

2-3 June 2012



World Weekend
OF PRAYER

FOR CHILDREN AT RISK

“Why should we pray for children at risk?”

We all know the stories. Some of us even see it first-hand on a regular basis. The seven-year-old girl sold into prostitution by her own parents; the teenage boy sleeping on the street, already an addict; the 10-year-old girl left to care for her three siblings after her parents died of AIDS.


Why do we pray for children like these? We don't know them. Some may live close to us, but many are thousands of miles away. We will probably never hear about them again, so we will never know the outcome of our prayers.

And if we do pray, what should our prayers be like? It can be hard to pray for children we have never met, in situations we don't understand. What should we ask God to provide for them, when we don't know what they need; how should we thank him, when we don't know what to thank him for?

Well, Jesus actually offers us an answer to these questions, in Matthew 6 v 9-13 and Luke 11 v 2-4 – verses more commonly known now as ‘the Lord's prayer’. This prayer is a guideline for why and how we can pray; not only for ourselves, but also for others, including children at risk. It covers thanksgiving, provision, forgiveness, resisting temptation – all things that are relevant and important to every single one of us.

Prayer is a two-way thing. It is not just about us asking for what we need – as we speak to God, put our trust in him and allow our lives to be shaped by him, he also gives us wisdom so that we can know him better, and the strength to go out and do his will in the world.

So why pray for children at risk? **Because prayer is powerful.** Because God does listen and respond. And because the more time God's people spend with him the more like him we become, and the more we know how to live out his love for children at risk.

Will you join us? 

Haven't we all asked the question: “If God is really in control, what is the point in praying? Will it really make a difference?”

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We pray to remind ourselves how amazingly good, merciful and powerful God is, and to thank him for it.

Our Father in heaven, may your name be honoured.

We pray so that children at risk can know the incredible goodness of God.

We pray to come closer to God, so that we might know his will better and better, and so that we know how to do his will on earth.

May your kingdom come, may your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

We pray so that more people, us included, can know how to treat children according to God's will – and actually do it!

We pray so that we don't forget that we rely on God for all of our daily needs, even the most basic ones.

Give us today our daily bread.

We pray to ask God to provide for children at risk who do not have everything they need.

We pray to remind ourselves that we are not perfect and that we need forgiveness. We pray so that we can be free from the burden of not forgiving others, and set them free too.

Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us.

We pray for children at risk to know the amazing forgiveness of God, and for them to have the strength to forgive people who have hurt them or put them in danger.

We pray because through prayer God gives us his strength, to help us steer clear of sin.

Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

We pray so that God would give children the strength they need to follow him in a tough world.

'A father to the fatherless...
is God in his holy dwelling'
Psalm 68 v 5

God's kingdom where we can spend
eternity, with no suffering or
sadness - we'll see God face to face!

**'Our Father in Heaven, may
your name be honoured'**

'...he decided long ago to
adopt us as his children.'
Ephesians 1 v 5

- Provider
- Saviour
- Redeemer
- Healer
- Comforter
- King

Loved, adored and respected

why PRAY IT?

We pray to remind ourselves that God is holy, and he should be honoured, loved and respected. We pray to be reminded that God is not like us - he is far beyond anything that we can imagine, so when we approach him we should do so in reverence and love because of who he is. He is the God who has a perfect knowledge of us and yet loves us more intimately than we can understand. He is the God who cares deeply about every aspect of our lives, down to the smallest detail. He is the God who saves us, guides us and comforts us.

what DOES IT HAVE TO DO WITH CHILDREN AT RISK?

We have probably all been in tough situations where we have found it hard to worship God. Perhaps we have questioned why a good God would allow us to face such difficult circumstances. Perhaps we have felt anger towards him when we cannot see the justice in what is going on. Perhaps we have even turned our backs on him, finding it impossible to understand his ways and therefore refusing to trust in him.

If this is true for us, then how much harder must it be for a child at risk, who may face a daily struggle for survival, to praise God and to truly believe that he is worthy of their praise? Yet it is these children who are often the most trusting and assured of God's love and good plans for them.

who IS LIVING IT OUT?



For Maria, a teenager living in El Salvador, it would have been all too easy to be bitter and resentful about life, and to direct this resentment towards God. When her parents separated, she suddenly found herself with no real home or family, and for a while she was forced to turn to a violent street gang to help her find food and a place to sleep. A city-wide network of local organisations in San Salvador has been helping her for some time now, but when she looks back on the darkest and most difficult times in her life she is still able to say:

"For me, it doesn't make sense to distance myself from God, because in the middle of my problems he has been with me. He filled me with peace and love - I don't feel hate, or bitterness, God has lifted me and done good things. Only God gives the strength and peace to go on. I know what it is to suffer, but perhaps it happened so that, later, I can help others."

What an amazing example of someone worshipping God against the odds!

Psalm 145 v 3-7: Great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; his greatness no-one can fathom. One generation will commend your works to another; they will tell of your mighty acts. They will speak of the glorious splendour of your majesty, and I will meditate on your wonderful works. They will tell of the power of your awesome works, and I will proclaim your great deeds. They will celebrate your abundant goodness and joyfully sing of your righteousness.

how CAN WE PUT IT INTO ACTION?

The first line of the Lord's prayer is an opportunity for us to prepare our hearts, reminding us of who God is, stilling ourselves, focusing on him, and thanking him so that we have a right attitude towards him as we come to him and ask him to answer our prayers.

Whether it's singing your praises, reading your Bible, or discussing good things about God's character with those around you, spend some time reminding yourself of God's goodness. It's important to recognise again that God is worthy and holy, so that your prayers to him may be reverent, relevant and real.

"It's important to recognise that God is worthy and holy, so that your prayers to him may be reverent, relevant and real."

Write a list of as many names and characteristics of God as you can think of. Then think about how each of them might apply to some of the different needs of children:

- The need for food
 - The need to learn
 - The need to be kept safe
 - The need to have a place to call home
 - The need to have their voice heard
- Spend time thanking God for who he is to children in relation to each of these areas.

Pray for children at risk who might be finding it hard to praise God because of their circumstances. If you have children at your event, encourage them to be a voice for these children and to pray and praise God on their behalf.

‘...put God’s kingdom first.
Do what he wants you to do.
Then all of those things will
also be given to you’
Matthew 6 v 33

HERE AND NOW!

- Heart’s desire
- Design
- Decision
- Purpose
- Yearning

‘Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven’

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‘Blessed be the name of God
forever and ever, to whom
belongs wisdom and might.
He changes times and
seasons; he removes kings
and sets up kings’
Daniel 2 v 20

‘Turn away from your
sins! The kingdom of
heaven is near’
Matthew 4 v 17

‘The Lord has set up his
throne in heaven. His
kingdom rules over all’
Psalm 103 v 19

why PRAY IT?

What is ‘a kingdom’? We can describe it as a realm which is under the control and authority of one ruler. This ruler has the power to make decisions on behalf of their people, for good or for bad.

We pray this partly in recognition that God’s kingdom is ‘close at hand’ and that soon ‘of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end’ (Isaiah 9 v 7). But what of God’s will being done on earth? Jesus said, ‘The poor, you will always have with you’ (Matthew 26 v 11). So we might think it is useless to hope and pray for God’s kingdom to come on earth. And yet, surely, Jesus would not have asked us to pray this if he knew it was impossible?

Our weakness and sinfulness have resulted in society being broken, but God’s strength and perfect wisdom revealed to us make it possible to restore his kingdom in our own lives, in the lives of other individuals and even in whole societies.

what DOES IT HAVE TO DO WITH CHILDREN AT RISK?

Many children at risk live in situations which are chaotic, degraded and seemingly ruled by ‘the god of this age’ (2 Corinthians 4 v 4). It seems as though a Christ-centred attitude to children is often hard to find amongst the earthly rulers of communities and countries. If rules are put in place for the protection of children, they may not be adhered to even by people in positions of power and influence; and often these rules are lacking altogether.

Despite this, as Christians we know that there is a higher kingdom than these earthly ones. And, thanks to the work of Christians around the world, millions of children are coming to know of this kingdom and allowing God to be king in their own lives.

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who IS LIVING IT OUT?

Sadly, one of the things that Cambodia is best known for is its child sex trade, with children being trafficked into and out of the country to meet the demand created by sex tourism. Although the Cambodian government recognises this as a serious challenge, and has launched many initiatives to try and tackle the problem, laws are hard to enforce and some local government officials consider the time and expense to be more than they are willing to give.

It is in this context that fifteen-year-old Say Lim discovered that her parents were planning to send her to work in Thailand. Say Lim had been attending an education

programme in Bangkok, run by a member of a local network of Christian projects, and had recently given her life to Jesus, which angered her parents. When she came to the programme in tears to tell them what her parents were planning, staff prayed with her, and that same week Say Lim's mum and dad had a miraculous change of heart and decided to keep her at home. The programme's desire to model God's kingdom in Cambodia meant that Say Lim was kept safe and shown God's heart in a very real way. Her parents are even letting her attend church now!



Isaiah 10 v 1-2: Woe to those who make unjust laws, to those who issue oppressive decrees, to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people, making widows their prey and robbing the fatherless.

how CAN WE PUT IT INTO ACTION?

Some great blogs about the many local caregivers working daily with children at risk can be found at worldweekendofprayer.com

Print off a few of these and spend some time in quiet reflection, reading through the stories and thanking God for the people that are so faithfully living out his heart for children by working to meet their needs each day.

"Spend some time in quiet reflection, thanking God for the people that are so faithfully living out his heart for children by working to meet their needs each day."

Take a look at some Bible verses which tell us about God's will for children (Proverbs 22 v 6, Mark 10 v 14, Ephesians 6 v 1, Isaiah 54 v 13, 2 Samuel 7 v 14...) Think about the five different needs of children below, and about the practical ways in which we as Christians can help to meet these needs according to God's will:

How to meet these needs

Need

- The need for food
- The need to learn
- The need to be kept safe
- The need to have a place to call home
- The need to have their voice heard

'...his compassions never fail. They are new every morning...'
Lamentations 3 v 22-23

Used to describe a master giving a servant enough food to accomplish an assigned task

Their bread will be supplied, and water will not fail them'
Isaiah 33 v 16

'Give us today our daily bread'

'Two are better than one, for they have a good reward for their toil'
Ecclesiastes 4 v 9

The necessary food for today, for sustenance

why PRAY IT?

Some of us will probably never have to wonder whether we will have any food to eat tonight, or a place to sleep, or clean water to drink or wash in. So it is easy sometimes to forget to put our trust in God every day for our most basic needs.

For others of us, this part of the prayer is a daily reality: the next meal may be a distant hope, a night on the street could be a distinct possibility and every sip of dirty water may turn out to be life-threatening.

Jesus doesn't only tell the materially poor to pray for daily provision – this is for everyone. Whatever our circumstance, this line reminds us that only God can provide what we need, whether physical or spiritual, and that we need to trust him for it, no matter how well provided-for we seem to be.

what DOES IT HAVE TO DO WITH CHILDREN AT RISK?

We all know the statistics. Millions of children around the world are going hungry every day, sleeping on the streets and missing out on an education that could help them provide for themselves in the future.

It can be hard and confusing to pray this line when we see or hear about children whose daily needs are not being met. But perhaps what we need to remember is that these are not just idle words, but words that have the power to convict us and make us the answer to our own prayer.

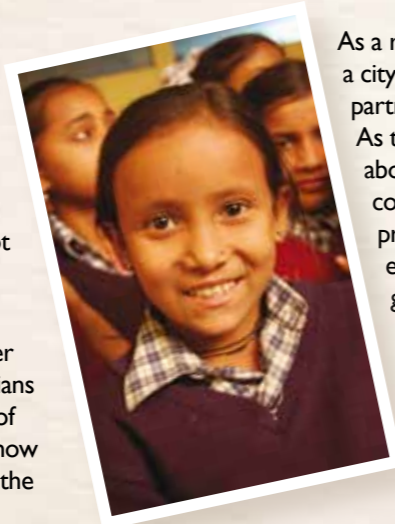
One of the amazing things about the Lord's prayer is that Jesus consistently asks *us* to pray for *our* daily bread to be provided, for *our* sins to be forgiven, for *us* to be kept from temptation. That means we pray for each other, for our community and our brothers and sisters around the world.

Reminding ourselves that we are in community with other believers can often be the catalyst that stirs us into action, and this action can be the difference for children.

who IS LIVING IT OUT?

For nine-year-old Sneha, an orphan being looked after by her aunt in Vijayawada, India, daily food and shelter were by no means guaranteed. Her aunt was under pressure to get married, and when she did her new family would not accept Sneha – they wanted to throw her out onto the street.

But around the same time, on the other side of the city, a small group of Christians had gathered for the World Weekend of Prayer 2008, to pray and ask God to show them how to respond to the needs of the local children.



As a result of this meeting they decided to form a city-wide network, so they could support and partner one another to better help children. As they got underway the network learnt about Sneha's situation and were able to connect her to a hostel where she is now properly clothed, fed, sheltered and given an education (she has even been moved up a grade in school!)

This practical action that turned Sneha's life around was a result of prayer by a group of people determined to make a difference in the lives of children in their community.

Proverbs 30 v 8: Give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread.

how CAN WE PUT IT INTO ACTION?

Place some items in different areas of your venue relating to various needs that children have (e.g. a plate of food, school books, a toothbrush, etc). Put some pieces of paper and pens and pencils next to the items and then spend some time visiting each area, either individually or in groups.

Think about children who may not have access to each of these things on a daily basis and write/draw any responses on the pieces of paper. Think about some of the practical things that you might be able to do to be an answer to these children's prayers.

"Think about some of the practical things that you might be able to do to be an answer to these children's prayers."

Over the WWP take time as you eat to thank God for providing for your daily needs. Think about the children who will not be getting a meal today, and discuss some practical ways that you could respond to the needs of these children.

- Forget
- Release
- Wipe slate clean
- Bear no malice

'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.'
1 John 1 v 9

'Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us'

- People who gossip about us
- Rebellious children
- Loved ones saying hurtful things
- Bullies
- People at church
- Colleagues

'First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift.'
Matthew 5 v 24

why PRAY IT?

In Luke's version of the Lord's prayer, we read 'Forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone who sins against us' (Luke 11 v 4). So we may mistakenly believe that Jesus is placing a condition on whether God will forgive us or not. The true interpretation, however, may be even more challenging: although our forgiveness is not dependent on our good actions towards those who wrong us, if we do not forgive, then perhaps we have not truly known God's forgiveness of us.

So we pray this as a reminder of God's great mercy and forgiveness of us, and as a response to his grace we ask for the strength to forgive those who have offended or hurt us.

what DOES IT HAVE TO DO WITH CHILDREN AT RISK?

When G K Chesterton was asked to write an essay for a newspaper entitled 'What is wrong with the world?', he responded with two powerful words: "I am". Whether we like it or not, and however indirectly, we are part of the reason that children are suffering. Whether through a sense of powerlessness, negligence, or deliberate actions, or simply by being part of fallen humanity, we have prevented children from becoming all that God has intended them to be. We may need to ask for forgiveness for the part that we have played.

Meanwhile, for many children at risk, the chance to offer forgiveness to those who have abandoned, abused or neglected them is the chance to be set free from bitterness, pain and resentment. Even when children are saved from abusive situations, they will never be truly healed until they are able to do this, even though it may be one of the hardest things they ever have to do.

who IS LIVING IT OUT?

Harriet is a five-year-old orphan, born with HIV, who was living with her aunt in the town of Gulu, in northern Uganda. Sadly, this aunt did not understand Harriet's needs, and when a local network of projects discovered her she was malnourished, neglected and without the love and care she desperately needed.

It would have been easy for the network to simply take Harriet away from her aunt and give up on the relationship.



But that is not what they did. Although it was not easy, staff members took the challenging step of speaking to the aunt, explaining why her behaviour had been harmful to Harriet and working with her to better care for her niece.

Amazingly, rather than being defensive, Harriet's aunt really listened, and sought forgiveness from God and from Harriet. This is now allowing them to rebuild their relationship and move forward to a happier future together.

Luke 6 v 27-28: But I tell you who hear: love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you and pray for those who mistreat you.

how CAN WE PUT IT INTO ACTION?

Based on the five main areas of need for children (food, education, safety, a home and a voice) write down some of the people that children may need to forgive, and some of the reasons why they might need to forgive them.

Write a prayer asking God to give children the strength to forgive. If appropriate, you could send these prayers to children at risk that you or your church have a connection with.

"Lord, who is a God like you? You forgive sin. You forgive your people when they do what is wrong. You don't stay angry forever. Instead, you take delight in showing your faithful love to them. Once again you will show loving concern for us. You will completely wipe out the evil things we've done. You will throw all of our sins into the bottom of the sea." (Micah 7 v 18-19)

Buy or collect some sand and spread it over an area of your venue. Spend some time reflecting on whether there are areas of your life which have played a part in putting children at risk, even just by failing to act.

Write these things in the sand.

Then wipe out what you wrote, as a reminder that God has forgiven you.

'And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil'

*'I will lead them beside streams of water on a level path where they will not stumble'
Jeremiah 31 v 9*

*'Pray that you will not fall into temptation'
Luke 22 v 40*

- Rescue
- Free
- Liberate
- Redeem
- Acquit

*'Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour'
1 Peter 5 v 8*

Where we often play with the idea of giving in to what we know is wrong

why PRAY IT?

There are two Greek words for 'testing' or 'temptation' mentioned in the Bible. One, 'dokimazo', is used to describe testing the genuineness of something by fire, and contained within it is the idea that impurities will be burned away, leaving something which is pleasing to God. The other type of testing, 'peirazo', is a type of testing which intends to find fault and to cause someone to trip. This is the word used in this verse.

We are not praying for God never to test us, but asking him not to tempt us with something more than we can bear and which is a deliberate attempt to lead us into sin. And God promises that he will never do this.

what DOES IT HAVE TO DO WITH CHILDREN AT RISK?

For many children who have been rescued from difficult situations, perhaps a life of gangs, drugs or sleeping rough, the temptation to return to that life can sometimes be overwhelming. As extraordinary as it may seem, the new place in which they find themselves – whether a children's home, a foster family, or another institution – can be extremely daunting: full of strangers, no access to the drugs which helped them get through each day on the streets, new responsibilities such as attending school or sharing in daily chores around the house.

It is an abrupt one-hundred-and-eighty degree turn which can be too much for a child to take in all at once. We need to pray that children are not tempted beyond what they can bear, and that God gives them the strength to adapt to and flourish in their new situations.

who IS LIVING IT OUT?



Manuel is the youngest of eight siblings living in Asunción, the capital of Paraguay. At just nine years old he has suffered more than many people will experience in a lifetime. Although he lived with his mother, her struggle with alcohol addiction meant that he felt a constant, acute sense of abandonment, and a lack of love, attention and understanding led him to follow in the footsteps of his older siblings and move out to the harsh life of the streets.

But thankfully it wasn't long before Manuel was found by a team of street workers connected to a local network of Christian projects. They were able to arrange for him

to stay in a residential rehabilitation project for several months, which is now supporting him until he can be resettled with his mother and siblings.

Although life in this new extended family has been a huge adjustment for him, and he has been tempted on many occasions to return to the familiarity of the streets, the love and support of the project has shown him that the staff really do want what is best for him. Slowly, he is learning to live a life of respect and dignity, and the dedication of the staff has given him the strength to resist the urge to give up and go back to where he was before.

I Corinthians 10 v 13: No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

how CAN WE PUT IT INTO ACTION?

Think about some of the ways that adults can help children to understand and resist temptation. If there are children that you are responsible for (as a parent, a carer, or a children's leader) write a short letter or declaration explaining how you will try to help those children fight the temptations in their lives.

This could be just a personal reminder to you, or it could be something you do with your whole church and put on display, reminding you all of your responsibility towards the children in your church community.

In one area of your venue, lay out some art and craft supplies (paper and pencils, paint and brushes, clay, wire, beads, etc) and play some quiet music. Allow people to spend some time in contemplation, thinking about some of the temptations faced by children at risk.

Encourage people to draw or create something representing one or more of those temptations. Invite them to take their artwork home with them to remind them to pray for children to fight and overcome those temptations.

"Pray for children to fight and overcome temptations."

WORLD WEEKEND OF PRAYER 2012

Want to read great stories of children whose lives have been changed through the WWP? Interested in finding out how the WWP got started?



www.worldweekendofprayer.com

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*Got questions or prayer requests?
Need some help planning a prayer event?
Want to order more copies of this
booklet?*



info@worldweekendofprayer.com

Want to stay involved so that you can get regular ideas and information about praying for children at risk?



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TELL US YOUR STORY

We would love to know how you use this guide, and if you pray in any way, shape or form over the WWP please do tell us about it! It will only take a few minutes to fill in the online questionnaire at



www.worldweekendofprayer.com

and it's so encouraging for us to be able to hear and share what God is doing through the prayers of his people.

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The World Weekend of Prayer has been running since 1997, when it was started by international children's charity Viva. For more information on Viva's work with children at risk around the world see www.viva.org