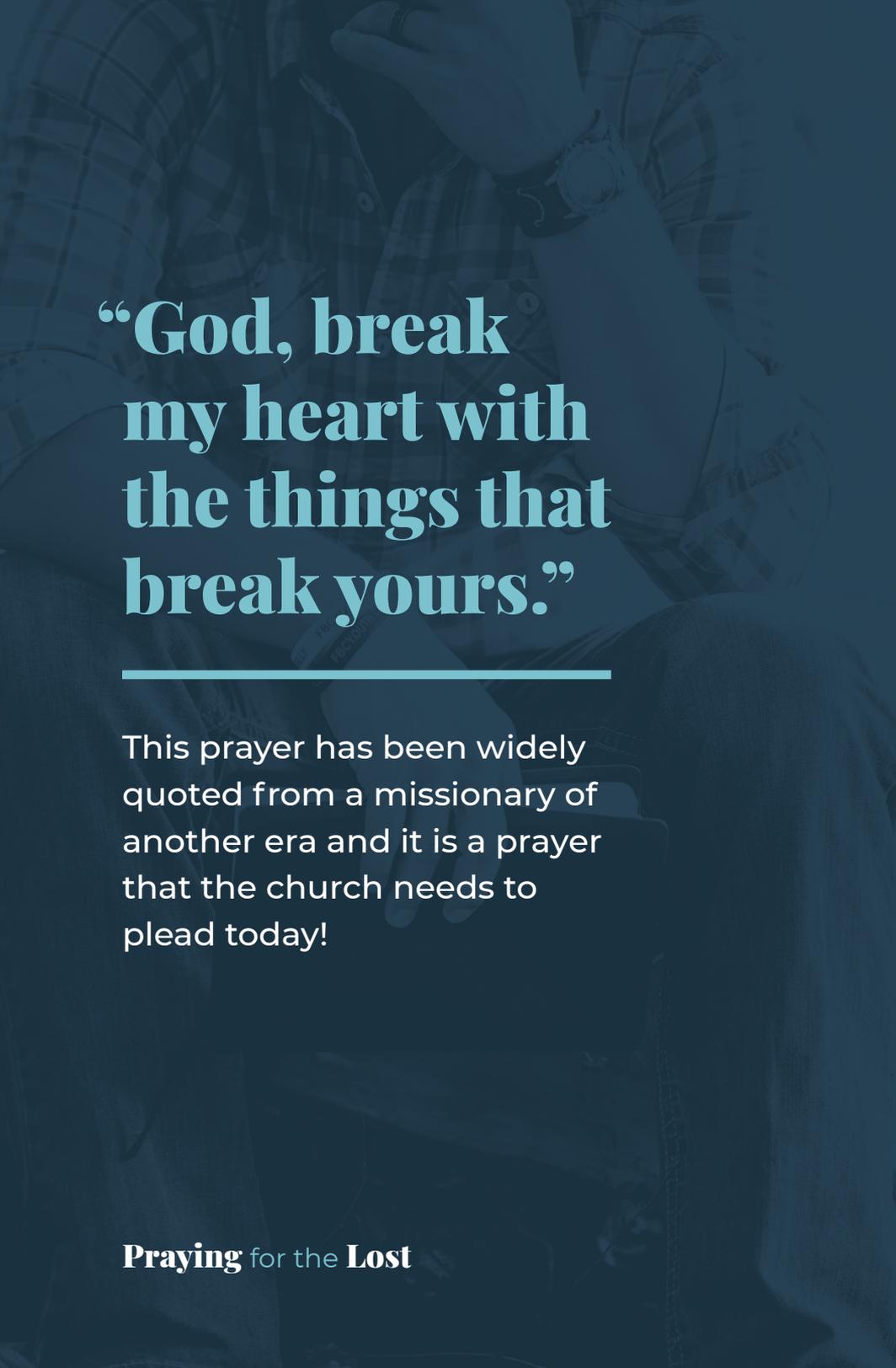




# Praying for the Lost

By Ted Elmore



**“God, break  
my heart with  
the things that  
break yours.”**

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This prayer has been widely quoted from a missionary of another era and it is a prayer that the church needs to plead today!

**Praying** for the **Lost**

# Praying for the Lost

Jesus said, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her. How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!"

"You were not willing," some of the saddest words in Scripture, tell us that God wants people to welcome Jesus into their lives as Messiah and Lord. Just like Jerusalem, who did not welcome him as Messiah, there are those who do not accept Christ and are "lost."

Who are the lost? These are described in the Bible as unbelieving (John 3:18, Luke 15); living in spiritual darkness (John 1:5); blind to the gospel (2 Corinthians 4:4); and perishing (2 Corinthians 4:3). Lost-ness is therefore not rooted in behavior but in the condition of the soul. If someone's soul is lost, then that person is capable of a wide spectrum of sinful behavior.

One is not lost by behavior nor is one saved by behavior. The gospel is that in God's perfect timing he sent his son to be born of a virgin, live a sinless life and be crucified (an ancient Phoenician-Roman method of execution) for our sin(s) and be raised from the dead. The root sin is unbelief and it is unbelief (a refusal to recognize one's need of a Savior and turn to Jesus) that crucified Jesus. He was buried and rose again on the third day, thus proving his claim to be the Son of God (Romans 1:4). In John 17:3, eternal life is described as "knowing" Jesus. It is a relationship that trusts Jesus for salvation (faith) and follows him in obedience (evidence of knowing Jesus).

Luke 15 clearly describes a God who is actively seeking the lost. Jesus came to earth to "seek and save the lost" (Luke 19:10).

We can influence our lost family and friends to Jesus through prayer and witness. Prayer accentuates the activity of God. We would obviously pray for them to be saved, but we can also engage in the spiritual warfare for their souls by praying the process God uses to bring them to calling on the name of the Lord. God teaches us to pray for the lost to be saved.

# Let's Break That Down...

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## **Pray for salvation of the lost**

In Romans 10:1 we are taught that Paul prayed for the salvation of lost people and Timothy was instructed to do the same in 1 Timothy 2:1-4.

## **Pray for conviction of sin for the lost**

Jesus said the Holy Spirit would convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgement to come (John 16:8-11).

## **Pray for individuals by name**

Pray God will send someone to your lost friends/family to share the gospel with them. Do not be surprised if that "someone" is you.

Pray your lost friends/family will hear not only with the natural ear, but hear deep in their inner being with the spiritual ear.

Pray God will grant them faith and they will believe in their hearts that Jesus died on the cross for their sins and that God raised him from the dead.

Pray they will then call upon the name of Jesus for salvation. "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Romans 10:13).

Pray they will confess Jesus as Lord.

List those for whom you will regularly intercede and if possible share the gospel.

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# Prayer Suggestions

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**Schedule** time to be alone in a quiet place and pray on a daily basis for the lost. This may be your kitchen nook, a prayer room at your house or church, or even out on your favorite park bench. Be intentional and make prayer a priority when planning your day (Mat 6:6).

**Organize** or join a small prayer group to meet regularly and pray for individuals by name. A “Prayer Triplet” is simple and effective: three believers list three lost people that they are praying for and then the three believers meet once a week to pray for the three lost people each of them listed.

**List** the names of lost people for whom the church is praying. You may want to create a section in your church prayer room. When they come to Christ and are baptized, remove them from that wall and place them on an answered prayer wall or some other section designed for that purpose. One way to begin this process is to have a locked box (similar to an offering receptacle) for the people to place the names of lost friends. These can be prayed over in corporate worship as a group and then the names transferred to the prayer room. When one of them comes to faith in Jesus and makes that public, celebrate the answered prayer. It is a faith builder for others.

In the situation of someone who has made a profession of faith but “strayed away,” or as some would call a “prodigal,” do not assume their salvation. Pray for them as if they are lost. The same Holy Spirit will convict both the lost and the prodigal. (The Holy Spirit knows the condition of the prodigal’s soul.)

## Conclusion

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Remember, fruit follows faithfulness and God determines the fruit. Be faithful, remember the prayer of the missionary, “God, break my heart with the things that break yours.”



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