having an open door to explain the Gospel, we all face the hardness of the human heart. Therefore, as suggested earlier, when praying for missionaries, we should pray that God will give them opportunities with people whose hearts the Lord is opening, as He did with Lydia (Acts 16:14).

Besides the one-on-one challenge of getting opportunities for the Gospel, we face the practical challenge of even getting into many countries. Restricted Access Nations are by definition closed to official missionary visas and activity, but even “open” countries often raise difficulties for those wanting to do missionary work such as the challenge of getting a long-term visa. So in your praying for opportunity, pray also for the Lord of harvest to open doors to these nations.

So how would the Lord have us pray for missionaries? Remember Paul’s inspired exhortation – that prayer should begin with asking the Lord to give the missionary open doors for the Word. We must not take for granted that just because someone is a missionary, he automatically has easy access to Gospel opportunities. In Japan we found that one of our best evangelistic tools was our dog! The Japanese love dogs, and when they saw us walking ours, they often commented on how pretty Dixie was, and this opened the door for conversation. And what does a missionary need after the open door? See if you can discover the answer to that question by finding out what Paul knew he needed. Next issue we will compare notes!