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Network of  
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Enthusiasts

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## TOUCHING ON PRAXIS

"I have prayed for you every day since I last saw you." That's a statement that is guaranteed to humble any missionary who is at the receiving end of it! Praise God for those who can say it, knowing it to be 100% true. But just think, what would be the impact on mission if there were thousands more Christians who prayed with such regularity and commitment? Thinking about it raises the perennial question in mission as to how we can get more Christians involved in prayer for gospel ministry around the globe. Recognising that this is a bigger issue than just for prayer for mission, let's reflect for a moment on a few relevant matters.

While those of us involved in mission are very vocal about needing more people to pray, do we actually have a biblical concept of the place of prayer in mission? When Paul wrote to the Christians at Rome, he urged them to pray by urging them 'to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me.' (Rom 15:30) Notice the language he uses. It isn't simply 'pray for me in my struggle', but a request to JOIN him in that struggle. It isn't simply one person in a struggle asking someone outside the struggle to pray for them - he is asking them to be involved as he is involved. In his thinking, they become active participants with him in the struggle. To put it in mission jargon, he is not asking them to pray FOR the work - he is saying that prayer IS the work. He is calling upon them to do the work of mission by prayer. This is the basis for us saying that God wants everyone involved in sharing the gospel around the world - all Christians can be involved in doing the work of mission. But do we always present it like that? Have you never heard 'if you can't go, you can give; if you can't give, you can pray'? Is that not a subtle suggestion that those who pray are just the economy class passengers in the jumbo of mission? A little lower than those who are doing the real work?

Paul demonstrates the same outlook in Phil 1:19, where he expresses hope 'through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ.' He links together their prayers and the work of the Spirit. He who has no equal, is almost given an equal - prayer. Paul has no doubt in his mind about the impact of prayer in his daily experience. But do we portray prayer in this light in our brochures, in our prayer notes, and in our teaching? Have we forgotten the 'WOW' element of asking people to pray for mission and missionaries? Do we neglect to make it clear that we are asking them to DO the work of mission?

One other thought. When Jesus was teaching his disciples through modelling ministry, he drew their attention to the level of need in the world and then he taught them 'Ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into his harvest field.' (Mt 9:38) He had to teach this to them, and it raises the question as to how much effort we put into teaching

people to pray for mission. The context in which the Lord's Prayer was shared with the disciples was one of teaching to pray - Mt 6:5-13. 'Young people never pray for mission' is a frequent cry from the not-so-young. But has anyone taught them how to pray? Are we assuming too much in our publications and our preaching? Is there too much information and exhortation and not enough training? If prayer is all that the Bible says it is, then we need to do some reflecting on what we are doing in this area.

#### IDEAS TO IMPLEMENT

In my travels, I met a young-ish Christian businessman. Our conversation turned to his interest in mission and he told me the story of a group that met in his home once each month. To initiate the group, he approached 10-12 young adults in his church and asked them if they would like to come for breakfast at his place one Saturday morning, as he had some exciting stuff he would like to share with them. He asked them to fix the time, and asked them to give him their preferred menu. Most of the group came to that first breakfast. As the eating came to a close, he started talking about one of the missionary families from the church that he had been talking to by phone just recently. He explained things in concepts and ideas that were common to the lives of the young adults, eventually bring things down to a number of key issues that the family was confronting. It begged the question 'how can we help them?' He then explained the place of prayer and shared pieces of paper with the prayer needs set out on them, inviting each of the young people to read their piece of paper as a prayer for the family. It became a monthly breakfast, with the pieces of paper eventually becoming redundant, except for any newcomers who wanted to use them. It was never called a 'mission prayer group'. It was never advertised by the Mission Action Group in the church as one of their activities. It was one man teaching others how to pray for mission. Do we have some teaching to do?

#### NEWS OF RESOURCES

We need to ensure that our teaching on mission is soundly based on the Word of God, so it is always good to see new books that can help us to do just that. The Bible Speaks Today series has recently come out with 'The Message of Mission' by Howard Peskett and Vinoth Ramachandra (IVP, 2003). Complete with a study guide, it covers fifteen key passages of Scripture that teach about mission, literally from Genesis to Revelation. It could be used for group Bible study, either as is, or just as a basis; it would be great for a Mission Action Group in a church to study together when they meet; it would provide the necessary material for a series of sermons on mission. Buy one for yourself - and buy one for your pastor!

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Back issues available on request from Bruce at <info@smbc.com.au>:

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- #4 Home assignment
- #5 Pre-departure pastoral care
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NAME is prepared by Rev Dr Bruce Dipple  
Director of the School of Cross Cultural Mission  
Sydney Missionary and Bible College  
PO Box 83 Croydon NSW 2132 Australia  
Tel: 02 9747 4780  
Fax: 02 9747 5053  
www.smbc.com.au

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