

Dozing in Prayer Meetings

I know in my head that praying for world missions is critically important. Jesus commanded us to pray for workers to the Lord of the harvest. The first missionary journey began with prayer. While I don't fully understand the theology of prayer, I know that God answers it. I suspect I'll be embarrassed for praying so little when I get to heaven and finally learn why prayer is so important.

But if prayer is biblical, urgent and important, why does my mind wander during personal prayer? Why do I feel compelled to nap in missionary prayer meetings? As a new missionary serving in Nigeria, the most difficult part of the day was not Hausa language study but staying awake in afternoon prayers. The heat was unbearable. The droning fan only made me sleepier. We prayed for people I didn't know who lived in places I couldn't pronounce. But I knew I would get in trouble with the district superintendent if I missed afternoon prayers.

Prayer is an amazing resource. It's a ladder between two worlds, a breath of heavenly air and a telephone to the King. So why do I doze in prayer meetings?

I suspect that we neglect prayer when our eyes of faith have become near-sighted. Could it be that our prayers are weak because our faith is anemic? Strong faith leads to fervent consistent prayer, while weak faith results in a guilt-motivated duty to go through

the motions.

Maybe the heart of the problem is that we don't realize we are at war. The Church is fighting in two wars—earthly and heavenly. We struggle on two battle fronts—one in this world and the other in an unseen conflict between God's armies and forces of evil. Prayer is the emergency phone call from weary, wounded soldiers calling the heavenly Commander for comfort, instructions and reinforcements. Prayer is battle communication between two worlds.

How can we maximize this critical resource?

Missionaries: When you write prayer letters, include clear prayer requests that are vision-driven and ministry focused. Too often prayer letters tell about family news and exotic experiences but overlook the central role of stimulating people to pray.

Pastors and church mission committees: Don't grow weary of praying! One missionary we knew in Nigeria was almost paralyzed by a fear of vipers and scorpions that sometimes entered her home. Her support team prayed fervently, and she was released from this fear that could have ended her missionary career.

Christians: Cultivate relationships with cross-cultural workers and become a part of their world-shaping ministries. We suggest you pray through John 17:9-26. Pray that

God will make missionaries one with Him and one with each other. Pray that God will give them His joy, that He will protect them and make them useful.

For reasons we don't yet grasp, making disciples of all nations will not succeed without our faithful prayer. Prayer is God's tool for changing the world. Through eyes of faith, picture hundreds of millions of people living in darkness who find the Light of the world. Picture churches around the world becoming salt and light in decaying societies. Pray toward that end.

When you're tempted to snooze in missionary prayer meetings, remember that prayer is the most strategic way you can be fully involved in God's work. The world's evangelization won't happen without a revival of prayer. Your prayers will powerfully influence the world; and amazingly, they will also influence supernatural powers before the throne of grace.

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