

Persistent Prayer
By Bob Young
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[Note: I have two October assignments. One is to present some ideas from Nehemiah at a men's retreat activity. The first thing I noted from the book is the importance of prayer for Nehemiah. The second assignment is to present an evangelism/missions seminar to assist a local church in incorporating evangelism and outreach into their ministry system. In my list of characteristics of a highly evangelistic congregation and highly evangelistic or mission-minded members, prayer rose to the top of the list. From these preparations came this brief article about prayer, evangelism and missions.]

I am not good at persistent prayer—at least not as good at it as I would like to be. Jesus praises persistent prayer in parables like the parable of the persistent widow. I am confident I do not pray enough about the salvation of those I love. I know that Jesus said, "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day" (John 6:44). I understand that salvation requires divine initiative. But God has given his children the critical role of prayer. Jesus taught his disciples to pray and never to give up (Luke 18). He told them to keep on asking (Matthew 7:7; Luke 11: 5-11).

Prayer moves the world—or at least it moves it hand of the one who moves the world. Prayer is essential in evangelistic churches. Prayer is a part of the work of evangelism and missions. Do not give up praying for someone after a few weeks. It might take a lot longer. George Mueller prayed throughout his lifetime for five friends to know Jesus Christ. The first one came to Christ after five years. Within ten years, two more of them received Christ. Mueller prayed constantly for over twenty-five years, and the fourth man was finally saved. For his fifth friend, he prayed until the time of his death, and this friend came to Christ a few months after Mueller died. For this last friend, Mueller had prayed for almost fifty-two years.

God does not view time in the same way we do. He hears every prayer you pray, and He desires that you persist. At times you will want to give up. Don't! God is hearing your prayers and is pleased with them. In His time the answer will come.