

16 Ways to Pray for Missionaries

By David Platt

Acts 13 and 14 communicate one of the most pivotal stories in all of missions history. They relay the first recorded sending of missionaries by a local church in Scripture. Paul and Barnabas were commissioned for their particular task in a worship service, complete with singing, prayer, fasting, and the laying on of hands. Pastor John Piper claimed of this passage, “This moment of prayer and fasting resulted in a missions movement that would make Christianity the dominant religion of the Roman Empire within two-and-a-half centuries and would yield 1.3 billion adherents of the Christian religion today with a Christian witness in virtually every country of the world.”

The people in that room in Antioch were together for a particular reason. They were not all the same, but they found themselves agreeing on a common purpose: they were united by the gospel of God, enthralled in the worship of God, and intensely focused on the mission of God. In that moment, the Spirit called out two men to be sent out, and the church responded with immediate obedience. The synergy between the call of the Spirit and the prayerful response of the church resulted in a supernatural spread of the gospel that continues to this day.

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The Spirit and the church sent Paul and Barnabas—the whole church, not simply a few people. The church demonstrated a commitment to upholding those they sent out, even when separated by time and distance. Essentially, the church said to the missionaries, “We are with you.” Remarkably, the primary manner they did so was through Spirit-empowered prayer.

Today, our prayers remain the greatest way we can support those we are sending out, invoking the very power of God to intervene in ways that are beyond our human limitations to save the lost. So, I’d like to lay out sixteen ways I see in this passage of Scripture to pray for our missionaries continually.

1. Pray that they would be confident in God’s Word (Acts 13:4–5).

Missionaries are sent not just to learn culture or do humanitarian relief but to confidently proclaim the Word of God.

2. Pray that they would be filled with God’s Spirit (Acts 13:6–9).

Believers already have the Holy Spirit in them, but at times the Spirit fills someone in a special way to enable him or her to proclaim God’s Word.

3. Pray for their victory in spiritual warfare (Acts 13:10–12).

When our brothers and sisters take the gospel into the nations, they are going into a war. The devil is dead set on destroying souls and diverting mission.

4. Pray for their success in gospel witness (Acts 13:12).

Pray that many would come to know Christ in all walks of life from the faithful witness of our missionaries.

5. Pray for peace with other believers (Acts 13:13).

Satan attacks from all angles, both inside and outside. Pray for peace within families, in marriages, with children, and with companions and ministry partners.

6. Pray for favor with unbelievers (Acts 13:14–15).

Nonbelievers are blind to the gospel, and many are violently opposed to its message. Pray that missionaries would find favorable opportunities to share the gospel with them.

7. Pray that the gospel will be clear through them (Acts 13:16–47).

Although cross-cultural communication is difficult, pray that missionaries, by grace, would clearly communicate the character of God, the sinfulness of man, the sufficiency of Christ, the necessity of faith, and the urgency of eternity.

8. Pray that God will open hearts around them (Acts 13:48).

God alone draws people to himself. Pray that he will open hearts and minds to believe and be drawn to eternal life with Christ.

9. Pray for their joy in the midst of suffering (Acts 14:1–2).

Missionaries often face various forms and levels of suffering in their work. Pray that they would experience the joy of intimacy with Christ in the midst of it.

10. Pray for their kindness in the midst of slander (Acts 14:1–2).

Though missionaries face suffering and difficulty, pray that the character of Christ and the power of his Spirit enable them to respond with grace.

11. Pray for supernatural power to accompany them (Acts 14:3).

Pray that missionaries would speak the Word with boldness and that supernatural power would accompany its proclamation.

12. Pray for Christlike humility to characterize them (Acts 14:4–18).

Pray that missionaries would overcome the temptation to be prideful in their work by the power of the Spirit.

13. Pray for their patience (Acts 14:8–18).

Missionaries face ups and downs and wins and losses in their work. Pray that they might respond with longsuffering.

14. Pray for their perseverance (Acts 14:19–20).

In 2 Corinthians 4:8–9 Paul wrote, “We are . . . struck down but not destroyed.” Pray for missionaries to persevere through setback after setback, beatdown after beatdown, and struggle after struggle.

15. Pray that God would use them to make disciples (Acts 14:21–23).

Pray that missionaries would see fruit in their ministries as they seek to make disciples among the nations.

16. Pray that God would use them to multiply churches (Acts 14:24–28).

Pray for the multiplication of churches filled with people who know the Word led by pastors who teach the Word.