

At the heart of the gospel, Christ Himself summons people to be restored to relationship with God and to live under His leadership. This powerful summons is described in the Bible as God's call. God never coerces people to follow Him. Instead, 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 brings them to Himself and co-works with them for His purposes. Long before people first believe in Christ, God is already at work. He continues transforming us to become like Jesus throughout our lifetimes. It is incredibly significant to pray for God to accelerate and to continue His work in the lives of friends and family—even those 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 Christ-like character that God desires has a clean, God-like beauty. The best word for this beauty is the word "holy." The word "sanctify" is used to describe the process of being changed to display this Christ-like character. It's not just an external change of a few religious practices. It's not a minor upgrade of nice behavior. It's a sometimes slow, but radical change from the inside-out that affects every part of our lives. Because this change is God's idea, we can confidently call on Him to fulfill His call. Pray for God to bring changes in these dimensions:

- **Spirit.** Pray that God brings changes in their spirit—their innermost being—so that they are wide awake toward God, increasingly enjoying a relational connection with the risen Christ.
- **Soul.** Pray for emotional and relational wholeness, so that all of their God-given appetites and desires are awakened and aligned God's call and purpose.
- **Body.** Pray for God to bring physical healing, strength and longevity.

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: What has God already been doing in his/her life? You can be sure that God has been working to bring about changes that will make that person become more like Christ and to be co-working with Christ for His greater purposes. Of course, God can sometimes appear to work slowly. Since He does not coerce or force people, there can be setbacks. But His passion and zeal never change. Pray this in the form of thanksgiving. It will help you anticipate what God will do to increase and accelerate His work.

Like every other issue of FreshPrayer, this issue is designed to focus upon people who have yet to follow Christ in creative, life-giving ways which emerge directly from scripture. This issue will help people pray with confident praise for what God *has been* doing, what He *is doing now*, and what He *will do* in the days to come. God describes Himself as the one “who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.” Instead of praying for God to merely fix some of the pressing problems or urgent issues (which of course can be very important), this time of prayer invites us to take a step back and consider the whole story of what God is doing in the lives of people. When Christians are convinced that God has already begun doing something good, reminding them of God’s faithfulness makes it obvious that we can ask God to advance and accelerate His work. Your task as a leader in this prayer session is to urge people to consider what He already has done. From there simply urge them to pray for God to accelerate what He is doing now with expectant praise for what He intends to fulfill.

1. Focus on a particular person.

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 relationship. 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 participant’s 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 is doing in their lives.