

**PRAYER:**  
**MAKING**  
**DISCIPLES**  
on our **KNEES**



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*'No man is greater than his prayer life.'* Leonard Ravenhill

## Making disciples on our knees

If you want to be a fruitful disciple-maker, you will first have to be a faithful disciple-prayer. In God's economy, prayer and intercession are indispensable tools in the work of planting new communities of faith. And we neglect it to our detriment.

From a young age, I was taught by my believing parents the power of prayer. And God would graciously answer my occasional prayers in times of trouble.

At the age of 16, I read a book that shook me to the core - 'Why Revival Tarries?'<sup>1</sup> Leonard Ravenhill's classic book on prayer and holy devotion. It exposed the bankruptcy of my own prayer-life and my rather tepid pursuit of God in my own life and within my local church. Ravenhill's words were a prophetic challenge to the church of his day and ours:

*"No man is greater than his prayer life. The pastor who is not praying is playing; the people who are not praying are straying. We have many organizers, but few agonizers; many players and payers, few prayers; many singers, few clingers; lots of pastors, few wrestlers; many fears, few tears; much fashion, little passion; many interferers, few intercessors; many writers, but few fighters. Failing here, we fail everywhere."*

*"That world outside there is not waiting for a new definition of Christianity; it's waiting for a new demonstration of Christianity."*

*"Prayer is to the believer what capital is to the business man. When we have paid, the place is taken; when they had prayed, the place was shaken!"*

Lines like these were scathing and uncompromising in their challenge. Ravenhill was of course right. We believe far too easily that we can sit and plan mission and multiplication, when we first need to learn to kneel and pray for vision and personal consecration.

There is far too much anthropocentric pragmatism in vogue in the church of our day - we measure success in terms of church attendance, the size of our buildings, the slickness of our worship bands or even the name and fame of our pastors, denominations, theological emphases or church-planting methods. We want success after our efforts; God wants servants after His glory.

The size of our church buildings will not matter a jot to God if they do not ultimately produce Christ-honoring, Spirit-filled, Bible-believing, kingdom-seeking, God-hungry disciples with vision to see the fields ripe for harvest and the will to be obedient in their part of the work. And we cannot manufacture such people by our own feeble efforts - we need to partner in prayer, petition and persistent training to help them become such!

To be sure, prayer is not the *only* work of those of us called to pioneer new multiplying communities of faith. It is not the *only* work of **all** of us called to make disciples. We at NAMS believe there are active steps of going, baptizing and teaching that are equally important.

But prayer is to be an important, non-neglected work of every disciple. It was after all, Jesus, the master disciple-maker bar none, who was also the first and foremost model of intercession we have, and indeed still is (Romans 8:34, Hebrews 7:25).

Consider the fact that He had a habit of regular fervent prayer, particular at key moments in His life and ministry. He spent a whole night in prayer before He chose the twelve (Luke 6:12). I find myself rather more casually entering into discipling relationships. Would that I be more careful to seek God about who He wants me to build a discipling relationship with.

Consider that, as a mission leader once pointed out, Jesus prayed not only about His disciples, but in front of them (Luke 11:1), for them (Luke 22:32, John 17:9, 11, 15-17) and with them (Luke 22:39-40). Theirs was a prayer-saturated two years or so of ministry with the Blessed Son of God. They were able to observe first hand what He taught them - that the Son did and said only what His Father told Him and showed Him (John 5:19-20, John 8:28). Do the people I disciple see and hear of the vital place of prayer in my life? Do I model it as Jesus did with the twelve?

In Matthew 28:19, Jesus told the apostles to 'make disciples' by going to all peoples. But in Acts 1:4, He told them to first wait in Jerusalem till they were clothed with power of the Holy Spirit from on high.

And so, they gathered in fervent united prayer before the Holy Spirit fell and a world-changing movement rose. We need to learn both the power of praying in secret (Matthew 6:6) and of praying in unity with others (Acts 1:14) as a companion acts to our being empowered and sent to the uttermost ends of the earth.

The early church was a praying church, in kind with her Lord. When persecution threatened, they prayed (Acts 4:24-31). When Peter went up on the roof to pray, a door to take the Gospel to Gentiles was opened (Acts 10:9). When the leaders at Antioch sought God in prayer and fasting, He called Paul and Barnabas to the work of pioneer mission and church-planting (Acts 13:1-3).

Paul prayed voraciously and regularly for the disciples he left in the churches he planted. Do I pray regularly and habitually on behalf of those I disciple?

Why then do we think we can make disciples without first seeking God in prayer for wisdom, discernment, power and for the growth and well-being of each person God gives us to make disciples of?

# With Christ in the School of Prayer

*"A vision without a task makes a visionary; a task without a vision is drudgery; a vision with a task makes a missionary." (Leonard Ravenhill)*

In the last chapter, we saw that prayer is an integral part of making disciples. Recently, I have been struck by how easy it is for me to neglect praying for those I am discipling while frantically doing all I can to teach, model and train them.

It does not all depend on me. The maturing and growth of disciples is God's to give, and He graciously involves us in partnership (1 Corinthians 3:5-9). And it takes time.

Making disciples is not something that can adequately happen at a 3-month long program or a year long adult Sunday School class. It involves a life-to-life transfer of mind-renewing truth, enduring love and character-formation that is mediated through the power of the Holy Spirit and the authority of the supreme Christ by obedience to Gospel acts (repentance, faith, baptism, receiving the Spirit) and Gospel truth (all that Jesus commanded). True discipleship is a life-long process. We graduate when we die.

So we must model, equip, deploy and send. But we must also pray constantly for those God gives us to make disciples of. In doing so, we work with God.

Indeed, a vital aspect of that divine transformation is a triangular partnership involving personal prayer (of the disciple-maker) through and by the Spirit of God on behalf of, and with, another (the disciple) .

As I look at the Scriptures, I see a vital link between the praying for disciples and the outcomes of growth, knowledge, discernment and obedience that are catalyzed by those prayers.

Paul often reminded his churches that he was praying for them (Romans 1:10, Colossians 1:3, Ephesians 1:16, 1 Thessalonians 1:2, etc). This suggests that he had a habit of setting time aside to pray regularly for the believers in those churches. Nor was this special - he was merely following in the footsteps of Jesus who had a habit of personal pray for those given to Him (Luke 5:16, Luke 22:32, John 17:9).

So, how should we go about praying regularly for those we disciple? In the early 1990s, Don Carson wrote a helpful book, 'A Call to Spiritual Reformation'<sup>2</sup> which was an exposition of some of Paul's prayer themes recorded in his Epistles. Carson included a useful list to help Christians pray for others, which I will share and add to below:

**1. We need a plan to pray.** Rarely do we get anything of worth done without the desire and will to make it happen. As Carson writes, 'We do not drift into spiritual life; we do not drift into disciplined prayer.'<sup>3</sup> Therefore we need to plan to set aside time daily for this - choose a time of day when you are most alert, are likely to be distracted the least and can be in a quiet uninterrupted place to be by yourself. If this

is new to you, plan to set aside a few minutes to start with - don't be too ambitious, i.e. planning to pray for a whole hour.

**2. Be proactive to prevent your mind wandering.** Carson suggests vocalizing your prayers, as they stop our minds from mental drift. In fact, this is the way Jews always prayed, so that Jesus taught us 'When you pray, say...'(Luke 11:2 cf Matthew 6:5-6, Mark 11:23-24).

Another way is to pray over the Scriptures, or use the Lord's Prayer as a model to work through the different aspects that could and should be our focus during our prayer times.

Finally, pray as we are most comfortable. Some people pace as they pray, others sit on their favorite chair with a cup of coffee in the morning, while still others kneel or lie prostrate before God.

**3. Additionally, find a prayer partner or form a prayer-triplet.** Even if you do this for a season, it is a good practice, because you learn the power of interceding with others on behalf of our families and those we have care of. There is great power in the united prayers of believers (Matthew 18:19, Acts 4:31).

If single, find someone or a group of the same gender, and if you're married, then your most regular intimate prayer partner should be your spouse.

**4. Finally, develop a system for prayer lists.** Carson writes: 'It is difficult to pray faithfully for a large spread of people and concerns without developing prayers lists that help you remember them.'<sup>4</sup>

Each disciple-maker ideally is responsible for a handful of disciples he is working with. But there are also others in our networks, leaders and apprentices in the Base Community or church, pre-believers in our families, friendship and wider networks that we are (and should be) concerned about to know Christ; as well as the wider world of governments, nations, unreached people and special events and issues in our lives and world that need praying over.

I have found it invaluable to have a list of people that I pray for daily which includes all of my immediate family, those I am actively discipling in the community I lead with my wife, friends near and far and those I am seeking to share the Gospel with. Keep adding to your list - don't let it become routine and stagnant.

In the end, praying is a discipline and can be hard work. May God help us see instead that pray is a great gift from God and our privilege. It is a most devastating weapon against the enemy, which is why he works so hard to stop us praying. But if we fail in this, then we will fail everywhere else. Brothers, let us pray.

## ‘Watch and pray’ – the 10.02 call.

Prayer needs to be the first and foremost work of every NAMS companion. The letters of the New Testament are replete with calls to pray and intercede for the saints – Romans 15:30-31, Ephesians 6:18-20; Philippians 4:6; Colossians 4:3; 2 Thessalonians 3:11 Timothy 2:1-3; James 5:16, etc. We cannot make disciples without praying for them.

Similarly, in the work that God has called us to in NAMS (i.e. pioneering church planting through intentional disciple-making), we must take our cue from the mission and pattern of ministry set for us by our Lord Jesus Christ. He made prayer a regular habit and priority in his ministry, and taught his disciples the same (Luke 11:1-10). His prayers become our patterns for prayer (Matthew 6:9-13; John 17). Jesus’ instructions regarding what to pray for, as he sent the 72 (or 70) disciples out on mission in Luke 10 have been especially instructional to us.

In Luke 10:2, Jesus instructed the disciples being sent out thus:

“The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.”

Here, Jesus is telling the 72 that he is sending out on mission, that their first job is to pray. Before they do, they must see that the harvest is huge – too big for them. We need many more people to complete the task, and so we call out to God first.

Clearly in Jesus’ eyes, prayer is an essential part of being missionary disciples of Jesus. And so in NAMS, using a tool taught us by others, we ask Companions of NAMS to set the alarms on their mobile phones or clocks to go off at 10:02 am every morning, in a daily recall of Luke 10:2. When we hear it, we pause to pray systematically through the 15 mega-people regions (one each day, twice a month) covering the regions that we seek together to reach.

Interestingly, the word Jesus uses in the Greek of Luke 10:2 for ‘pray’ is *deomai* which literally means to ‘beg’ or ‘plead earnestly’. This is much stronger than a simple polite request, i.e. beg God for help!

Why do we need to beg? Certainly God can see that we need many more workers for Gospel work.

It becomes clear in the rest of Scripture that God is neither reluctant nor hesitant to send and to save, but it is we who are slow to respond and to go. The earnest prayers of God’s faithful missionary disciples are needed to stir the rest of us to action. We must and will pray passionately as we realize many people out there need him. It is an urgent request that calls for action.

This is further seen in the word ‘send’ in Luke 10:2 which is *ekballō*. Literally this translates as ‘thrust out’ or ‘cast out’ as in of fishing nets or sending demons out – it is an act of compulsion. As we pray, God responds to compel others to join in the great harvest work. This is no small request – but an order to pray for urgent help.

To illustrate, if someone charges into a building, shouting “Leave this building immediately,” it is not a polite suggestion but a command requiring urgent action.. Similarly, when Jesus says in effect 'beg the Lord of the harvest,” he expects us to be obedient in requesting such help.

Jesus wants our prayers to be driven; not by the needs of the church, but by the size of the harvest in the world. Do you see the world that is lost and dead without him? Do you watch or read the news and not think of so many who are lost without him. Do you know that according to research, 81% of all Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists today do not know personally know a Christian?<sup>5</sup> Do you see the world and are moved to pray and go?

In the words of John Wesley, ‘the world is our parish’, and so our prayers must be world-sized and urgent.

I urge you therefore to use this tool - set your alarms to ring at 10.02 am daily and start praying earnestly that God may send laborers into His harvest.

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1 Leonard Ravenhill, ‘Why Revival Tarries?’ (Bethany House Publishers; 2007).

2 D.A. Carson, ‘A Call to Spiritual Reformation’ Inter-varsity Press:1992)

3 Ibid., page 19

4 Ibid., page 27

5 [https://joshuaproject.net/resources/articles/has\\_everyone\\_heard](https://joshuaproject.net/resources/articles/has_everyone_heard)



# NAMS NETWORK

If you have found this booklet helpful, have more questions or would like more help to become a disciple-making disciple of Jesus Christ, write to us at the following address: [info@namsnetwork.com](mailto:info@namsnetwork.com) or directly to the author and GEO of NAMS, Rev Manik Corea: [manikagcorea@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:manikagcorea@yahoo.co.uk).

This booklet is a compilation of a series of blogs that appeared on our website: [www.namsnetwork.com](http://www.namsnetwork.com). You can subscribe to receive weekly helpful blogs from NAMS leaders by clicking the 'contact' tab of the home page of our website.

## What is NAMS?

**NAMS stands for New Anglican Missionary Society. We are a community of pioneering, global church planters engaged in calling the faithful Church of Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to be obedient to the final command of Jesus (Matthew 28:19-20) by making disciple that make disciples, raising leaders that make disciples and planting churches that make disciples.**

We are headquartered in Pawleys Island, South Carolina, USA. NAMS colleagues and associates are making new disciples and planting new communities of faith on 5 continents and are working in or developing work in 42 nations.

You can get more information about us at our website: [www.namsnetwork.com](http://www.namsnetwork.com) or by writing to us at [info@namsnetwork.com](mailto:info@namsnetwork.com)

Check out our Youtube channel 'NAMS Network' for more disciple-making resources that we have produced to help Christians obey Jesus' final command.

Thank you.  
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