GOSPEL-SHAPED OUTREACH • SESSION 6

How Should We Pray?

Prayer-Fueled Evangelism: Boldness, Faithfulness, and Gospel Compassion

Pastor Patrick Bottoms | Wednesday, October 28, 2026

> *"We pray not because the outcome of God's redemptive work is uncertain, but because we are dependent upon Him for everything necessary to participate faithfully in that work." — Pastor Patrick*

Introduction: Entering the Fray from Christ's Victory

Ephesians 6:12 • Romans 8:37

Sharing the gospel is not merely a conversation or a technique. When disciples engage in making disciples, they enter a spiritual conflict that cannot be seen with human eyes. Paul reminds believers that "we do not wrestle against flesh and blood" (Eph. 6:12). Yet we do not enter that conflict hoping to secure a victory of our own. We enter it because Christ has already accomplished the decisive work.

Patrick illustrated this with David and Goliath. Once David defeated Goliath, Israel's army advanced across a field where the decisive victory had already been won. In a far greater way, believers advance in the victory of Christ. As Romans 8:37 says, "we are more than conquerors through him who loved us." Christ accomplished it all; we now have the privilege of joining in His work. How, then, do we walk faithfully in this victory while entering the fray? Through prayer.

The goal of gospel-shaped outreach is not primarily to master methods, programs, or talking points. It is to be molded by the gospel so that we become disciples who make disciples. That begins with remembering our own condition apart from grace: we too were lost in sin and in need of the same Savior we proclaim to others.

Why Prayer Matters for Disciple-Makers

Prayer brings us before the sovereign Creator who speaks to His people through His Word. In making our petitions known to Him, we acknowledge both our need and His authority. Prayer is an act of dependence and surrender: we ask, we submit our wills to His, and we trust His wisdom and provision.

Through prayer we seek a will aligned with God's will, wisdom and discernment, a daily "on mission" mindset, and open doors for His Word. Even the most ordinary moments may become

opportunities to speak of our hope in Christ. In every request we confess that salvation comes through God's work, not human cleverness.

Because disciple-making is more than a single moment of proclamation, we need one another's encouragement, prayers, correction, and help. Prayer equips us not only to share the gospel, but to remain faithful throughout the ongoing work of helping others follow Christ.

1 | Pray for Laborers

Matthew 9:35–38

Jesus saw the crowds as "harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd," and He had compassion on them. He then told His disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few," and commanded them to pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers (Matt. 9:36–38). Jesus saw the need clearly. Rather than telling His disciples to act independently, He directed them to prayer.

Patrick contrasted this with the familiar image of a lone hero saving the day. Disciple-making is not a solo mission. Salvation is the sovereign work of God, accomplished by Christ and applied by the Holy Spirit. God graciously calls His people to take part, and His church needs laborers in every facet of that work.

The whole body has a part to play. There is no such thing as an unimportant church member. Believers pray for one another, share the Word, encourage and sharpen one another, bear burdens, offer accountability, and go alongside one another. One day we may be the one speaking; another day we may be the one praying, encouraging, or needing encouragement ourselves.

This does not excuse any believer from personally sharing the gospel. Rather, the work is too important and too extensive for anyone to claim it belongs only to someone else. We should pray both for new laborers and for those already serving who have grown tired or discouraged when they have not seen immediate fruit.

Jesus calls us to make disciples, not merely to count converts. The work does not end with a first profession of faith; it includes walking with and helping others grow in Christ. Above all, we remember that the harvest belongs to the Lord, not to us. When His people labor together in this work, they glorify Him.

2 | Pray for Opportunities

Colossians 4:2–4 • Ezekiel 36 • 2 Corinthians 3

Paul asks the Colossian believers to continue steadfastly in prayer, watchfully and with thanksgiving, and to pray "that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ" (Col. 4:3). Even while imprisoned, Paul asks not first for an easier situation but for an open door and clarity in speaking of Christ.

Why are such prayers necessary? Patrick drew on Ezekiel 36 and 2 Corinthians to remind the group that, apart from God's gracious intervention, the human heart is hard toward Him and the mind is veiled to spiritual truth. We cannot change a heart by persuasion, pressure, or eloquence. We depend on God to open the way for His Word.

This dependence should shape how we approach others. We can be so eager for someone to understand that we try to "shoehorn" the gospel into a conversation, becoming forceful or impatient. In doing so, we may simply be imposing our will. Praying for opportunities helps us remain humbly attentive to the Lord's work rather than relying on aggressive methods.

Watch for ordinary open doors. Patrick pointed to Paul's encounter with the Philippian jailer (Acts 16). When prison doors opened, Paul did not treat the moment only as a chance to escape; it became an occasion for the gospel to be heard. Our opportunities may come through a store clerk, a conversation in a checkout line, or a community gathering. Watch for what others say, listen carefully, ask thoughtful questions, and look for natural ways to bring the Word of God into the conversation.

The group discussion added an important practical point: make margin in your life. A schedule crowded by busyness and constant entertainment can make it difficult to listen, reflect, or notice a person in need. Discernment can also mean knowing when not to force the conversation, leaving the door open to continue talking and praying for the person later.

We ask the Lord not only for opportunities but also that, when a door opens, we would speak clearly "as [we] ought to speak" (Col. 4:4).

3 | Pray for Faithfulness and Boldness

Ephesians 6:10–20 • Luke 12:12

Paul's appeal for prayer in Ephesians comes immediately after his command to put on the whole armor of God. Believers are called to stand in the Lord's strength amid spiritual warfare. Paul urges perseverance in prayer for all the saints and asks that words would be given to him so that he might "boldly… proclaim the mystery of the gospel" as "an ambassador in chains" (Eph. 6:19–20).

Patrick emphasized two connected qualities: faithfulness and boldness. Faithfulness means steadfastly standing in what God has provided through His Word and Spirit, even when circumstances are hard. Such perseverance reflects God's own steadfast character. Boldness means being willing to speak of Christ as we ought, rather than remaining silent because we fear discomfort, rejection, inconvenience, or loss.

Our response to trials may itself become a witness. Others may be watching from a distance, noticing how a believer responds to difficulty. A life that remains anchored in Christ can give rise to questions and opportunities to explain the hope of the gospel. As Patrick reminded the

group, our circumstances are ultimately not about our own glory: God may be using them to form us and to serve others.

He also acknowledged that even an ordinary concern for time and commitments can cause us to pass over an opportunity to engage someone. We may fear what speaking could mean for our job, our schedule, our comfort, or our relationships. That is why boldness and faithfulness must be regular requests in prayer, not qualities we presume we possess on our own.

The class reflected on Paul's imprisonment: even while suffering, he was concerned for others and for the spread of the gospel. Encouraging one another and bearing one another's burdens can strengthen the church's witness and remind us that we are not laboring alone. Patrick also pointed to John Bunyan's perseverance in preaching despite imprisonment as an example of costly faithfulness.

Luke 12:12 reminds believers that the Holy Spirit will teach them what they ought to say. Patrick specifically noted the verse's immediate setting: Jesus is addressing situations in which His followers are brought before authorities. This promise is not an excuse to neglect preparation. We should study, meditate on, and memorize Scripture, trusting the Spirit to bring His Word to mind when needed.

Prayer Before, During, and After the Gospel Is Shared

The answer to "How should we pray?" also explains why we pray: we do not possess the power, wisdom, or ability to make anyone spiritually alive. The Lord of the harvest does. We pray for laborers because we need one another; for opportunities because salvation is God's work; and for faithfulness and boldness because we can become weary, distracted, or afraid.

Prayer should surround the whole work of disciple-making: before we speak, while we are speaking, and after the conversation ends. It keeps us humble and reliant on the Spirit. Patrick encouraged the practice of praying Scripture itself. For example, Psalm 23:1, "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want," can become a prayer of thanksgiving for God's faithful provision. As the Word shapes our thinking, we respond to God in prayer.

> *"Prayer fuels the mission. It provides laborers, opportunities, faithfulness, [and] boldness as we watch what God accomplishes." — Pastor Patrick*

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Compassion or frustration?

When we observe the spiritual condition of those around us, are we more inclined toward Christlike compassion, indifference, or frustration? How should that affect our prayers? (Matthew 9:35–38)

From the study: Patrick encouraged us to confess indifference or frustration and ask God to change the way we see people, remembering that we too once needed someone to share the gospel with us.

2. Open doors or forced conversations?

How can we distinguish between faithfully seeking gospel opportunities and attempting to force conversations through our own efforts? (Colossians 4:2–6)

From the study: The discussion highlighted asking questions, listening carefully, recognizing when the time is not right, and leaving room in our lives to notice opportunities.

3. Boldness when it costs us?

What does Paul's request for boldness while imprisoned teach us about faithfulness when sharing the gospel becomes uncomfortable or costly? (Ephesians 6:18–20)

From the study: Consider whether fear, comfort, busyness, or an unwillingness to sacrifice reveals something that has become too important to us. Pray for the courage to speak and stand faithfully.

4. Do our prayers reveal our dependence?

If we genuinely believe that God alone gives spiritual life, what does our prayer life reveal about how much we actually depend upon Him in evangelism? (2 Corinthians 4:4–6; 2 Thessalonians 3:1)

From the study: This final question was given for personal reflection and prayer during the week.

A Simple Prayer Guide for the Week

Laborers. Lord of the harvest, raise up and strengthen disciples who make disciples. Help us encourage one another and labor together.

Opportunities. Open doors for Your Word. Give us attentive hearts, compassion for people, and clarity when it is time to speak.

Faithfulness. Keep us steadfast in Your Word when we are tired, distracted, discouraged, or tested.

Boldness. Give us courage to proclaim Christ with humility and love, trusting the Spirit rather than ourselves.

Prepared by combining Patrick's Session 6 handout with his October 28 teaching and the class discussion. Organized for personal study and review; not a verbatim transcript.