

18 Prayers to Pray for Unbelievers

Prayers for Them

Pray that God would circumcise their hearts. Circumcision was the Old Testament sign of entering into God's covenant, of being God's people. To have a circumcised heart symbolizes having a heart that is fully joined to God, fully submissive to him. "And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live" (Deuteronomy 30:6).

Pray that God would give them a heart of flesh. The Bible contrasts a heart of flesh, a heart that is alive and responsive to God, to a heart of stone, a heart that is cold and unyielding. Pray that God would work within these unbelievers to change their hearts. "And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh..." (Ezekiel 11:19).

Pray that God would put his Spirit within them. The great joy of salvation is being indwelt by God himself. Pray that God would grant this honor to those unbelievers, that he would choose to take up residence within them. "And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules" (Ezekiel 36:27).

Pray that they would come to Christ. If unbelievers are to come to salvation, there is just one way. They must come through Christ and Christ alone. "Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me'" (John 14:6). Remember, too, that he is the one who calls them to come and to be relieved of the burden of their sin (see Matthew 11:28-30).

Pray that God would open their hearts to believe the gospel. Once more, God must initiate and people must respond. So pray that God would open the hearts of these unbelievers so they can in turn believe, just as Lydia did. "The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul" (Acts 16:14).

Pray that God would free them from the slavery of sin. Unbelievers may believe they are free, but they are in fact enslaved. They are slaves of sin, bound by their sin and sinfulness. Pray that God would liberate them by his gospel. "But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed" (Romans 6:17).

Pray that God would remove Satan's blinding influence. Unbelievers have been blinded by Satan and will only ever be able to see and appreciate the gospel if God works within them. So pray that God would give them sight—spiritual sight. "In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God" (2 Corinthians 4:4).

Pray that God would grant them repentance. Unbelievers cannot repent without the enabling grace of God. So pray that God would grant them repentance, that this repentance would lead them to a knowledge of the truth. Pray as well that *they would come to their senses* and that *they would escape from the devil's snare*. "God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by him to do his will" (2 Timothy 2:25-26).

Pray that God would use any circumstance to do his work in them. We pray to a God who is sovereign and who sovereignly works his good will. Often he saves people through difficult circumstances, through bringing them to the very end of themselves. Pray, then, that God would arrange circumstances, whether

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easy or difficult, to lead them to salvation. “Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I keep your word” (Psalm 119:67). As you pray for the unbelievers you love, always pray to God: “your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10).

Pray that God would extend his mercy to them. God assures us that he wishes for all people to turn to him in repentance and faith. He receives no joy from seeing people perish. Pray, then, that God would be glorified in the salvation of these people. “The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

Prayers for You

Pray that you will develop relationship with them. For people to be saved they must first hear the good news of the gospel. For them to hear the good news of the gospel, they must first encounter Christians—Christians like you. Pray that you would develop deeper, more significant relationship with them so you can, in turn, speak truth. “How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching?” (Romans 10:14).

Pray for opportunities to minister to them. Many people come to faith after seeing Christ’s loved displayed through the ministry of Christians. Pray for opportunities to minister to unbelievers so that your ministry can have an evangelistic effect. “In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

Pray for them faithfully and persistently. Our temptation is to grow discouraged in prayer, to pray for a while and, when we see no visible results, to give up. But God calls us to persevere in prayer. “Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving” (Colossians 4:2). (See also the parable of the persistent widow in Luke 18:1-8.)

Pray for a burden to plead for their souls. Paul was willing to tell the church at Rome of his great longing to see the salvation of the lost. Do you share this deep longing? Pray that God would give you a great burden for souls. “Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved” (Romans 10:1).

Pray for boldness in generating and taking opportunities to speak the gospel. Even Paul longed for this boldness and for the confidence that he was speaking the right and best words. Pray that God would give you the boldness and, that when you take the opportunities, that he would then guide your words. “[Pray] also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel...” (Ephesians 6:19).

Pray for other believers to encounter them. God almost always uses a succession of people to share the gospel with people before they are saved. Pray, then, that God would lead other Christians into the lives of the unbelievers you love, that they too would provide an example of Christian living and that they too would speak the gospel. “I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth” (1 Corinthians 3:6).