

2-3 June 2012



World Weekend
OF PRAYER

FOR CHILDREN AT RISK

Why do we pray for children at risk?

Joseph is ten years old and lives in Kenya. Sadly, his parents died a few years ago and now he has to look after his three little brothers and one baby sister all by himself. That is a lot of responsibility for someone who is only ten! Joseph doesn't go to school because they don't have any money to pay for it. So he might never learn what he needs to know to get a job, and help to pay for all of the things he and his brothers and sister need as they grow up.

Have you ever heard a story like this about a child who is suffering and wanted to pray for them? If you have, that's great! It's really important to pray for other people, especially people who are going through hard times or who don't know the love of Jesus.

But maybe you have wondered sometimes why you pray for children like Joseph. You don't know him, he lives thousands of miles away and you might not hear about him again and so never know what happened when you prayed.

And what about how you should pray? It can be hard to know what sort of things to ask God for when we pray for other

children in situations so different from our own.

Well, Jesus must have known that we might find it hard sometimes because he told us the best way to pray, not just for us but for everyone. The prayer that he gave us to pray is called 'the Lord's prayer' and you can find it in your Bible in Matthew 6 v 9-13 and Luke 11 v 2-4.

This prayer reminds us that praying is a two-way thing. It is not just about telling God what we need or want, or even just talking to him about everything that we are thinking - it is also about letting God speak to us, so that he can tell us the way he wants us to act and what he wants us to do.

So why do we pray for children like Joseph? Because prayer is powerful. Because God answers us when we talk to him. And because when we talk to him he can show us how to act so that we can make a difference ourselves in the lives of children who are suffering.

So let's get started!



We pray to thank God for how amazing and good he is!

Our **Father** in heaven, may your name be honoured.

We pray so that children everywhere will know to praise and worship God and celebrate what an amazing father he is

We pray because it helps us listen to what God wants to happen on earth, so that we can go and do it

May your kingdom come, and may what you want to happen be done on earth as it is done in heaven.

We pray so that God can show us how he wants children to be treated, and so that we can tell other people too

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

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

We pray to ask God to give us, and other children, the strength to forgive people who have hurt us or put us in danger

We pray because through prayer God gives us his strength to help us stay away from sin

Keep us from sinful behaviour when we are tempted. **Save us** from the evil one.

We pray so that children everywhere would let God help them to make good choices in their lives

'God is a dad to children who don't have dads' Psalm 68 v 5

God wants us to be his children!

The most amazing place! It's God's home, and it's where we will one day go to be with him for the rest of time

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

Saviour, great king, creator of the world, our comforter, a help when things are difficult

- Loved
- Worshipped
- Admired
- Respected
- Adored

why DO WE PRAY THIS?

Can you name the leader of your country? Try to imagine what it would be like if this leader was best friends with every single person living in your country. That would be pretty impressive, wouldn't it? Well, God is not only the leader of your whole country, or even of the whole earth, but of the entire universe. But he invites every single one of us to be his friend! And his friendship is the best kind of friendship we could ask for.

God really is amazing - but sometimes when we pray to him we act as though we have forgotten that. When Jesus described how we should pray, he said that we should first remind ourselves of how wonderful God is. So that's what we are going to do!

what DOES IT HAVE TO DO WITH CHILDREN AT RISK?

Have you ever found yourself in a really tough situation and wondered whether God is really there? How did you feel towards God then - were you angry, or confused? Maybe you even decided that you were not going to trust him anymore, because it seemed like he had let you down.

How would you feel about God if you had no food to eat? Or no bed to sleep in? Or no family to care for you? These are problems that some children face every day.

Sometimes we need to remember that God does not see things the same way that we do. He sees everything, everywhere, while we only see what is around us. That means that God works in ways that can be really hard to understand, because he is making decisions for the whole world. So, we need to pray for children in tough situations, that they can still know that God loves them and can still give thanks for the good things he has done.

who CAN SHOW US WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE?

When María was ten, her parents got divorced. Because she was from a poor part of El

Salvador, being left with only one parent meant that she was suddenly even poorer. Sometimes she felt like the only way to survive would be to steal food, and for a long time she felt like there was no-one around who loved her or cared about her. But she never gave up on God, and never stopped believing in how good he is.



She told us: *"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 loving and worshipping God even in a really difficult situation!

Psalm 145 v 3-7: Lord, you are great. You are really worthy of praise. No one can completely understand how great you are. Parents will praise your works to their children. They will tell about your mighty acts. They will speak about your glorious majesty. I will spend time thinking about your miracles. They will speak about the powerful and wonderful things you do. I will talk about the great things you have done. They will celebrate your great goodness. They will sing with joy about your holy acts.



how CAN WE PUT IT INTO ACTION?

Sit or lie on the floor with your eyes closed, breathing deeply and thinking quietly about God. Listen to a song, poem, or Psalm about God and think about how good and big and perfect he is. If he is that good and perfect, how much do you think he cares about children, especially children who are suffering or in pain?

Talk about this with your group, and then say some one-line prayers telling God why he is worthy of thanks and praise.

Write out Psalm 145 v 3-7 (or part of it) on an A3 sheet of paper, and make it into a poster that you can take home and put up on your wall to remind you of God's goodness.

Shout out as many names and characteristics of God as you can think of, and get one person in your group to write them down on a big piece of paper. Then think about what each of these could mean to a child who is suffering. (For example, 'Emmanuel' means 'God with us', so God is someone that children can always turn to, even when they are hurting.)

...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

God's kingdom is in our hearts - we can choose God as our king, and be ruled by our perfect God



'May your kingdom come, and may what you want to happen be done on earth as it is done in heaven'

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

'God decides who should be kings on earth, and when their rule starts and finishes' Daniel 2 v 21

'What God wants is right. His plan is good and pleasing and perfect.' Romans 12 v 2

why DO WE PRAY THIS?

One of the words that we use to describe God is 'king', because he rules over the whole earth. What do you think 'ruling over the whole earth' actually means? Maybe it means having the power to make decisions which affect everyone in the world, or being able to tell people what they can and can't do.

Jesus tells us to pray that what our king (God) wants to happen on earth will actually end up happening - in other words, that people on earth will do the things that God wants them to do. After all, God is a good king and if we listen to him and the things he asks us to do then the world will be a better place.

what DOES IT HAVE TO DO WITH CHILDREN AT RISK?

You may have decided to obey God, but there are lots of leaders of countries who have decided not to. These leaders might not like or respect children, and might decide not to try and help children who are poor, homeless or hungry.

But we can pray that God will show himself to them and change their hearts so that children in their country start to be treated better. And we can also thank God for all of the people who do love God and look after children, and do what he wants them to so that the children they look after can be safe and happy.



who CAN SHOW US WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE?

One day, Say Lim came running in to her classroom in tears, grabbed hold of her teacher and begged her, 'Don't let them do it! Don't let them send me away!' When the teacher could finally calm her down enough for her to explain what had happened, she discovered that Say Lim's parents were planning to send her to another country to work.

You see, in Cambodia, where 15-year-old Say Lim lives, lots of poor parents feel like they have no choice but to send their children away to go and earn money to support their family. But these girls and boys are sent to people who are only interested in hurting them, not helping them. Sadly, some of the leaders of the

country don't want to admit that this is wrong, because the problem seems too hard and expensive to fix.

But there are Christians in Cambodia who have decided that God is the ultimate leader in their lives, and so try to treat children the way God would want. And that's why, when Say Lim came to her teacher that day, the teacher prayed with her that God would change her parents' minds.

And guess what? It worked! Say Lim's parents decided not to send her away, and they are even letting her go to church, which they did not allow her to do before.



how CAN WE PUT IT INTO ACTION?

Look at a picture of a king. What is a king? What do kings do? On big sheets of paper, write down how you think children would be treated in a country with a good king, and in a country with a bad king, when it comes to five of the most important things that children need:

	Good king	Bad king
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 opinions and ideas listened to		



Thank God that we can all choose to be 'ruled' by the good king, Jesus, and receive all of the good things that he has for us.

Isaiah 9 v 7: He will rule on David's throne and over his kingdom. He will make the kingdom strong and secure. His rule will be based on what is fair and right. It will last forever. The Lord's great love will make sure that happens. He rules over all.



Many Christians who have chosen Jesus as their king are helping children, so that they can be treated in the way that God would want them to be. That includes the adults who look after you!

Write a letter to one of the leaders of your children's group or project, thanking them for the work that they are doing for children.

'God shows us his great love for us again and again, every day'
Lamentations 3 v 22-23

Only God can give us the things that we need each day

'Give us today our daily bread'

'God gives good gifts to his children'
Matthew 7 v 11

'Us' = it's not all about me!

Bread (food) = something we need every day so that we can live, not just something we would quite like



why DO WE PRAY THIS?

Do you know when you are next going to eat? Do you have a bed to sleep in tonight? Do you have clean, running water to have a wash in before you go to bed?

If you can say 'yes' to all of these questions, then you have a lot more than millions of children in the world right now. That's right, millions!

When you realise this, how does it make you feel? Does it make you more thankful for all of the basic things like food and drink that you have? It is definitely good to remember how much God has given you, but Jesus tells us that we need to do more than just remember every now and again. We are supposed to trust God every day for the things that we need for that day, and to be thankful every time we have a meal or go to sleep in a warm, safe place.

what DOES IT HAVE TO DO WITH CHILDREN AT RISK?

Has there been a time when you haven't had what you needed? Maybe your parents couldn't afford to buy any food one day, or you had to sleep somewhere where you felt cold or scared? Or if not, maybe you have read a true story about a child who this has happened to?

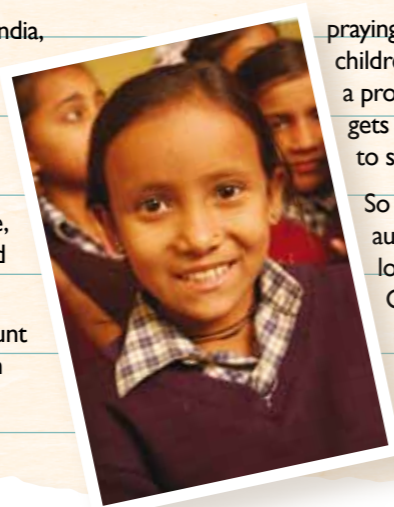
It is hard to understand why God would let this happen. But the Bible verse we have just looked at says, 'Give us today our daily bread'. Jesus is telling us that we shouldn't be focused on 'me, me, me' but on 'us, us, us'. We are supposed to care about each other. So maybe it seems like God is letting children suffer, but he is actually waiting for us to do our bit to help them.



who CAN SHOW US WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE?

Sneha used to live with her aunt in India, because her parents died when she was just four. But her aunt was about to get married and wasn't sure that her new husband and his family would agree to look after Sneha. If not, Sneha would have nowhere to live, and would probably have to beg for food every day.

But just as this was happening, Sneha's aunt met a group of Christians who had been



praying about how they could help the poor children living in their city. They took Sneha to a project where she now lives, and where she gets food, a place to sleep and a chance to go to school every day.

So God answered two prayers: Sneha's aunt's prayer that Sneha would be properly looked after, and the prayer of the group of Christians who asked God to give them a practical way to help children in their city!

Proverbs 30 v 8: Don't make me either poor or rich, but give me only the bread I need each day.



how CAN WE PUT IT INTO ACTION?

Put the following things in different parts of the room, to represent different needs of children:

- A plate of food (the need for food)
- Some school books (the need to learn)
- A model or drawing of an angel (the need to be kept safe)
- A model or drawing of a house (the need for a place to call home)
- A loudspeaker or microphone (the need to be listened to)

Visit each part of the room, and pray for children who do not have each of the things that these items represent.

Also take some time to think about what practical things you might be able to do to help these children get what they need.



Even though it is easy to forget sometimes, God is the only one who can give us what we need. We should thank God every day that he gives us food, drink, a safe place to sleep and the other things that we might sometimes take for granted. You can start now!

Thank you!

Write down some of the things that you have asked God for lately. If you are in a group, each of you can share something you have written. What kinds of things did you pray for?

'If we admit that we have sinned, God will forgive us. He will forgive every wrong thing we have done. He will make us pure.'
1 John 1 v 9

- Let go of anger towards someone
- Still be friends with someone when they do something bad

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

Even when they don't deserve it!

Unhelpful or unkind things that we do, say and even think

So that we don't let anger towards people control the things we think, say and do

why DO WE PRAY THIS?

You know that feeling when you have scraped your knee, and just as the cut is starting to heal it gets really itchy, then you can't resist scratching at it and making it worse again? That is what it is like when we refuse to forgive someone for something that they have done wrong.

Every time we are reminded of what they have done (like the itching reminds us of the cut) we get angry again and end up feeling worse than we did to start with. Even though it is sometimes the hardest thing to do, we need to be ready to forgive anyone who asks.

what DOES IT HAVE TO DO WITH CHILDREN AT RISK?

Sometimes, adults can do things which upset you or hurt you. Often, even though it hurts at the time, you end up realising that they were actually just doing what was best for you. But sometimes, this is not the case. Nobody is perfect, and sometimes adults do things which are wrong.

You may not have experienced this yourself, but you may have heard about friends or children in other parts of the world who have been really hurt by adults. These may be the people who are closest to you like parents or close relatives, or they may be leaders of your country who have not put proper laws in place to protect you.

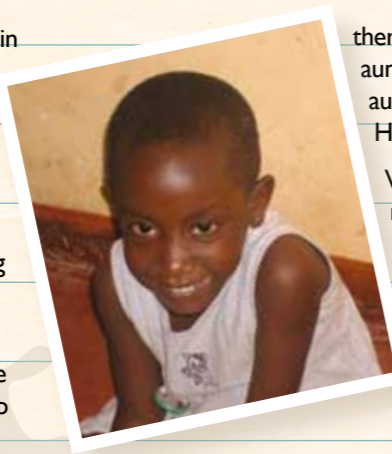
Whoever these people may be, it can be very hard to forgive them, especially if they are not ready to say sorry. But if we are not ready to forgive, then the hurt will become like that cut which doesn't properly heal.

who CAN SHOW US WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE?



Five-year-old Harriet is from a town in the north of Uganda and, sadly, her parents died when she was still a baby. She went to live with her aunt, but her aunt did not really know how to look after her. That meant that Harriet never had enough food, and she spent the first few years of her life feeling like no-one loved her or wanted her.

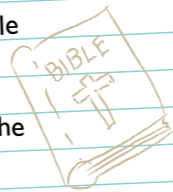
Eventually, a Christian project found out about Harriet, and started to give her the care that she needed. But they didn't stop



there. Instead of separating Harriet and her aunt forever, they decided to talk to her aunt and try to explain why they had taken Harriet away in the first place.

When the aunt realised how she had made Harriet feel, she said sorry to God and to Harriet. Because her aunt asked for forgiveness, Harriet is learning how to trust her again, and her aunt is trying really hard to look after Harriet in a way that shows that she really does love her.

Micah 7 v 18-19: 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.



how CAN WE PUT IT INTO ACTION?

Draw a picture of a situation you have been in when an adult has upset you or made you angry. Then think really carefully about this question: **"Did they do it to hurt me, to help me, or because they didn't have a choice?"**

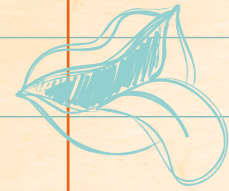
Here are some examples of situations, with possible answers to the question:

- "My teacher told me off" "But he did this to help me, because it showed me that what I did was wrong"
- "My mum didn't buy me the bike that I asked her for" "But she didn't have a choice, because the bike was too expensive"
- "My uncle hit me" "Even though he was trying to show me that I had done something wrong, hitting me was not the right way of doing it, and I need to ask God to help me forgive him"

Talk about the things that you drew with your group, to see if they have a different answer to the question. If there are people in your group who need to forgive someone for something they have done, pray for them.

Spread some sand out in one corner of the room. Think about whether there are any things you need to ask God's forgiveness for, and write or draw these things in the sand. Then read the Bible verse from the previous page (Micah 7 v 18-19). Now you can wipe out everything you have written in the sand to remind you that God has forgiven you completely.





*'If we ask, God will lead us in the right direction so we stay away from bad things'
Jeremiah 31 v 9*

Sinful behaviour is when we say or do things that hurt or upset other people – when we sin we are choosing to ignore how God wants us to act and instead just do what we want

'Keep us from sinful behaviour when we are tempted. Save us from the evil one'

Rescue us, free us and keep us away from the evil one

Temptation is when we feel like doing something that we know is wrong. But we always have a choice about whether to actually do it or not

*God protects us from the devil! 'God is my place of safety... he will certainly save you from hidden traps...'
Psalm 91 v 1-3*



why DO WE PRAY THIS?

Have your friends ever tried to convince you to do something that you knew was bad? Did you do it, or did you resist and explain to your friends why you thought it was wrong?

And what about the other way around – have you ever tried to convince your friends to do something bad because you thought it would be fun, or because it seems exciting to do something that you know you are not allowed to do?

It can be very tempting to do bad things. At first it can be fun and sometimes it even seems like people might like you more because of it. But God reminds us that making ourselves happy is not our number one aim. Our number one aim should be to make God happy, and he is happy when we resist the temptation to do bad things and instead do things which honour him.

what DOES IT HAVE TO DO WITH CHILDREN AT RISK?

Imagine living on the street. Life is hard – you have to beg every day just to scrape together enough money for a tiny bit of food. It is cold, and the police are always on the lookout for you, so you have to find somewhere different to sleep every night. But there are good things too. You have friends who look out for you. You don't have any duties or chores to do – you can go wherever you want, as long as the police don't see.

Now imagine being rescued from the street. You find yourself in a nice warm home, with a bed and three meals a day. But you miss your friends. You are surrounded by people who don't always understand how you feel. And you are expected to help out with the housework! Maybe you have been in this situation, or something like it. If you haven't, can you imagine how tempting it must be to run away, back to the street where all your friends are? Even though you know it is not what is best for you, it doesn't stop you wanting to do it.

This temptation itself is not wrong, but children who go through times like this need help from God, and from people who care about them, so that the temptation isn't too big for them.

who CAN SHOW US WHAT THIS LOOKS LIKE?

Manuel is nine and lives in Asunción, the capital of Paraguay. His mum is poor and has seven other children, so she could never look after Manuel properly. Manuel's older brothers and sisters found it too hard to live with their mum, and decided to move out and live on the street instead. Manuel was left alone with his mum, who sadly ignored him most of the time, and he felt more and more abandoned. It wasn't long before he joined his brothers and sisters on the street.

After a while, Manuel was found by people running a shelter for homeless children, where he is now living. At first it was hard – everyone on the street had known him but here he was a stranger, and it felt like starting

his life again from scratch. Lots of times he thought about running away, back to the street. But at the shelter he found love, understanding and an acceptance that he had never known before, and these things made him strong enough to resist the temptation of going back to life on the streets. Now he is even starting to think about being able to live with his mum again.



I Corinthians 10 v 13: You are tempted in the same way all other human beings are. God is faithful. He will not let you be tempted any more than you can take. But when you are tempted, God will give you a way out so that you can stand up under it.



how CAN WE PUT IT INTO ACTION?

Get into pairs or groups of three with friends, siblings or your parents. Tell each other about some of the things that you are tempted to do, that you don't think are good things. Ask each other to pray that God would give you the strength not to do these things.

Also talk about some of the practical things that could help you. For example, you could ask your friends if they would be your prayer supporters, so that whenever you are feeling tempted you can call them or go to them and ask them to pray until you are not tempted any more.

Pray that other children around the world would also have this support from their friends or the people who look after them.

Think about some of the things that you have been tempted to do, even though you have known that they were wrong. On one big piece of paper, write the words, '**Lord, help me do the right thing when I am tempted to...**' Then, on lots of separate pieces of paper, finish this sentence with the things that you have just talked about. So you could write '...say something mean to my friend', for example.

Stick the first sheet of paper up on the wall, and spread the others over the floor. Then play a game of 'musical prayers' – play some music and start dancing and then, when the music stops, run to the closest piece of paper on the floor. Pray the whole prayer out loud (e.g. 'Lord, help me do the right thing when I am tempted to say something mean to my friend'). Keep going until all of the prayers you wrote have been prayed aloud.

