



PRAYER AND WITNESS - MATT 9:35-38

Intro / Context

- Recently returned from visiting 3 APA mission partners in Asia.
- Saw firsthand the need for gospel workers in unreached and restricted contexts.

Text Overview (Matthew 9:35–38)

- Jesus teaching, preaching, healing — public ministry in full motion.
- Crowds described as “confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.”
- Harvest metaphor: plentiful crop, not enough workers.
- Unexpected response: Jesus doesn’t say “Get to work.”
- He says: “Pray to the Lord of the harvest to send workers.”
- Prayer is the starting point of witness.

1. Pray for More Workers

- The mission is bigger than any one person or church.
- Mission partners overseas need more laborers
- Churches at home always need more workers.
- Emphasis is not on strategy or skill — but dependence on God.
- Witness is community-based:
 - Sometimes you are not the best person to evangelize someone.
 - Example: parents of adult children — shift from persuader to intercessor.
- Pray that God sends the right worker for each person.

2. Pray for Opportunities

- Ask God for divinely orchestrated moments.

- Paul requested prayer for open doors (Colossians 4).
- Story from restricted mission area:
 - Limited ability to speak openly.
 - Prayed to be used.
 - Unexpected opportunity through volleyball.
 - God used a simple shared interest to build relational witness.
- God can use ordinary skills and interests as bridges.
- Witness isn’t always verbal proclamation.

3. Pray for Specific People

- 1 Timothy 2: Pray for all people — including leaders.
- God desires everyone to be saved.
- If you can’t speak to someone about God, you can speak to God about them.
- Prayer is not the “less courageous” option — it is foundational.
- Example: George Müller prayed decades for 5 friends.
 - Some conversions took years — one after his death.
- Prayer fuels long-term faithfulness.

The Heart of Witness: Compassion

- Jesus was moved deeply — “gutted.”
- People are described as confused and helpless, not condemned.
- Without compassion:
 - Witness becomes judgmental or agenda-driven.
- Compassion drives us to pray.
- Jesus came for us out of compassion — lost and helpless.
- Our witness must reflect His heart.

Application

- Identify one person to pray for consistently.
- Commit to pleading for workers, opportunities, and salvation.
- Prayer is the foundation that empowers all witness.

Connect Group Discussion

Warm up:

1. When someone says “I have good news, and I have bad news” which would you prefer to hear first and why?
2. What stood out to you from Sunday’s sermon?

Study & Discussion:

1. Jesus saw the crowds and felt compassion before He told the disciples to pray. What do you think changes in our witness when it begins with compassion instead of obligation, frustration, or fear? Be honest: what emotions do you most naturally feel toward people who don’t share your faith?
2. Jesus tells the disciples to pray for workers before telling them to go. Why do you think prayer comes first? What does this reveal about who actually “owns” the harvest? In your life, do you tend to default to action or to prayer? Why?
3. The sermon suggested that sometimes we are not the right person to witness verbally to someone (e.g., parents with adult children). Can you think of a situation where pushing harder might actually damage your witness? What would it look like to shift from persuader to intercessor in that relationship?
4. George Müller prayed for decades for specific people. What does long-term, persistent prayer reveal about how God works? Is there someone you’ve stopped praying for because it feels pointless? What would it look like to recommit — even if you never see the outcome?

Practice of the Week: Pray for One Person — On Purpose

Step 1: Choose the Person

- Ask the Lord: Who are you putting on my heart?
- Write their name down somewhere you’ll see it (phone wallpaper, journal, prayer card, car dashboard).

Step 2: Pray Daily — 5 Focused Minutes

Pray for them in three simple ways:

1. Pray for their heart
 - That confusion would turn to clarity.
 - That hurt would soften.
 - That they would experience God’s love.
2. Pray for workers
 - If you’re not the right voice, ask God to send the right one.
 - Pray for divine appointments and godly influences in their life.
3. Pray for opportunity
 - Ask God to show you when to speak — and when to stay silent.
 - Ask for courage and discernment.

Step 3: Let Compassion Lead

Before you pray, pause and picture them.

Ask God to give you His heart for them — not annoyance, not anxiety, not pressure — but compassion.

If you can’t speak to them about God yet, speak to God about them.

