

How to Pray for Missionaries

Their Prayer Letter

Missionaries all write regular prayer letters, so why not ask to receive them? They will keep you up to date with their work and personal needs. Remember, spiritual work can bring tears as well as joy; disappointment as well as hope. Working as a missionary can be lonely, so pray imaginatively for them in their work.

Their Country

Pray for the leaders in your friends' country. Pray for freedom to preach the gospel. For political stability.

Find out as much as you can about the country, its history, and what's happening now.

- Read the papers
- Watch TV
- Use background information from Operation World, or from the agency your friends are working with.
- Organizations such as OMF produce regular prayer letters and fact sheets on the countries they work in and have a web site and magazine.

Their Personal Needs

Pray that your friends will feel at home in a new country, culture and climate.

Pray for their children, particularly if they are at school in a different country.

Pray for happy family times together, and for the children to love and serve the Lord.

Pray that they won't resent being separated from their parents, and that the parents won't fret about their children.

Pray for elderly or frail parents back home and for those who support them. Ask that God would look after them during your friends' absence.

Pray for good, sustaining friendships, for holiday arrangements and time to relax and unwind. If the missionary is single, feelings of loneliness and isolation may creep in.

Pray for your friends when it's time to adjust back to life in their own country. Pray that as they visit churches and supporters they would build strong links and renew relationships.

Pray for good relationships with national Christian leaders and with fellow workers, some of whom may come from different cultures and countries.

Pray as your friends learn a new language, understand its nuances and attempt to communicate. Pray against set backs and discouragement. Grasping the language takes time.

Pray for their language helpers; people with the courage to correct and advise, and who will encourage your friends in their work.

The National Church

Pray for the pastors and church members in your friends' country. Pray for spiritual growth, and for their ability to teach, preach, disciple and witness. Pray for vision and for love, and for any resources or literature that's needed.

Pray for the Christians to be 'salt and light' in their neighbourhoods, society or government, and for good relations with those of other faiths.

Praying with Others

Most Christian organisations have prayer groups throughout the country. Write or phone, to see if the organisation your friends went out with has a group near you, or check the web.

It helps to pray with Christians who are older in the faith or more knowledgeable. By joining a group you will encourage others, further God's kingdom and meet those with similar interests to your own.

Pray as Paul Prayed

The apostle Paul was a pioneer missionary and a prayer. He was beaten, imprisoned and shipwrecked, but never lost sight of the goal. He asked his friends to pray:

- **For Boldness**

Pray . . . that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel . . . Pray that I may declare it fearlessly, as I should.

— Ephesians 6:19, 20

- **For Opportunity and Clarity**

Pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ . . . Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should.

— Colossians 4:3, 4

- **For Protection**

Pray that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men, for not everyone has faith. But the Lord is faithful, and he will strengthen and protect you from the evil one.

— 2 Thessalonians 3:2, 3)

- **For the Spread of God's Word**

Pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honoured, just as it was with you.

— 2 Thessalonians 3:1

How to Pray Each Day

If you want to pray for your friends every day, why not use these topics? Choose from these items and use whatever background you have from prayer letters or other sources.

- **Sunday – Their spiritual life**

Time to read and pray. Spiritual growth. Encouragement. Fellowship with local Christians. Good links with sending churches and prayer supporters. For integrity, reliability, consistency.

- **Monday – Their personal life**

Relationships between husband and wife. Maintaining contact with children, parents and family back home. Friendships with nationals. Health and strength. Physical and spiritual protection.

- **Tuesday – Communication**

Progress in language study. Adaptation to culture, customs and people. Clarity, creativity and relevance in preaching and teaching. Biblical emphasis. Involvement with those hearing the message.

- **Wednesday – Relationships**

Harmonious relationships with other Christians, team members and church leaders. Partnership with the local church.

- **Thursday – Evangelism**

For boldness. For godly, sensitive, Spirit-led ministry. Hungry hearts and the opening of spiritually blind eyes. For the establishing of Christ's church. For national missionary movements.

- **Friday – Discipling**

For patience and empathy. Training young people. Encouraging new believers. Equipping those with leadership gifts.

- **Saturday – Their country**

For those in authority. The political situation. Religious freedom. Openness to the gospel. Favour with officials. Visa renewal.

Keep On Keeping On

Paul urged the Ephesian church leaders to “keep watch over yourselves and all the flock” (Acts 20:28, NIV). He saw the danger of ministry where the leaders neglect their own spiritual lives.

It can be as hard for Christian leaders to maintain a disciplined spiritual life as for anyone. Probably harder. The devil knows where to strike. So pray.

Pray that missionaries will “speak as men approved by God.” — 1 Thessalonians 2:4 (NIV1984)

That their conversation will be “full of grace” and “salt.” — Colossians 4:6 (NIV1984)

That they'll preach “in season and out of season.” — 2 Timothy 4:2 (NIV1984)

Laying foundations “as an expert builder” — 1 Corinthians 3:10 (NIV1984)

Colossians 1:9–12; Ephesians 3:14–21; Philippians 1:9–11 teach us about Paul's faith and about God and his plans for his Church. Why not use them in praying for your friends and the Christians in their area?

Praying for the World

We need to be concerned about our country, but we should also be concerned about our brothers and sisters throughout the world—as well as those who haven't heard the gospel. So read the papers, listen to the news. (God may lay a particular country or ministry on your heart.)

Operation World (OM Publishing) covers every country and gives facts and figures about their religions, history and government. It makes excellent background reading, is available in Christian bookshops and is a tremendous resource. There are also children's versions such as *You Can Change the World* and *You Too Can Change the World*.

Good political maps will show country boundaries, whilst your local bookstore or library should have something on the country you're interested in. You can also get maps, books, tapes and videos from missions like OMF.

Encyclopedias and Atlases on CD Rom contain articles on countries' geography, history and religions, along with maps, flags and photos. Browsing the web will give you further info on countries and missionary societies.

It's good to have a wide interest in God's world, but it's hard to pray for all of it, so concentrate on one or two places, and pray about those. Imaginatively. Creatively.

We constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfil every good purpose of yours and every act prompted by your faith.

— 2 Thessalonians 1:11 (NIV1984)

A Part to Play

God has a part for you to play in mission, building his Church worldwide. No Christian worker, whether at home or overseas, can "go it alone." Missionaries need the support of a team.

When you decide to pray regularly for someone, you join that team. Whether you pray, provide financial support, or work to plant churches, you are playing your part in world mission. As you pray, God uses your prayers to work out his purposes. Our prayers make a difference to the Sovereign Lord. They can make a difference in the world.

Jesus asked his followers to pray for workers to go out into a needy world. We need to pray that too. But let's not forget them once they've gone. Continue to pray for these missionaries.

It takes discipline and commitment to pray for people who live in a place we know little about, who work in a language we don't speak, who may eat breakfast while we're going to bed, and who may not be back for some years. But they don't stop being our brothers and sisters while they're away.

Remember them. Pray for them every day. Your prayers count.

The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.

— Matthew 9:37, 38 (TNIV)