

How to Prayer for the Salvation of Others Start With Those You Know Best

John 1:40-42

January 4, 2026, Rev Joe Sanders
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It's the start of the new year, 2026. Does it feel to like a continuation of the last year? That's not true for me. Many people make resolutions and then break them within a few weeks. Most of their resolutions are focused on their health. People want to eat better, lose weight, exercise more. Then they realize that they like junk food, don't have the will power to stop eating and there is no desire to exercise.

As I begin this new year I'm inspired by God's Holy Spirit with a fresh vision for ministry. The Lord has awakened within me insight for the future. He has given to me understanding. He has empowered me to move forward. God has given us the ministry of making disciples.

Does anyone sitting here want people to go to hell? In some circles those words are used in anger. Then in other circles they are used in jest. But for us going to hell is no joking matter. It's not what want even for our enemies. I am bringing to you this vision and mission as God's driving force to carry us forward.

John 1:40–42 (NIV) Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon son of John. You will be called Cephas" (which, when translated, is Peter).

Our Vision and Mission empowers us to make disciples. Look on the front of the program: Bible Believing Disciples Of Jesus Seeking To Make More Disciples. It's a new year with a new vision to move us forward. We are many things: born again people, we are part of God's kingdom. But the thing that most makes us different from other churches is our belief that the Bible is true. That is the Bible guides our daily lives, and moves us forward makes us disciples of Jesus. We don't merely see ourselves as believers in Jesus, but as disciples. That is we are people who want to be like Jesus in our thoughts, words, and actions. So we are Bible believing disciples of Jesus. Many Christians and many churches may also make this claim.

That's not all, we know that we are not a finished product. We know that we have lots of room for improvement in our desire to be like Jesus. We know that our salvation isn't for ourselves, but is for everyone. Therefore, we are seeking to make more disciples. With this in mind we are becoming more unique as a congregation.

One part of our vision describes who we are right now. Another part of our vision describes who we can be, who we strive to be, who we desire to be. Though there may not be thousands or hundreds of us, we differ in that we are seeking, we are living out our salvation by intentional making disciples. We may not have the biggest, loudest, or best worship band. We may not have small groups meeting in homes. We may not have a daily meal or a food pantry. All of those things are good. Each of the churches who are known by those ministries are unique.

What makes us unique is our friendliness, our sense of family, and our desire to make disciples. We've been doing it for years, we just haven't celebrated it. Our Mission of seeking to make disciples of Jesus by: *Being present at community events and activities; Praying for and getting to know our*

neighbors, inviting them to church, and introducing them to Jesus; Training one another to share the gospel and teaching one another how to pray and study the Bible.

We've already begun with our participation in the Christmas Parade. We want to do more Main Street events including parades and the events at the Courthouse Square. We'll put up a tent, talk with people and give out information about Jesus and our church. Every Sunday morning we're playing music outside for the neighbors to hear. We've started to ring the church bell. We need to get into a better practice of doing each one every week. We'll have on a regular basis articles in the Beacon, along with ads.

These are good thing, but they aren't personal. What will truly begin to make a difference is praying for our neighbors. I've mentioned this before, Bless Every Home Prayer Guide. If you haven't signed up, I will help you today. Then you can begin praying for the people who live near you. You will have the opportunity and desire to meet them as you pray for them by name. This will open the door for serving them. Which will give you a moment to talk about your faith in Jesus. We will develop opportunities to have Public Bible Studies. Maybe we'll meet with friends at a restaurant or at a park.

What will help you the most is specific training. Last fall we talked about your prayer life and your life with Jesus, we now want to get into the issues that will help all of us make disciples. Each Tuesday afternoon is a Bible study that will provide practical help. Then the last Saturday of the month will be a breakfast for everybody in the church. I will recap in one hour the main points of the Tuesday Bible studies.

John 11:25–26 (NIV) Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?”

We are too often too quick to think about ourselves and not that the gospel is for everyone.

We just celebrated God becoming a person entering the world of people. Jesus, God in the flesh, lived in every way possible being faithful to His own character. Jesus trusted God in the simplest and the most unbelievable ways. He became our sin, died on a cross taking away the punishment of our sins. Then Jesus rose from the dead conquering the power of death.

Jesus asked a woman, a friend, whose brother had died four days prior if she believed He was the Resurrection and the Life before it all happened. She said she believed. It's about belief in Jesus as the resurrection and who gives life.

Believing is for everyone: men, women, and children. Believing is for the young, old and really old. Believing is for the poor, the wealthy, and the filthy. Believing is for those who work hard and those who are lazy. Believing is for the weak and the strong. Believing is for everyone. Jesus said whoever lives and believes in Him will never die. Whoever includes anyone who believes. Belief is not just for people who look like me. Belief can happen to anyone, anywhere. Belief can happen to the worst of us and the best of us. Belief can happen to anyone who is prompted by the Holy Spirit.

We are seeking for the Holy Spirit to speak to us and through us. We make disciples as we listen and follow the leading of God's Spirit. His Spirit is alive in His Word. The Holy Spirit brings the Word of God to life. The Holy Spirit provides understanding of the Word. The Holy Spirit brings the truth of God's Word into action.

As we pray for family and neighbors, co-workers and our enemies the Holy Spirit speaks to them. There is a power that is released through the Holy Spirit into the lives of saints and sinners alike when God's people are praying. This is always true, but it is especially true when we are talking about

salvation. God has no desire to see anyone go to hell. God wants every person to believe in His Son Jesus and be saved from their sins and its punishment, so that they will be in heaven for eternity.

I asked this question earlier, do we want to anyone to go to hell? There is no reason for any person to suffer for eternity in hell. Our part of keeping people out of hell begins with prayer. Not fleeting prayers, but intentional, specific prayers for individuals to be saved from their sins. Prayers for specific people to turn from their sin and turn to Jesus. Every believer can pray for the salvation of others if first we stop thinking only of our needs.

John 1:40–42 (NIV) Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus.

It has to start with prayer and then the Holy Spirit will call them to Jesus. Andrew was obviously seeking the Messiah. We can safely determine several things about Andrew and the first is that he loved the Lord. He had heard John the Baptist preach repentance and baptism from sin. Andrew was baptized and regularly followed John the Baptist through the wilderness as he preached. He was one of John's disciples.

Andrew was present at the baptism of Jesus and heard John proclaim Him as the Lamb of God. This particular phrase referred to a animal that would be sacrificed for the sins of God's people. It was also associated with the Messiah. God had promised and the prophets had proclaimed that God would send a Savior for His people.

Andrew knew that John the Baptist spoke the truth. He was a prophet of God. He was the first voice for God in over four hundred years. His message matched that of the prophets of old. Andrew wanted to know more. He wanted his own life to be different, to be more faithful, and trusting, and obedient to God's word.

He was a disciple of John the Baptist, seeking to grow in his faith. He was concerned about others, specifically his family. His attention was intentionally focused on his brother Simon. When Andrew knew that God's promised Messiah had arrived there was one person he had to tell. His brother Simon was first and foremost on his mind. It's obvious that Andrew came to Simon first with this Good News.

Just as Andrew had a specific person, his brother, in mind we must also have specific people in mind. I don't need to ask you who your specific person or persons are, because I know that you are concerned about the salvation of a family member, a friend, a neighbor, or a co-worker. So, the next step is how we pray for these specific people.

Andrew knew his brother Simon very well. We know from scripture that Simon himself thought that he was unworthy to be in the presence of the Messiah. While fishing Jesus performed a miracle and Simon made that confession. He was admitting that he was a sinner, an unclean person. Simon was known for making bold statements about everything and about Jesus. He also spoke boldly and foolishly with anger. Andrew knew that Simon was not righteous, not in a right relationship with God. So, it is most certain he prayed for Simon to see his own sin, repent and turn to God.

As we consider the people we love who need Jesus our prayer for them is to see their sin and God's grace in Jesus.

John 1:41–42 (NIV) The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, "We have found the Messiah" (that is, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus.

Whether it's brother or sister or friend pray for their salvation. Our highest prayer priority and longest list of prayers needs to be for others to be saved. Is that true for you? It is for me some days, but not everyday. This is a safe place to be honest about ourselves. Most of my prayer time is consumed with me, my family, and you.

On Tuesday mornings I meet with other pastors for prayer. Do you know what we pray for? We pray for each of our churches to be a faithful witness in our community. We also pray for every soul in Coshocton County to be saved. That is a big audacious prayer, right? But, God has put it on our hearts to pray for people to be saved. We are praying for people where we can potentially have an impact. It's not that we aren't concerned about Columbus, Cleveland, Chicago, New York, or Las Vegas. It's not that we aren't concerned about people in Germany, Italy, China, Venezuela, Iran, Gaza, and Israel. It's we don't have the same potential to have an impact on those outside our community.

Regardless of how we feel or what others may say, the salvation of lost souls is vital. There are people we may not like. I'm talking about people we know. But, we don't want them to suffer for eternity. Their salvation is vital. If sinners don't confess their sins and turn to Jesus as their Savior and Lord, they will be lost for eternity.

Every soul matters. They matter to God who created them. They matter to Jesus who died and rose again to save them. They matter to the Holy Spirit who pleads with them. Every soul needs to matter to us. The people in your family matter. Those who live across the street matter. The person at work matters. We demonstrate that they matter as we begin to pray for their salvation.

It's not enough for me to identify someone as an idiot. But, just because a person doesn't think before they speak doesn't mean they need to go to hell. We can pray for them. Just because a person makes bad choices on top of bad choices doesn't mean they need to go to hell. We can pray for them. Until we see our neighbors, co-workers and even our enemies as people who will go to hell without Jesus they will remain lost souls. We can pray for them.

We're praying for each person to see their sin, its destruction in their life, and their need for God's grace in Jesus will change our hearts and will release the Holy Spirit to work in their lives.

As I begin this new year my desire is to pray for more people who don't know Jesus. I will spend more time praying for those who aren't saved, for sinners of every kind. I will spend more time praying for my neighbors. I will spend more time praying that they see their sin and their need for God's grace in Jesus Christ.

I don't want people to go to hell, do you? I want people to go to heaven, are we in agreement?