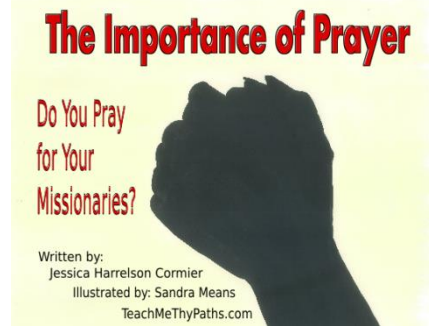


The Importance of Prayer

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Question: Do you pray for your missionaries? Do you know how important it is to pray for missionaries? Here is a true story about a missionary named Dick Harrelson and a pastor named Vic Wilson. Bro. Harrelson and his family were missionaries in Papua New Guinea. Pastor Wilson faithfully pastored his church and prayed for his missionaries for many years.

Let's see how one missionary and one pastor learned the importance of prayer...



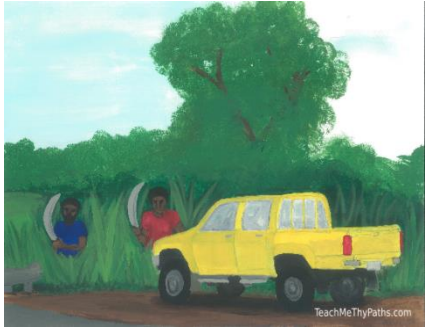
It was ten hours to the hospital. The missionary was almost to his destination. On the seat beside him sat his sick little girl. He had to get her to the doctor. He glanced sideways at her. How he loved her, his precious JoAnna that God had given him to raise and to protect.

"God," he prayed, "Please help my little girl. Please make her well. Please let the doctor know what is wrong with her so that he can know how to treat it."

His whole mind was consumed with praying and with the worry he felt in his heart. Normally, when he drove the roads in Papua New Guinea, his mind stayed on high alert to what was going on around him, but on that day, his only thought was to get to the doctor.....FAST!

As he neared a one-way bridge in the road, he noticed a semi-truck coming on fast from the opposite direction. He could see that the semi would easily

make it to the bridge before he did, which meant he was going to have to stop and wait his turn. His foot touched the brake pedal, and he gradually slowed to a stop on the side of the road. The missionary stared at the oncoming truck, but his mind was far from the scene before him. Then, without warning, it happened!



Suddenly, from the bushes alongside of the road sprang two men armed with machetes. One of them rushed at his door while the other raced to the passenger side. In an instant, his door was yanked opened. (Oh, why hadn't he locked it as he normally did?!) The terrifying, movie-like drama began to play itself out. Thinking quickly, he grabbed his door and jerked it open as wide as it would go. The man on his side of the car was knocked out into the way of the oncoming semi. He slammed and locked his door and then whirled around to take in the situation on his daughter's side of things. The second man was reaching across his daughter for the gear shift!

Bro. Harrelson rammed the man's hand to the floorboard and at the same time glanced up at the road. The semi had passed! His foot stomped on the gas pedal, and the pickup truck accelerated. Both men were left sprawling in the dust behind them.

His heart pounded! It had all happened so fast, and it was over before he had really known what was happening. He turned to his daughter. She was okay, just shocked like he was. As his mind replayed the event that had just taken place, he realized that the situation could have gone much worse. Why had the second man dove for the gear shift instead of grabbing his little girl? If he had taken her, everything would have been over. He would have had to get out and deal with the two men, and they probably would have taken his truck and everything in it. But God had mercifully blinded their eyes and had given Bro. Harrelson the wisdom to know exactly what to do. It was a moment in time that he would never be able to forget.

Several months later.....Bro. Harrelson and his family were on furlough. They were just finishing up a service at one of their supporting churches. It was obvious that this church loved their missionaries by the way the people hung around their table and spoke to them after the service. No



one seemed to be in a hurry to leave. But later, when the church was mostly empty, the pastor came up to the missionary with a sober look on his face, "Brother, there is something I have to tell you. Each morning, I get here to the church early, but before I enter my office, I always take a few minutes to pray for our missionaries."

The missionary glanced around him at the many prayer letters lining the walls. He nodded, and the pastor continued. "Each morning, I make my rounds. I lay my hand on these prayer letters and pray for each missionary in turn for a few minutes before I move on to the next one. Well, Brother, several months ago, something really strange happened. I put my hand on your prayer letter, and as I began to pray, I was overcome with an intense burden for you and your family. I literally could not take my hand off your letter, and God would not let me move on. Instead, my eyes filled with tears and I stood there for who knows how long laboring in prayer for you. Brother, I'm curious. Do you have any idea why I might have been under such a heavy burden that day?"

Time seemed to stand still for the missionary as his mind raced back to that horrifying day three months before. And then it was his turn to tell his side of the story. The two men wept and rejoiced together at the goodness of God. The hearts of that missionary and that pastor bonded as the full truth hit them. They had BOTH been truly laboring together on that fateful day on the mission field.

The missionary went on to tell that story, both sides of it, everywhere he went. Now, more than ever before, he realized that he and his family could not make it without the prayers of their supporters back home.



Question: Do you pray for your missionaries? I mean, do you REALLY pray for your missionaries? Do you know them personally because their names are on your lips on a regular basis? If you were asked about one of your missionaries in particular, would you know him, or would his name just vaguely ring a bell? Your missionaries, each one of them, need YOU. Are

you ready to bow before God at a moment's notice to spend time in prayer for one of them? They are depending on you for more than just money to keep them on the field. They need your prayers. Their lives may depend on it!