

At the heart of the gospel, Christ Himself summons people to be restored to relationship with God and to live under His leadership. The Bible describes this powerful summons and declaration of purpose as God's call. Without coercing or forcing people to follow Him, He persistently, patiently and powerfully works in people's lives. Ultimately, if anyone ends up living out God's purpose for their lives, it's because God was at work. God begins His work long before people first believe in Christ. He continues the work of transforming us to become like Jesus throughout our lifetimes. This is why it is so significant to pray for God to accelerate and to continue His work in the lives of friends and family who have yet to follow Christ. We're basically praying for God to press His purpose forward.

1 Thessalonians 5:24

Faithful is He who calls you, and He also will bring it to pass.

1. Pray for God's call.

Pray that the gospel will be clearly communicated so that God's voice gets through to their heart. God is not merely raising His voice to get their attention. His call is an invitation to become like Jesus. God's call requires some clear revelation of Jesus to inspire and draw the human heart. Pray for Christ's magnificent love to be revealed. Pray for the excellency of His Lordship to be recognized.

1 Thessalonians 5:23

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. Pray for God's work.

God calls people to be like Jesus. The best way to describe the new, transformed, Christ-like character is the word "holy." The special word which describes the process for becoming holy is the word "sanctify." God wants to change every aspect of people's lives, sanctifying them, which is to say, increasingly transforming their character to be like the radiant and pure character of Christ. God desires to bring about permanent and comprehensive changes in every part of our lives. Pray for supportive and life-shaping changes in these dimensions:

- **Spirit.** Pray that God brings changes in their spirit, so that they are wide awake and desirous for relationship with God. You might have a hunch about how God may be calling them to join Him in His global purpose.
- **Soul.** Pray for the emotional and relational wholeness.
- **Body.** Pray God to bring physical healing, strength and vigor.

3. Praise God for His faithfulness.

Praise God for how He has already been faithful in the life of the person you are praying for. You might have to think about it a bit in order to be as explicit as you can be. Just what has God been doing in their life? You can be sure that He's been working to communicate His heart of love and His intentions for that person's good. He's been working to bring about changes that will make that person become more like Christ. He sometimes works slowly. But His passion and zeal never change. Thank God with expectation for His work to increase and accelerate.

This issue of FreshPrayer will help people pray with praise for what God has been doing, what He is doing now, and what He will do in the days to come. Angels rightly name Him, "The one who was, the one who is, and the one who is to come." It's just as true for us to pray for others, mindful of what He already has done, eagerly asking for Him to accelerate what He is doing now, and expectantly praising Him for all that He has intended to fulfill. Like every other issue of FreshPrayer, the prayers are designed to focus upon people who have yet to follow Christ in creative, life-giving ways which emerge directly from scripture.

1. Focus on particular people.

One way to begin is to focus attention on particular people who have yet to follow Jesus. They may consider themselves to be a Christian in nominal ways, but they haven't yet walked in the joy of serving God as a fully devoted follower of Jesus. As each participant names one particular person, ask them to discuss these questions:

- **What has God already been doing in their life?** You may need to give people a few examples, such as the heritage of a godly family, or church. Or perhaps they have been blessed by God in answer to prayer. Or any number of ways that they have come to understand the gospel.
- **What is God calling them to be or to do?** Press the discussion to go beyond just saying something about going to heaven, or becoming a Christian. Dream a little bit. Have fun thinking about the God-possible fulfillment of their life, as if their life was a book with blank pages at the end.

2. Consider God's call.

Talk briefly about God's call, reading 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24. God's ways are never coercive. He does not manipulate or intrude, forcing the will of those He loves. Somehow in God's wonderful ways, He conveys a powerful calling. It's up to the person hearing the call to respond, and yet, at the same time, God is the one who actually brings about any change at all in our lives. This is why it matters that we pray for others. God is doing His work, but He delights to hear our prayers, calling on Him to fulfill His calling in the lives of our friends and family.

3. Pray and praise (or vice versa).

Use the prayer points in the participants guide. You can begin with expressions of praise about God's faithfulness. Or you can launch the prayers with requests about different parts of their lives. Help people to be creative and yet focused on what God will do in their lives.