



Episode 010: How Can We Pray for Missions? Show Notes

Karen Bird is working on her Masters of Theology at Tyndale Seminary in Toronto, Ontario. She serves as a board member with Kids Alive International. She is passionate about walking closely with God and making prayer a priority in her life. She is a wife and a mother of 3 kids.

What is the ministry and vision of Kids Alive?

- Kids Alive is a Christian faith mission dedicated to rescuing orphans and vulnerable children, meeting their spiritual, physical, educational and emotional needs and raising them to be contributing members of their society and witnesses to their family and community.
- Kids Alive run small family centered children homes, childcare centres, and schools in needy areas.
- Our goals is that they will grow up to know and follow the Lord and that they would be raised up to be leaders in their countries and that they would bring Christ's kingdom to their countries.

How have you become passionate about prayer?

- She and her husband are dedicated supporters of missions at home and abroad.
- Because of our family members who are faithful Christians, I have been spurred on to know Christ better and to integrate my faith into my life and work.
- Recently taught an elective at her church to seek the Lord not perfectly but increasingly. Her heart longs in the direction of prayer.
- She wants to develop a spirit of dependency on the Lord, and prayer really keeps us focused on God, the one we are called to love with our heart, soul, mind and strength.
- Prayer is a discipline that is worth pursuing because it connects us to God.

Please describe what you mean by prayer – how do you define it and why is it so essential?

- Prayer seems simple and intuitive but it goes deeper.
- It is a way of expressing devotion to Jesus, an opportunity to declare praise and adoration and a way to ask God for things.
- The Bible says that God delights in our prayers. Scripture says that our prayers smell good to God, like incense.

- It is a personal and corporate way to connect with God.
- Prayer is an intimacy builder and a response to intimacy. Like a marriage, communication builds intimacy and communication is the natural response of intimacy.
- From the beginning of time, people have had the propensity to arrogantly go at it alone rather than rely on God.
- God desires that we remain faithful to him, not for his sake, but for our sake.

Why is it important that we pray? Why should we pray for missions?

- We are part of an integrated whole.
- God is at work to bring restoration to his creation and he is using us to do it.
- Praying releases the hand of God to provide and sustain and to hold back our enemies, so that God's kingdom can move forward.
- Prayer is more powerful in the spiritual realm than we even realize.
- When we pray, coincidences happen. When we stop praying, coincidences stop happening.
- Many missionaries are looking for and waiting for these God-ordained coincidences – breakthroughs that will usher in God's truth, financial support, and physical safety in unsafe countries where they serve. We can pray with them and anticipate God's answers together.

Many Christ-followers wrestle with the discipline of prayer. Why do you think this is?

- In the Old Testament, we see that others had trouble staying focused on the Lord.
- God is invisible and it takes faith to believe. We can pray for the gift of faith. "Lord help my unbelief."
- We're blocked by the idea that we should be praying "just right" and have all the right words. We feel inadequate. We don't have to expect ourselves to be able to pray for hours at a time. We need to spend time growing in our discipline of prayer.
- Science and technology, prosperity, modern skepticism, time pressures – these can all be road blocks. We need to be more mindful of opportunities to practice dependency on God.
- The mystery of unanswered prayer is another roadblock. We don't know why some prayers go unanswered, but we need to trust that God's will is being done and He knows best.
- "If God had granted all the silly prayers I've made in my life, where should I be now?" C.S. Lewis

What ideas do you suggest for those who want to go deeper in the discipline of prayer?

- Don't wait for your emotions to line up before praying. Instead of feeling like I want to pray, I'm going to pray before I feel that I want to.
- Keep a journal or memory book can be helpful – record how you have seen the hand of God at work in and around you so that you don't forget how God has moved.



- Prayer books can be really helpful. We can pray through Scripture or buy a book – Puritan prayers are some of Karen’s favourites.
- If you find yourself lamenting about not having the prayer life you think you should have, just start praying.

What advice do you have for people who would like to be praying for missions but don’t know where to start?

- “Do for one what you wish you could do for all.” Andy Stanley
- The needs are great, there are so many missionaries to pray for, many unreached people groups to pray for – more than one person could ever pray for.
- Choose one missionary or one unreached people group or one country or one mission organization and just start there.
- You can pray for one.

What routines or strategies do you recommend using for global missions work?

- Her grandma used a giant world map that she used to pray for the world. Use your own map. Mark off where your missionaries are. Learn about the countries that they are in. Learn more about their ministry activities. It will encourage your prayer life and your missionaries.
- Pray with your children before bed. Kids have a special aptitude for prayer. Start the practice of praying for missions young. Getting them praying will encourage you to keep praying too.
- Starting a prayer group is a great strategy for praying for missions. Use positive peer pressure to help grow your discipline of praying for missions.

How has God responded to prayer in your life?

- When our kids were very small, and I was a young mother, I was exhausted trying to figure out how to be a parent. I spent so much time trying to figure out all the problems, and then I’d remember to pray about it. After I finally give in and started praying, things would begin to change. I know that God was graciously responding to my needs.
- Recently I busted up my ankle and I couldn’t walk on it. I know there are greater challenges out there than that, but it really affected my life and I had great anger that overflowed into my relationships with my family. During this time I was supposed to speak to some junior high students about following the Lord. I woke up that morning feeling very discouraged. All I prayed was, “Help.” I opened my Bible and the words written there were exactly what I needed and I was just blown away by the gentle touch of the father who really cares about the details.
- We’ve been praying for missionary friends for many years and we involve our kids in praying for them too. I can’t wait to get to heaven and see how God answered each of those prayers.

If you had to pick your top two or three favourite books on prayer, what would they be?

- Richard Foster's two books *Celebration of Discipline* and *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*

If our listeners wanted to learn more, how could they be in touch with you to learn more from you?

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