

PRAYER & EVANGELISM

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Take a minute to pray for God to guide you as you study...

In our last lesson we discussed how to handle rejection when trying to lead another person to follow Jesus. We ended stating that rejection does happen, and that this shouldn't discourage us from continuing to try. If God had given up, the times we rejected Him, then chances are we wouldn't even be in this lesson!

Today we are going to learn one of the best ways to continue actively trying to lead someone to accept Jesus' sacrifice and follow Him, even if we've been told 'no'. This is through the awesome privilege of prayer! Rarely will an individual say 'no' to having you pray for them. It will happen sometimes, but very rarely. This is an awesome opportunity to show them the power of God and the reality of His love for them!

In order to have a more complete understanding of how prayer can be an effective tool for evangelism, we need to remind ourselves of the story of the Bible. The story of the Bible explains the reality of a great controversy that we find ourselves in. This battle is between God and His forces of love, and an enemy, Satan, who wants to lead others to distrust God or even the existence of God. Here's what happened shortly after a war in heaven happens...

Revelation 12:12: "Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and the sea! For the devil has come _____ to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time."
NKJV

The devil was cast down from heaven and came to the earth seeking to claim territory for his kingdom of rebellion. After the devil was able to tempt Adam and Eve into sin, he became the prince of the world. Jesus says,

John 14:30: "'I will not say much more to you, for the _____ of this world is coming. He has no hold over me."

We see the devil's claim to authority of the earth in the book of Job.

Job 1:6-7: "Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the LORD, and Satan also came among them. And the LORD said to Satan, "From where do you come?" So Satan answered the LORD and said, "From going _____ on the earth, and from walking _____."

Satan's claim is interesting here, because he says he comes from earth, however, he also claims to have all dominion of earth by the wording of walking about on it. He is stating that he has unlimited access to all of the earth's territory.

The apostle Paul also showed an understanding of the earth being under the dominion of Satan. He writes,

Ephesians 6:12: "For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the _____, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms."

The great controversy in some aspect is a war of territories. Praise God not only for allowing us to understand the present reality we find ourselves in, but also for showing us the "territory" that He fights for.

In Job 1:8, God responds to Satan's claim over the territory of the earth.

Job 1:8: "'Then the LORD said to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?" (NKJV)

God's response to Satan isn't a response of "Check out this mountain over here on this side of earth. I still have dominion there." No, God instead asserts that Job is God's territory. God doesn't seek to claim geographical territory in this great controversy. Instead His focus is on the territory of one's heart.

Now you may be wondering what all this has to do with prayer and evangelism. The book of Daniel shows us how the story of the great controversy and prayer connect. Read Daniel 10:1-14 and write down an outline of the passage.

What amazing insight into the territorial battle of good and evil! Let's look closer at Daniel 10:12-14.

Daniel 10:12-14: "Then he continued, "Do not be afraid, Daniel. Since the first day that you set your mind to gain understanding and to humble yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to them. But the prince of the Persian kingdom resisted me twenty-one days. Then Michael, one of the chief princes, came to help me, because I was detained there with the king of Persia. Now I have come to explain to you what will happen to your people in the future, for the vision concerns a time yet to come."

The minute Daniel said a prayer for understanding it caused a reaction from heaven. An angel was sent to minister to Daniel but "the prince of Persia" tried to withhold him. So "Michael" had to step in. This is a battle of heavenly beings! This battle isn't over a geographical region, even though the prince claims one, but over an individual. What insight into the workings of this great controversy. Prayer invites God into a situation where Satan might try to claim dominion. Notice how this "prince of Persia" is claiming the territory of Persia, which is where Daniel is. However, because Daniel has set his heart on God, Daniel is in the kingdom of God!

BASIC POINT

When you pray for someone else, it invites God to claim territory in their life.

Prayer allows God to enter into a territory where Satan might claim authority because we as followers of God are in the kingdom of God and He has dominion of our hearts! Jesus shows us how humans are the territory of the kingdom of God on this earth in Mark 5:1-20.

Jesus crosses over to the country of the Gadarenes and is met by a demon possessed man. Jesus asks him, "What is your name?" (Mark 1:9) and the man responds, "my name is legion; for we are many," (1:10). Jesus then casts out the demons into a herd of pigs angering the community there. The community asks for Jesus to leave because of their frustration. After this wonderful deliverance, the man, formerly possessed, tries to follow Jesus, but Jesus tells the man to stay saying, "Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you." (Mark 5:19).

And later when Jesus comes back to this same region the people "ran through that whole surrounding region, and began to carry about on beds those who were sick to wherever they heard He was." (Mark 6:55).

Jesus had placed a person whose heart was under the kingdom of God in a place that didn't want to welcome Him to work in that community. God wants to do the same with us in our communities. If we have yielded our hearts to Him, then we can use prayer, inviting God into the lives and situations of those who may be far from Him, to lead our friends, families, neighbors, and enemies to a relationship with Him.

This is why prayer is one of the best ways to do evangelism. Many won't reject it because humans on a certain level are superstitious of some form. We want good juju, or positive vibes, or good luck. Why not show them that through a relationship with God they can witness great things? We can be the catalyst just by offering to pray for them and with them. So pray! The apostle Paul tells us how we can fight this enemy by putting on the armor of God and using "the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God; praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." (Ephesians 6:17, 18 NKJV). So pray, and pray boldly for and with people.

Notes:

FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS

1. Share an experience where you prayed for God to work in someone else's life.
2. Do you find it scary to ask if you can pray for someone? Why?

LESSON 7: PRAYER & EVANGELISM

