

OPERATION CELEBRATION!

TRAINING MANUAL



***A Simple Strategy to Help Your Church Prepare for
the Harvest Through Prayer***

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Why Prepare Through Prayer?

In August of 1990, the nation of Iraq invaded and annexed its nearest neighbor, Kuwait. The UN Security Council responded by calling for Iraq to withdraw its military forces and subsequently embargoed most trade with the nation. A massive coalition of military forces from Britain, Egypt, France, Saudi Arabia, the United States and other nations responded to the threat by building up armed forces and invading Kuwait and Southern Iraq. On February 24, 1991, coalition ground forces began their offensive. They surrounded and defeated the Iraqi force in an astounding four days time.

What was it that enabled them to complete their task in such a short period of time? They preceded their ground campaign by bombing the enemy positions from the air! This massive aerial bombing campaign, which started on January 17, 1991, immobilized most of their military and civilian infrastructure paving the way for the ground troops to complete their mission swiftly. If the air campaign had not been successful, the ground battle would have taken months or perhaps years and many more lives would have been lost.

Think of prayer like you would the massive air campaign. By praying for a harvest of souls prior to your upcoming harvest event or revival, you are paving the way for the "ground forces" to share the gospel with men and women! You are empowering the evangelist or speaker by asking God to prepare the hearts of those attending your harvest service, or revival.

Don't take my word for it; listen to the words of others who know the power of prayer first hand:

"I fear John Knox's prayers more than an army of ten thousand men." – Mary, Queen of Scotland

"I had rather stand against the cannons of the wicked than against the prayers of the righteous." – Thomas Lye – Puritan preacher

"...Men may spurn our appeals, reject our message, oppose our arguments, despise our persons -- but they are helpless against our prayers." – J. Sidlow Baxter – speaker and writer

"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds..." – The Apostle Paul (2nd Cor. 10:4 NKJV)

Prayer and Evangelism



"A church that strives to evangelize its community without saturating its efforts in prayer is like a race car driver that jumps into a car at the starting line and discovers that the tank has not been filled with gas." – George Barna, *Evangelism that Works*

Millie Dienert – an international speaker known for her efforts in coordinating prayer for several of the conference events sponsored by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association – revealed the secret of Mr. Graham's successful evangelism ministry during the 1998 Billy Graham School of Evangelism which my wife and I attended in Monterrey, California. She said his success was owed to three things: 1) Prayer 2) Prayer 3) More prayer. While it may seem silly to repeat this idea three times, she was underscoring the necessity of prayer in evangelism. Notice, I did not say, the option of prayer. Prayer is a necessity for the harvest. Before we ever talk to men and women about God, we need to talk to God about them.

The Bible is very clear in instructing us to pray for people to come to know Christ. Read what Paul wrote to a young pastor named Timothy:

"Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made **for all men**, for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of **God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth**. For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time, for which I was appointed a preacher and an apostle—I am speaking the truth in Christ and not lying—a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth. **I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere**, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting..." 1st Tim. 2:1-8 NKJV (Emphasis added)

From that passage, we see that God desires that all men and women be saved. But, it is also clear that the vehicle he uses to accomplish that desire is the prayers of His people. Why he chose to work through our prayers is a mystery to me. It is one of those questions I am saving up for eternity!

Nevertheless, if you want to see relatives, friends, neighbors, co-workers, casual acquaintances, or church prospects come to know the saving power of Jesus Christ, you are going to have to invest some valuable time in prayer. Think of it this way: a parent would never

give a bicycle to a child if they knew that the child didn't really care one way or the other about having a bike. Most children I know of would stand on their heads in the street to get a bicycle or any other toy that their heart desired. They just keep nagging and nagging until the parent gives in and buys the bike. (For a similar biblical example of this, see the parable of the persistent widow in Luke 18:1-8)

While we should never approach prayer in a manner that could be considered nagging, we should fervently bring our petitions before God with a heart of compassion toward our subject. You are praying for the eternal destiny of someone whom God cares about. It is an important matter to God and it should be just as important to you.

The spiritual condition of people apart from Christ

LOST – Matthew 15:24; 18:11

BLIND – 2nd Corinthians 4:3-4

BOUND – 2ND Timothy 2:25-26; Ephesians 2:2

CONDEMNED – John 3:18; Ephesians 2:3; 2nd Corinthians 4:3

UNDER GOD'S WRATH – DESTINED FOR HELL – John 3:36; Matthew 7:13

HELPLESS – John 6:44, 65; 12:32; Ephesians 2:1

HOPELESS – Ephesians 2:12

Prepare to Pray

“The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.” – James 5:16b

Psalm 66:18 states, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear.” It is very important to realize that unconfessed sin in our hearts will hinder our praying for the lost. Before you begin to pray for your relatives, friends, neighbors, co-workers, casual acquaintances, or church prospects, take some time for self-evaluation and confession of personal sin. Ask God to show you anything in your life that would hinder your praying. This should be more than just a superficial exercise; you should seek deep personal cleansing from God. “If we confess our sins,

He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us." - 1st John 1:9-10 NKJV

Getting our prayers into SHAPE. Use this acrostic to focus your praying:

- S** → Is there **S**in you need to confess?
- H** → Is there some **H**abit you need to correct
- A** → Is there an **A**ttitude you need to change
- P** → Is there a **P**romise you have not claimed
- E** → Are you an **E**xample for others to copy

When praying, remember another helpful acrostic - PRAY

- P** ... Begin with **P**raise and thanksgiving
- R** ... **R**epent of your sins and **R**eceive cleansing from God
- A** ... **A**sk God for the things that are weighing upon your heart
- Y** ... **Y**ield to God's will.

OPERATION CELEBRATION!

Operation Celebration is not unique; it is the same strategy used successfully by the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association known as Operation Andrew. The basic idea behind the method is to list the names of seven people who do not know Christ, pray for them for a minimum of ten minutes per day, seek to cultivate friendships with them opening the way to talk about Christ, and invite them to an upcoming harvest event at your church. With this packet, you received a prayer pamphlet. Use this pamphlet to list the people you are praying for. Keep or post it in a handy place such as your Bible, refrigerator, a mirror, car dashboard or any other place that will serve as a reminder to pray for them. Begin by doing the following:

Look Around You – List names of seven individuals you know who need Jesus Christ. These can be relatives, friends, neighbors, co-workers, casual acquaintances, or church prospects from your church prospect list.

Look Up – Pray each day for these individuals spending at least ten minutes in prayer. Ask God to prepare them to receive Christ as their Lord and Savior and that they would become witnesses for Him. An acrostic "HEART" is included in this section to help you know how to pray for them. Also, ask God for opportunities to show and share the love of God with them.

Look Out – Look for ways to cultivate friendships with them if you do not know them already. Friendship opens the door for the gospel.

Look Forward – Talk with each person about attending the upcoming harvest event at your church. Offer to come by their home and pick them up even if they don't need a ride.

Look After – Those who respond to Christ or show interest in the gospel need your encouragement. Continue to pray for those who respond and for those who do not.

Have a HEART! How to pray for lost people.

H ... Pray that their **Hearts** would be open to the gospel (Luke 8:5, 12)

E ... Pray for their spiritual **Eyes** to be open and that their **Ears** would hear (Matt. 13:15)

A ... Pray for them to understand God's **Attitude** toward sin (John 16:8)

R ... Pray for the person to be **Released** to believe (2 Cor. 10:3-4; 2 Tim. 2:25-26)

I ... Pray for a **Transformed** life (Rom. 12:1-2)

There are plenty of other ways you can participate in a great commission prayer ministry. Once you have begun Operation Celebration in your church, you may want to investigate how you can further become involved in prayer evangelism. Consider the possibility of Prayer Walking, the Lighthouse Movement, Houses of Prayer Everywhere, or "Jesus" Video distribution. Talk to your pastor about these ideas. Who knows, God may spark a great commission prayer revolution in your local church through you!

An Invitation to Consecration

Now that you have studied the previous sections, take a few moments to reinforce your commitment to pray for the lost. Fill in the commitment section below...

I _____ consecrate myself to God to the following in an effort to honor God and fulfill the great commission: (Check all that apply)

___ I commit to daily seeking God's presence and power in my own life through prayer

___ I commit to pray regularly for the evangelistic ministry and the ministerial staff of my church

___ I commit to participate in Operation Celebration and with God's help, I will do my best to pray daily for the seven people listed on my commitment card

Sources Consulted for Operation Celebration Manual

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Barna, George. Evangelism that Works. Gospel Light Publishers, 1995

Recommended Reading Related to Prayer

Wilkinson, Bruce. The Prayer of Jabez. Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah Publishers, 2000

Cymbala, Jim. Fresh Wind, Fresh Fire. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997

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