



***Change your world  
through prayer***

**Prayer foundations**  
**[1] Basic Christianity**  
**[2] Family issues**  
**[3] Church & missions**  
**[VOLUME 1/2010]**

# Prayer Foundation: Basic Christianity & Family Issues

## Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
<b>BASIC CHRISTIANITY.....</b>	<b>2</b>
1. Awaken the church o Lord, revive us! .....	2
2. The sin that nobody speaks about: Jealousy.....	4
3. How to pray for your pastor/minister .....	5
4. How to pray when reaching out to the unsaved .....	7
5. Commitment vs. Surrender .....	8
6. Difference between prayer en proclaim .....	10
7. What is the purpose of life? .....	14
8. How to pray for the felt needs of people .....	16
9. How to pray for sick people .....	17
<b>PRAYING ABOUT FAMILY ISSUES .....</b>	<b>19</b>
1. How to pray for a childless couple .....	19
2. Helping your child to pray and to know God the Father.....	21
3. How to pray when your child is bullied .....	23
4. I am the stepmom, what now? .....	25
5. God's purposes through both men and women (by Zac Poonen).....	27
<b>CHURCH AND MISSIONS .....</b>	<b>29</b>
1. More Muslims are turning to Christ .....	29
2. Church planting.....	30
3. The Church of the future: Lessons from history .....	31
4. Becoming a praying congregation.....	33
5. What to pray for a missionary .....	35
6. Missions in our world today .....	36

## **Introduction**

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The purpose of this booklet is to provide some guidelines in leading Bible study, cell or other groups of Christians in prayer to grow spiritually and have a clear understanding of the basics of the Christian faith. Also to pray about difficult values families sometimes have to face.

This booklet is a compilation of articles that were published the past 5 years in the *Jericho Walls Prayer Guide*. Its aim is to serve as a guideline and to set the Christian on a road of praying Scripture for and over different issues. When we learn the language of the Bible, we can pray with much more confidence, since we know that the words we use are from Scripture and God promises that His words will never return void.

**We trust that this booklet will inspire you to teach others to also pray from the Word of God.**

*Jericho Walls International Prayer Network*

P.O. Box 3683, Tygervalley, 7536

Tel.: 021-919 7988

Website: [www.jwipn.com](http://www.jwipn.com)

E-mail: [watch@jwipn.com](mailto:watch@jwipn.com)

## **BASIC CHRISTIANITY**

### **1. Awaken the church o Lord, revive us!**

*Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him. Every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low. The crooked roads shall become straight, the rough ways smooth. And all mankind will see God's salvation (Luke 3:4-6).*

The church in many parts of the world needs revival. We are right now living in desperate days and God can use each one of us to prepare the way for His coming. It is time to seek the Lord. The valleys of defeat must be filled, the mountains of disbelief must be levelled, the crooked places of dishonesty must be straightened and the rough places of disobedience must be made smooth. Revival is divine intervention in the normal course of spiritual things. **It is God revealing Himself to man in awful holiness and irresistible power and love.** It is such a manifest working of God that human personalities are overshadowed and human programs abandoned in the light of it. It is man retiring into the background because God has taken the field and the stage. It is the Lord making bare His holy arm and working in extraordinary power on saint and sinner.

It is once more time to join in prayer for revival in our lives and in the nations. Prayer that is strong, prevailing, believing, God-moving, hell-defeating, sinner-saving, believer-sanctifying, Christ-exalting and worker-producing. Prayer that takes all that we are and have. God Himself will motivate us to pray these prayers that have extraordinary consequences if we are willing, willing to pay the price. Prayer that God may fill us all with the very passion of Christ, with the power and persistence of the Holy Spirit, with the burdening sense of the church's plight and world's appalling need, that the wheels of revival may be set in motion.

### **How do we personally prepare the way for revival?**

(Adapted from Andrew Murray)

*A revival of holiness is what we need. And how is it to be found? It will cost much in prayer. It will cost more than that - much sacrifice of self and of the world. It will need a surrender to Christ Jesus to follow Him as closely as God is able to lead us. We must learn to look upon a life like Christ's, having the very same mind that was in Him, as the supreme object of daily life. - Andrew Murray*

- Become thoroughly dissatisfied with yourself - be sensitive to God's conviction. *Press on toward the goal (Phil.3:14).*
- Set yourself like flint toward a sweeping transformation of your life. Throw your whole soul into the desire for God.
- Prepare yourself in the way of blessing. Pray with all your heart and ask God to enlarge your prayer and worship life. Make time for God and practice fasting.
- Do a thorough job of repentance. Don't tolerate sin in your own life. Let godly sorrow over your sin touch you deeply (**2 Cor.7:10**).
- Make restitution when possible. Make the crooked ways straight in your relationships and life.
- Practice living the Sermon on the Mount. This is the description of holy living (**Matt.5**).
- Be serious about personal revival. Pray instead of watching TV and don't get caught up in the ways of the world. Lay aside the crooked roads.
- Deliberately narrow your interests. If you narrow your interests, God will enlarge your heart. "Jesus only" is the way into a new life that is infinitely wider and richer than anything else.
- Begin to witness. Make a new commitment to reach out to the lost. Ask God for opportunities. He will help you.
- Have faith in God. Begin to expect God to move. All heaven is on your side!

Revival begins with us. It happens by each one of us getting our lives straight and turning from our crooked paths. Take seriously the need for personal revival. Take seriously the need for prayer. God is dealing with His church. The following is the testimony of Charles Finney during a revival in a small village in New York. *I should say a few words regarding the spirit of prayer which prevailed at Rome during this time. Indeed the whole town was full of prayer. Go where you would, you heard the voice of prayer. If you were walking down the street and if two or three Christians happened to be there, they were praying. Whenever they met, they prayed. Whenever there was a sinner unconverted, especially if he showed any opposition, you would find some two or three brethren or sisters agreeing to make him a special subject of prayer. No one could come into the village without feeling awestricken with the impression that God was there in a peculiar and wonderful way.*

(Text shortened and revised. Source: Debbie Przybylski, Intercessors Arise. Website: [www.intercessorsarise.org](http://www.intercessorsarise.org), e-mail: [deb@intercessorsarise.org](mailto:deb@intercessorsarise.org)).

## **2. The sin that nobody speaks about: Jealousy**

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This is the title of a book by RT Kendall. Much of the content of this article is taken from it. I strongly recommend that you read this excellent book. Jealousy is a hidden sin. We do not speak about it. Normally we recognise it in our hearts, but it is too terrible to acknowledge it. Jealousy can be found in business, politics, sport, amongst writers and pastors and movie stars, between siblings and in the media or the academic world.

Jealousy has many faces: Criticising others and speaking negatively of others. It makes me compare myself with others all the time. Jealousy seeks to be acknowledged and I'm always trying to prove myself. Jealousy finds it difficult to give honest compliments and finds it very hard to rejoice over the success of other people. It is always looking for acceptance and praise; always busy competing. Jealousy causes greed in me; anger and frustration, resentment, bitterness, unforgiveness, selfishness, pride and pomp. Jealousy makes that I always want more. Jealousy can see the faults of others very clearly, it is never vague. It is very personal. It is always aimed at someone.

How can I overcome jealousy in my life? Jealousy is often rooted in a sense of being insignificant, of not being good enough, in feelings of rejection or emotional hurt. All these things cause anger and greed in our hearts and manifest in different ways in our lives, one being jealousy. The way to deliverance from jealousy is to understand that it is more important to be loved than to love. We must understand that God loves us. He loves us unconditionally. He loves us in spite of who we are. He loves us so much that He was willing to give His Son to die for us. God's love makes us significant.

Having more and being better than someone else will not satisfy us. There will always be someone that will have more than what we have, that can do things we cannot do. This will bring new anger and greed that leads to more jealousy, and eventually end in more feelings of failure and pain. So the cycle will continue and cause significant damage to relationships.

To understand, know and experience God's unconditional love for you destroys all forms of rejection, heals emotional hurt, makes us significant and sets us free to be ourselves. We find our significance not in being

better or having more than others, but in what has been done for us: Jesus died for us. Overcoming jealousy will set us free, it will help us to enjoy life and enjoy other people and have good friendships. It will set us free to live our calling and enjoy our relationship with God. R.T. Kendall gives a number of ways to overcome jealousy in our lives:

1. Admit it to yourself. Unless you admit it, the process of deliverance cannot begin.
2. Confess it to God as sin and ask forgiveness.
3. Practise total forgiveness. In most cases of jealousy there are people that have hurt us and that we need to forgive. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you any form of unforgiveness and the specific people you need to forgive. Pray and tell the Lord you forgive them. Where possible, go to the individuals that caused the pain or did something wrong and forgive them.
4. Make a choice to continually accept and seek God's praise above the acceptance and compliments of people.
5. Anticipate your reward at the judgment seat of Christ. Your real reward is not what you receive, or do not receive from people around you.
6. Accept your calling.
7. Accept your inheritance.
8. Let God vindicate you.
9. Set your sights on heaven and not the things on earth.
10. Be thankful.
11. Make a decision to praise God – just praise Him. Think about the many things you can thank Him for!

**Lastly:** Remember, you are precious and unique, as child of God, you have eternal life. Why would you envy others' things and lives? You already have what you really need and you belong to God, Who owns everything anyway.

### **3. How to pray for your pastor/minister**

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In **Romans 15:30-31** Paul writes: *'Now I beg you ... that you strive together with me in prayers to God for me, that I may be delivered ... and that my service for Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints.'* Every pastor/minister needs daily, continual prayer. Spiritual leaders are positioned on the cutting edge and live under much spiritual pressure and

attacks from the Evil One. Through prayer we form a 'prayer shield' that surrounds our spiritual leaders.

The onslaught against pastors/ministers comes in many ways. The following are a few examples:

1. There are direct demonic attacks on spiritual leaders and their families from e.g. Satanists, spiritualists, witch doctors etc.
2. There is the attack of a worldly attitude as well as social pressure to compromise, be popular and think and act according to the worldly system.
3. There is the attack of the old nature, the flesh resisting the Spirit (**Gal.5:13-18**).
4. There are direct temptations and sin which each spiritual worker must resist.
5. Spiritual workers in general experience a lot of stress, both emotionally and socially.
6. Every spiritual worker has a specific personality and comes from a specific background. Many struggle with their own emotional pain and hurt from their past. The enemy likes to target pain from the past that has not been dealt with in the spiritual worker's life.
7. Spiritual leaders are often tempted to seek honour for themselves or to compete with other leaders.

To pray for your pastor/minister literally means to stand in the gap for them, to take up spiritual responsibility for them in prayer, to be sensitive to the voice of the Holy Spirit. Do not pray your own will and ideas upon spiritual leaders. Let the Holy Spirit lead you. The following are some guidelines:

- 1. Families:** Pray for their marriage, for peace, respect and enough time with one another. Pray for the children, that they will experience sufficient love and attention. Ask for wisdom for parents to raise their children. Specifically pray for a relationship of trust between father and son, and father and daughter. Ask that your pastor/minister will live in such a way that they do not provoke rebellion in their children.
- 2. Their health:** *Dear friend, I pray that you may enjoy good health (3 John 1:2, NIV).* The climate, attacks from the Evil One, working conditions, continuous criticism, little visible progress, misunderstandings etc. are all factors that may work together to cause

pastors/ministers to suffer stress, depression, tiredness and hopelessness. *Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid (John 14:27)*. Pray for your pastor/minister to refuse to listen to or accept any accusations from the devil, or fellow believers who think evil in their hearts (**Zech.7:10b**). Pray for them to make friends who can also be spiritual partners, and for God to fill them with joy (**Neh.8:10; Deut.12:18**), despite circumstances.

- 3. Their spiritual well-being.** Pray for them to be humble, live pure and holy lives and not to become critical or cynical. *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men (Phil.2:5-7)*. Pray specifically that they will not fall prey to a critical or cynical spirit, as that leads to a lot of damage to the work of the Lord.
- 4. To minister with power.** Pray that God Himself will equip them for the work He has given them. Pray for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, so that they can do their work effectively. Also pray for the Holy Spirit to break open God's Word to them, so they will be able to correctly interpret it and have the ability to convey it to others. Ask for wisdom and great patience for them to handle difficult situations and difficult people. Also that they will know the will of God in each situation. Ask for a great boldness upon them to preach the Word of God (**Eph.6:19-20**).
- 5. Their finances.** Pray for their financial support. Often pastors/ministers suffer financial lack placing pressure on them so that they look for another job to care for their families. (Children of spiritual workers often do not have the finances to go for higher studies.) Also pray for the protection of their earthly possessions, specifically against theft and accidents.

#### **4. How to pray when reaching out to the unsaved**

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When we reach out to people, whether as part of an organised outreach or simply as we connect with people in our daily life, it is important to wilfully focus on God's heart for them in order to pray for them according to God's will. The following are some guidelines to help you the next time you are on an outreach or when God puts someone on your heart that you know does not know Him personally.

1. Pray for people by name, and ask God to minister to their physical, emotional, mental and spiritual needs - **James 2:16**.
2. Ask God to show you how to demonstrate His love and care – **1 John 4:10-12**.
3. Ask God for opportunities to get to know those you know are not Christians in your sphere of influence - **Luke 19:10**.
4. Ask God to help you in building a friendship with them in order to reach them – **1 Corinthians 9:22**.
5. Ask God to show you ways to meet some of their felt needs - **Isaiah 61:1**.
6. Ask God for boldness and opportunities to witness of His grace - **Colossians 4:3, Acts 4:29**.
7. Ask God to open their spiritual eyes to see the truth of Christ – **2 Corinthians 4:4**.
8. Ask God to set them free from spiritual captivity – **2 Timothy 2:26**.
9. Ask God to give them ears to hear, faith to believe and the will to respond - **Matthew 13:15, Acts 20:21, Romans 10:9**.
10. Ask God to also send other people into their lives to witness to them - **Matthew 9:38**.

### **Set them thinking about life**

In the process of witnessing and building friendships with them, try to remember to ask them the questions listed down below. Do not pressure them for an answer. They will respond when they feel ready. Yet, after asking these questions, pray continuously that the Holy Spirit will continue to speak to them after your departure.

- Whom can I trust?
- What is the purpose of my life?
- What happens when I die?
- When will I really and truly be free?
- Why do I hate God and flee from Him?
- How can I handle my problems?
- What does happiness mean to me?

### **5. Commitment vs. Surrender**

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The word commitment is in essence not a biblical concept. It is more or less since the 1960's that Christian writers and preachers began to use the

word. Today people are asked to make a *commitment* to follow Christ, to commit to go to the mission field, to give financially, to pray for a certain issue.

The word commit means: promised devotion, to pledge devotion or dedication to somebody or something; to be committed to, to entrust something or somebody to somebody else for protection.

The loophole with commitment though, is that we can still decide **what and how much** we want to commit. The decision still lies with us. We are still in control. It is more of a humanistic concept than a Christian concept.

Scripture speaks of **surrender**, not commitment. The definition of surrender is: to give up possession of something: to relinquish possession or control of something, unconditional submission, abandonment of legal rights, an act of willing submission to authority, capitulation, renunciation, to hand over, to give up a fight, an act of declaring defeat at the hands of an opponent.

Let us surrender to God. Let us give up our rights. When we surrender to God, it is not for us to decide what we want to do with our lives, possessions and future. It is only in surrender that God can do with us what He wants to do. Surrender is unconditional commitment. It goes against the grain of the era of humanism. It is in total surrender that we can really pray: "Your will be done." It is through total surrender that we get out of the way so that God can work in and through us or even set us aside to work through someone else to do what needs to be done.

Surrender is an absolute **act of faith**, saying: "Lord I trust you." Praying from a position of surrender, not commitment, allows God to work far above and beyond what we can think or imagine. One of the biggest differences between commitment and surrender is the fact that in commitment things depend on me. In surrender I give all to God. I will fail, but He will never fail. Commitment without surrender is often trying to do what only God can do through me when I surrender to Him.

Commitment comes after surrender. After our unconditional commitment (surrender), we follow through on our commitment, whatever the cost. Sooner or later the Christian life comes to a place where there is a price to

be paid. It is here where commitment carries us through, irrespective of our circumstances, lack of faith and strength or unwillingness. We can commit ourselves for instance to do a certain piece of work. As soon as other pressures come, we might feel that we simply cannot do it. This is where unconditional commitment comes in: I keep my commitment, irrespective of the circumstances.

We will often sense that God is asking us to do something. After prayer and consultation, we feel that we need to do it. We put our hand to the plough and start. But then all sorts of difficulties arise and we feel that we cannot go on. Suddenly we start finding excuses: perhaps God didn't speak to me about this issue or maybe it is time to hand this over to someone else. Too many times I hear people say, "You know, God is using me to start things and then move on." I am not convinced that this is true in every situation. The easiest thing to do is to start something. If nothing comes of what I started, I can blame other people for not being faithful or not listening when God speaks to them. Too often the problem is in fact a lack of commitment to finish the work. So many times there is pride in the fact that we have been involved in starting something because then we can say, "You know, I was actually the one who started it." Do not start something if you aren't committed to finish it. We have too many sprinters in the Kingdom of God, but there are not enough long distance runners willing to complete the marathon. The Christian race is a marathon. God's marathon requires training, unconditional commitment and for you to surrender to Him.

## **6. Difference between prayer en proclaim**

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### **What are proclamations?**

In the New Testament the word to 'preach' is a word that is rooted in the word for a 'herald'; *an envoy of the king that goes out and makes known the will and laws of the king*. A herald goes out and proclaims the will and the laws of the king. To preach is to proclaim. To witness is to proclaim. To praise and worship God is to proclaim. Yet, proclamation is also to go beyond teaching and 'issuing God's decrees'.

There is tremendous power in obedience to the words of God. When we act on them, it changes the present situation. Moses acted on God's word when God said to him to throw down his staff, and it became a snake. God said to him, "Stretch out your hands" and victory was gained over the

Amalakites. Joshua stretched out his spear over the city of Ai and gained the victory. Moses acted on God's words when he 'proclaimed' to the Pharaoh what would happen, and the ten plagues subsequently hit the Egyptians. In the same way the Red Sea opened, rocks split and water came forth.

Every Bible-believing Christian has a rod in his hand, the Word of God. With this rod you can do everything God has commanded you to do. When we act according to God's Word (God's will) and by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, proclaiming the truths of God, these proclamations become mighty 'agents' of change in the world.

Proclamations are:

1. To declare, to make known, to proclaim to the powers in the air the manifold wisdom of God (**Eph.3:10-11**). It is to make known, to reveal the truth to the powers in the air and to humankind.
2. It is a confession of faith in God. It is to say: This is what I believe and I am going to build my life on these truths. I will think according to what God says in the Word.
3. It is a form of prayer - asking God to make His Word come true in my life and the situations over which I proclaim it. It is asking God to 'perform' His Word (**Jer.1:12; 1Kings. 6:12; Isa.55:11**).
4. Through proclamations I submit myself (my mind, my way of thinking, my way of approaching life, my way of looking at the world and circumstances, and what I believe) to biblical truths that state who God is, what God promised that He would do and what He wants to do in the world. Proclamations are truths that will be true for all eternity. It is to say: I will build my life on these eternal truths, and circumstances will not determine my thinking. It is to say I will live according to a different set of rules, principles and values than the world. I am going to live according to God's revealed truths in the Word.
5. Our words create. When we proclaim the Word and the words of God in Scripture, it creates life, it recreates, it brings order, healing and peace - it establishes the will and purposes of God in the world. Through proclamations God's creative and transforming power is released.
6. Proclamations are both a privilege and a responsibility. We are God's representatives on earth and through proclamations we use the Sword of the Spirit to exercise authority in the world.
7. It is to issue a decree, to establish in the spiritual realm the laws and the will and purposes of God, the truth and the principles that God

wants us to live by. It is to say: This is how it will be from this point forward. A proclamation is to say what God says about life and the world we live in. It is to proclaim the truth according to what God says in the Word: about what will happen and what must happen and how it will be in the future.

### **What proclamation is not**

- It is not the power of positive thinking. It is declaring the truth as we find it in the Word of God.
- It is not having my will and my way. Many people pray according to their own desires of the flesh and God will not honour that. God is not there for us in the first place. We are there for God and His purposes. Yes, He cares for me, but God is not there to 'serve' me and be my 'handyman'. It is not, in the first place, about my success and prosperity. It is for advancing the kingdom of God, living holy lives, living in the power of the Holy Spirit to be witnesses, bringing healing and peace in all circumstances and to all places, and living in the power of God to the glory of God.

### **Keep the following in mind**

The words of God that come from God's mouth (not words that we fabricate) will establish and create - otherwise they will have no effect. Take note: the Word says: *Every word that comes from My mouth.* (**Isa.55:11**) It is not just every word.

May I ask: What is your attitude towards the Word of God? Read **Isa.66:1-2**: *Thus says the Lord: "Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool. Where is the house that you will build Me? And where is the place of My rest? For all those things My hand has made, and all those things exist," says the Lord. "But on this one will I look: On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit, and who trembles at My word."* Take note of the words: *He who trembles at My word, or respects My word.* It is God's word. Read **Ps.29** to gain some understanding of the power of God's word and His voice. God created the entire universe by the words He spoke - what mighty words they were!

### **God will perform His word**

In **Jer.1:12** God says to Jeremiah: *I am ready to perform My word (NKJV). I am watching to see that my word is fulfilled (NIV).* What does it mean when God says, *I will perform My word?*

Let us put it like this. Carefully read **1 Kings.6:12** where God says: *I will honour My word*. It means: He will *do* His word; He will *execute* His Word; He will *fulfil* His Word; He will *establish* His Word (**Ps.119:38**); He will let His Word *accomplish* what He pleases; He will let His Word *prosper* in the thing for which He sends it; the word that comes from His mouth will *not return void*; His Word will *create and recreate*; His Word will *heal and bring hope*; His Word will bring *life and peace*, and it will *restore*. He will *remember* His Word and it will *come to pass*; He will do what He *promised*.

### **A short list of proclamations that you might find useful**

1. *Jesus is Lord of all (Acts 10:36).*
2. *The Lord God omnipotent reigns (Rev.19:6).*
3. *Your Kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven (Matt.6:10).*
4. *Jesus is the light of the world (Matt.5:14).*
5. *Jesus is the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6).*
6. *At the Name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord (Php.2:10-11).*
7. *And He will destroy on this mountain the covering of the face that is cast over the heads of all peoples and the veil that is woven and spread over all nations (Isa.25:7).*
8. *I have come that they may have life and have it more abundantly (John 10:10).*
9. *Greatness, power, glory, victory and majesty belong to the Lord (1 Chron.29:11).*
10. *Jesus is Lord of lords and King of kings (Rev.17:14).*
11. *The earth is the Lord's (Ps.24:1).*
12. *Lift up your heads, and let the King of Glory come in (Ps.24:7)!*
13. *There is no other name under heaven given by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12).*
14. *Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths (Prov.3:5-6).*
15. *They shall know the truth and the truth shall set them free (John 8:32).*
16. *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:16).*

17. *The works of His hands are truth and justice and all His decrees and precepts are sure (Ps.111:7).*
18. *For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to all who believe (Rom.1:16).*
19. *A vast host appeared which no one could count, gathered out of every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, these stood before the throne... (Rev.7:9).*
20. *What is sown in tears WILL be reaped in Joy (Ps.126:5).*
21. *He is our Light and Salvation (Ps.27:1).*
22. *He is Great and Mighty in Power (Ps.147:5).*
23. *Since ancient times, no eye has seen any God besides you who acts on our behalf (Isa.64:4).*
24. *For He who promised is Faithful (Heb.10:23).*
25. *Arise, shine; for the glory of the Lord is risen upon you (Isa.60:1-2).*
26. *This is the year of the Lord's favour (Isa.61:2).*
27. *He has come to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives, and release from darkness for the prisoners (Isa.61:1-2).*
28. *The God of Heaven will give us success as we build (Neh.2:20).*
29. *He will open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light (Acts 26:18).*
30. *Now is the day of salvation (2 Cor.6:2).*

## **7. What is the purpose of life?**

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The following is a shortened version of an interview with Rick Warren, author of *Purpose Driven Life*, and pastor of the Saddleback Church in California.

Rick Warren said: "People ask me what the purpose of life is. And I respond: In a nutshell, life is preparation for eternity. We were made to last forever and God wants us to be with Him in heaven. One day my heart is going to stop and that will be the end of my body, but not the end of me. I may live 60 to 100 years on earth, but I am going to spend trillions of years in eternity. This is the warm-up act - the dress rehearsal. God wants us to practice on earth what we will do forever in eternity. We were made by God and for God and until you figure that out, life isn't going to make sense. Life is a series of problems: Either you are in one now, you're just coming out of one, or you're getting ready to go into another one. The

reason for this is that God is more interested in your character than your comfort. God is more interested in making your life holy. The goal is to grow in character, in Christlikeness. This past year has been the greatest year of my life, but also the toughest, with my wife, Kay, getting cancer. I used to think that life was hills and valleys - you go through a dark time, then you go to the mountaintop, back and forth. I do not believe that anymore. Rather than life being hills and valleys, I believe that it's kind of like two rails on a railroad track and at all times you have something good and something bad in your life. No matter how good things are in your life, there is always something bad that needs to be worked on. No matter how bad things are in your life, there is always something good you can thank God for. You can focus on your purposes, or you can focus on your problems. If you focus on your problems, you are going into self-centredness, 'which is my problem, my issues, my pain'. One of the easiest ways to get rid of pain is to get your focus off yourself and onto God and others. We discovered quickly that in spite of the prayers of hundreds of thousands of people, God was not going to heal Kay or make it easy for her. It has been very difficult for her and yet God has strengthened her character, given her a ministry of helping other people, given her a testimony, drawn her closer to Him and to people. You have to learn to deal with both the good and the bad of life. Actually, sometimes learning to deal with the good is harder.

For instance, this past year, all of a sudden, when the book sold 15 million copies, it made me instantly very wealthy. It also brought a lot of notoriety that I had never had to deal with before. I do not think God gives you money or notoriety for your own ego or for you to live a life of ease. So I began to ask God what He wanted me to do with this money, notoriety and influence. He gave me two different passages that helped me decide what to do, **2 Corinthians 9** and **Psalms 72**. First, in spite of all the money coming in, we would not change our lifestyle one bit. We made no major purchases. Second, about midway through last year, I stopped taking a salary from the church. Third, we set up foundations to fund an initiative we call *The Peace Plan* to plant churches, equip leaders, assist the poor, care for the sick and educate the next generation. Fourth, I added up all that the church had paid me in the 24 years since I started the church and I gave it all back. It was liberating to be able to serve God for free. We need to ask ourselves: Am I going to live for possessions? Popularity? Am I going to be driven by pressures? Guilt? Bitterness? Materialism? Or am I going to be driven by God's purposes (for my life)?

When I get up in the morning, I sit on the side of my bed and say, God, if I don't get anything else done today, I want to know You more and love You better. God didn't put me on earth just to fulfil a to-do list. He's more interested in what I am than what I do. That's why we're called human beings, not human doings."

## **8. How to pray for the felt needs of people**

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To pray for the felt needs of people, those things that people are struggling with from day to day in the 'real world', is one of the greatest privileges of Christians and one of the greatest opportunities to show people that we care for them and love them and that Jesus cares for them and loves them. Less than 10% of all people are at any given time ready for a conversation about Jesus Christ and their salvation, but nearly 97% of all people are at any given time ready that you can pray for them for their felt needs, problems and challenges that they experience at that specific point in time. Very few people will refuse a prayer and a prayer of blessing, especially if they have specific needs. This is also true for people from other religions like Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims. We want to encourage you to do this on a regular basis – pray for the felt needs of Christians and non-Christians with whom you have contact every day.

### **A few guidelines on how to do this:**

1. **Just do it.** Do not make it an issue. As you meet people and they share some of their needs, concerns, difficulties, problems, challenges, etc., simply offer to pray for them.
2. **There and then.** It is best if you can pray for them right there and then. Do not wait till you are at home before you pray. It is good for them to experience someone caring for them in prayer and it is good for you too, by having the courage to do so.
3. **Respectful.** Ask the person if he or she would mind you praying for them and then pray a very simple prayer. Do it in a discreet way so that you do not embarrass the person. Do not pray in a loud voice and with much demonstration or many words.
4. **Pray again.** When you see the person again after a day or a few days, ask how he/she is doing and whether there is any progress regarding the issue you prayed for. Maybe the door is open for you to pray with them again, or you can simply say that you will continue to pray, as the Lord leads you. At this point in time you can even give the person a Scripture verse to encourage him/her.

5. **Bless, not curse.** It is always good to pray a prayer of blessing when you pray with someone. Pray for God to intervene in the person's situation and ask God to bless the person. Often Christians are afraid that if we pray that God will bless someone we overlook their sin (in cases where people are living in sin). This is not so. When you pray that God will bless someone, you pray that God in His wisdom will come and convict that person of sin and that He will comfort, heal, re-direct and show them His ways.
6. **Just pray.** So many people want to make use of such opportunities to 'lead the person to the Lord' (trying to save the person during or even before the prayer) – don't do it unless the Lord specifically directs you to do it. Just pray. God will work in His own way. People first need to experience genuine love and compassion before they will open up to the gospel of salvation. Most people only make a commitment to follow Jesus Christ after 8-11 positive contacts with Christians!
7. **Every day.** Make it a daily habit to pray for people. Listen to them. Seek out opportunities to 'apply' prayer to their felt needs.
8. **Do something.** You can also do more than just pray. When someone's car has broken down, offer to take the kids to school. If there is illness in the home, take some food or offer to do the laundry. There are just so many opportunities. We need to pray and do. Sometimes we cannot do anything for the person and then we just pray for them. At other times we can pray for them and do something that will show that we care for them.

## **9. How to pray for sick people**

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When Jesus sent out the disciples, He commanded them to preach the gospel, heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead (**Matt.10:7**). As disciples of Jesus, we have a clear command to go and heal the sick. In **Mark 16:17-18** we read: *And these signs will accompany those who believe... they will place their hands on sick people and they will get well.* The most basic way of healing the sick is simply to pray for them. We also read in **James 5:14** that we must pray for the sick and anoint them with oil. Let us take every opportunity to pray for the sick. Do not feel intimidated or afraid to do so. God listens to the prayers of ALL His children. Yes, it is true that God gives a gift of healing to some people, but that does not mean that all the other people cannot and must not pray for the sick. Come in simple faith to the Lord on a daily basis and ask for the

healing of your friends, family and other sick people – and see how God answers.

1. **Look up.** Do not look at or feel intimidated by the illness of the person you are praying for. Simply look to God and ask Him. Do not try to pray extremely ‘spiritual’ prayers. Simply lift up your heart to God and pray a simple prayer.
2. **Anoint.** In some cases you may feel to anoint a person with oil and then pray for them. You can use something like olive oil. Just put a little bit of oil on the forehead of the person and ask the Lord to heal him/her. (You can also explain to the person why you are doing that).
3. **Prompt.** When you pray for a person, when prompted by the Holy Spirit, you may ask the person if his/her life is right with God – if there are any unconfessed sins, any bitterness or unforgiveness or issues that need to be settled. Help the person to deal with those things before you pray for them. God works in different ways. Sometimes, especially in the case of unsaved people, God will heal the person and the healing will show the person that God cares and these types of miracles often bring people to faith in Christ Jesus.
4. **Explain.** There are different ways God can use to heal people: 1. God heals by the laying on of hands. 2. God heals by anointing with oil and prayers of faith. 3. God sometimes heals people by means of Holy Communion. 4. God heals people in answer to intercessory prayer for them. 5. God can use doctors and medicine to heal people. 6. God also heals when the individual prays for his/her own healing. Remember that it is God who does the healing, how and when He chooses and His desire is to heal!
5. **Scripture.** Familiarise yourself with some of the basic Scripture references about healing and bring those promises in prayer before God’s throne when you come boldly to His throne of grace to ask for help. In **Exodus 15:26** the Lord calls Himself Yahweh-Ropheka which means: The Lord who heals. This is God’s name, this is who He is and this is what He can do and wants to do for us. Pray to God who calls Himself Yahweh-Ropheka when you pray for the sick. *He said, ‘If you will listen carefully to the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in his sight, obeying his commands and keeping all his decrees, then I will not make you suffer any of the diseases I sent on the Egyptians; for I am the Lord who heals you.’*
  - He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases (**Ps.103:3**).
  - He heals the broken hearted and bandages their wounds (**Ps.147:3**).

- Don't be impressed with your own wisdom. Instead, fear the Lord and turn away from evil. Then you will have healing for your body and strength for your bones (**Prov.3:7-8**).
- Yet it was our weaknesses Christ carried; it was our sorrows that weighed him down. And we thought his troubles were a punishment from God, a punishment for his own sins! But he was pierced for our rebellion, crushed for our sins. He was beaten so we could be whole. He was whipped so we could be healed (**Isa.53:4-5**).
- These miraculous signs will accompany those who believe: They will cast out demons in my name and they will speak in new languages. They will be able to handle snakes with safety and if they drink anything poisonous, it won't hurt them. They will be able to place their hands on the sick and they will be healed (**Mark 16:17-18**).
- The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free (**Luke 4:18**).

Are any of you sick? You should call for the elders of the church to come and pray over you, anointing you with oil in the name of the Lord. Such a prayer offered in faith will heal the sick and the Lord will make you well. And if you have committed any sins, you will be forgiven. Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and produces wonderful results (**James 5:13-16**).

## **PRAYING ABOUT FAMILY ISSUES**

### **1. How to pray for a childless couple**

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There are many more childless couples than we think. Such couples find this situation emotionally complex and extremely traumatic, irrespective of whether the problem lies with the man or the woman. Some feel God is punishing them, others that they are not worthy of raising children, that they are failures or that there is sin somewhere in their lives that is preventing God from blessing them. While it is impossible to give answers to all the questions, there are directives that can encourage us to pray for such couples in faith, believing that God answers prayer. The following are guidelines when praying for childless couples:

- Make sure of your relationship with the Lord. Are you in a living relationship with Jesus Christ? First of all, God is interested in your

relationship with Him. Everything else flows from that. Don't rush this matter. Make sure.

- Deal with every kind of sin in your life. Don't go looking for sin, but ask the Lord if there is anything that He is not happy with. Ask the Holy Spirit to show you if anything has come between the Lord and you. God does not condemn, He is a God of grace and wants to forgive us and cleanse us from our sins.
- Many childless couples think they have committed some sin or other and for this reason God is punishing them and/or He doesn't want to tell them what they did wrong. Go and think how you see God. Do you see Him as a Father just waiting for you to do something wrong so that He can punish you, or a Father who is unwilling to help you and now you must plead and beg Him to change His mind – that you must overcome His unwillingness through prayer? I would like to advise you both to take time and go and write down what your emotions are around God, how you think about Him or feel about Him. Be honest – God knows what you are thinking and experiencing in any case. Then tell Him and ask Him to bring your thoughts and emotions in line with the way He really is. Do you see Him as a Father of love (real love), who loves unconditionally, a Father who is good, a Father who is gracious and a Father who forgives? This determines how you will pray.
- Pray boldly and ask Him for a child. Believe in God and believe God, which means: "Lord, we ask You for a child. With You nothing is impossible."
- It also means: "Lord, Your will be done. Your ways are not our ways. Whatever You decide is right. We subject ourselves to Your will, but we are also confident when we ask because You are our Father." There could be reasons why God won't allow you to have children, but then you must understand that it is not because God does not like or love you.
- Don't blame each other if nothing happens. Don't allow it to drive a wedge between the two of you. Don't blame yourself if the problem lies with you. Mostly it is more difficult for men to know they are the ones with the "problem". It affects their manliness and often gives rise to a poor self-image and all kinds of conclusions and emotions. Women experience it differently. That is why both of you must try to put these emotions into words and then pray about the matter.
- Live joyfully and hopefully. God is good and God is faithful and God is still almighty even if there is not going to be a baby. Do not allow the

devil to rob you of your joy and don't let his condemnation and accusations rule your life.

- Ask the Lord what He wants to tell you about the situation. Listen well. It happens that one is sometimes so set on just asking and wrestling with God that He must give you a baby, that you don't listen carefully what God wants to say about the situation. There may be reasons why things work out like this in your case and it may have nothing to do with sin or unbelief.
- If you or your parents were perhaps involved in occult activities, it would be wise to pray with someone who has enough knowledge of these matters.
- There are ethical limits to our efforts of acquiring a baby. There is for example nothing wrong with adoption. But when it comes to surrogate mothers, the use of the sperm of another man, etc. we are at a point where we are crossing the boundaries of the Scriptures. We must live before God with integrity, morally pure and holy. This is God's intention with the Bible. This comment is not meant to be judgmental, but to caution and give guidance.
- Guidelines for people praying for childless couples: It is important that people praying for such couples will not be judgmental in their prayers, for example imply that the couple does not pray in faith or that there is sin in their lives. Don't act as if you have the answer. Rather listen and show unconditional love and be compassionate. Pray that if the couple goes for medical help that the doctors will make the correct diagnoses and treat such couples with integrity, and that the Lord will use the doctors to be of help.

## **2. Helping your child to pray and to know God the Father**

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Things that motivate children to pray are the things that touch their hearts—friends, family, teachers, even pets. We often smile at the innocence of their prayers, some of them quite un-Biblical, but we want them to pray from their hearts, with simplicity. As they learn to approach their heavenly Father with their daily concerns and needs, (and see Him answer), children learn to trust Him as the One who can fight their battles and those of the people they love. They learn to look to Him to provide for them, protect them, and to intervene in the world in real and powerful ways.

And it's not only personal problems. Children as young as three and four years old can also be sensitive to poverty, hunger, crime, and divorce. Memorised prayers have their place in launching our children's prayer lives too. The Lord's Prayer is a Biblical framework to help children consider topics of prayer they might not otherwise think about. Children need to know the Name of the Lord is a strong tower; they can run into it and are safe (**Prov.18:10**). By praying these Scriptures, they can turn a feeling of powerlessness (very common for children) into confidence; that though they may be small, they can pray powerful, strong prayers in Jesus' Name and He will help them.

It is essential to introduce and lead your child to Christ as his/her personal Saviour. This will form the foundation of their prayer life. Keep on teaching and testifying to your child until he/she is ready to invite Christ into his/her life. (See 5 and 6 below)

Here are some additional practical ideas to help you to teach your child to pray, no matter how old (or how young) your children are:

1. **Invite your own children into your prayer time.** When they see you pouring out your heart honestly to God, it will encourage them to do the same. They will come to know that you know God personally, that He has saved you and washed you with His blood. What would a child learn from your prayer life?
2. **Create a time for family prayer.** It may be extended prayer at meals, at bedtime or a special weekly gathering. In this way, children learn to pray by listening, watching and participating.
3. **Allow children to be a part of corporate prayer times in your church.** Children need to see people of all ages in communication with God—and to hear about the answers to those prayers.
4. **Give kids visuals to help motivate their prayers** for issues outside of their own lives and relationships. Pictures (such as those from magazines or of children in need around the world) can show them real needs and evoke the kind of emotional response that is necessary to pray prayers from the heart. Ask for God's guidance that your child will not get frightened or discouraged because of the suffering of others.
5. **Help children get to know their heavenly Father.** This is the most crucial point of all. They need to realise that prayer is a relationship, not a religious activity, nor a 'magic formula'. It is important for children to understand that they are praying to their

loving heavenly Father in the Name of Jesus Christ— teach them about the character of God, which will lead to an increase of their faith.

6. As soon as your child is ready, **lead him or her in a prayer to receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.** It's after all the most important heartfelt prayer he or she will ever pray!

(Shortened article: Cheryl Sacks, *Purpose Driven Life*, website: [www.purposedriven.com](http://www.purposedriven.com)).

### **3. How to pray when your child is bullied**

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Many children are bullied at school and it causes parents and children much pain. This article is not an in-depth discussion of the full extent of the subject, but it does give directives for you as parents on how to pray.

- Firstly, it is important to work on your child's self-image. Children who are bullied often have a very poor and/or warped self-image. The child must be taught that he or she also has a place in the community, that they are worthy and have their own talents and gifts that are just as special as those of others.
- Pray for the child to understand his or her position in Jesus. Pray that the child will understand that he is so important that Jesus was prepared to die for him and lives in him after re-birth. The child needs to understand that God loves him unconditionally and that the Spirit of God lives in him. We are talking about children here who have a personal relationship with Jesus. If the child does not have a relationship with Jesus, explain the way to salvation clearly and how to become a child of God.
- Parents must teach these children how to pray themselves. The child must go and stand before God himself and ask Him for wisdom, and guidance and protection for his situation. This is of the utmost importance.
- Teach the child to bless the person who is bullying him or her. It is very important.
- Pray that your child will not react in the wrong way: with anger, bitterness or hatred. Pray that God will set him or her free from fear of the bully. It is fear that makes the child lose heart and makes him feel helpless. God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline (**2 Tim.1:7**). Pray for physical protection. It is only in the minority of cases that physical protection is important, but it is the fear of getting hurt physically that paralyses many children.
- The parents can and should prepare the child spiritually. It is useless to make the child's battle easier for him by visiting the school

continuously and complaining to the teachers. In the end, the child must overcome the situation himself/herself otherwise the same problem will repeat itself over and over again in his or her life. There are many bullies in life and the sooner the child learns to handle it, to deal with the situation and find his own way of not only surviving, but living in freedom within each situation, the sooner the child will also be equipped to tackle the rest of his or her life.

- If it becomes necessary to go and talk to the school authorities, pray for wisdom on how and when to do it.
- Try not to take your child out of the school. It does not really solve the problem.
- Ask God if there is not a deeper problem in your family that needs to be faced: In many cases when children are bullied, there is a problem with the way the family functions. For example, there could be a domineering dad or mom, a child who for some reason or another experiences rejection at home, or is overprotected. Pray that the Holy Spirit will provide insight on how to solve the problem.

### **Also teach your child to actually pray for the bully!**

- Guard against negative prayer, accusing the bully and pointing out to God all the 'sins' of the bully.
- The bully normally also has a self-image problem himself and suffers much pain in his life. Pray for this child to also understand who he or she is and what God's purpose is with him/her.
- Bullies often come from homes or situations where there is a lack of love, where they experience rejection and are belittled, where they are treated with violence for making mistakes and are sometimes punished too heavily and sometimes unfairly. Bullies are children who rebel against such circumstances and then take out their anger, inferiority and frustration on other children, in this way trying to be in a situation where they can take control of their circumstances. Because they know only violence, they react violently towards everyone around them. Bullies are children who go about with great pain in their hearts, seeking love and acceptance, but it is hidden behind a façade of bluster.
- Bullies usually need acceptance and they want to be part of the 'in-crowd'. They are desperately in need of friends, but easily become jealous of other children. Bullying other children gives them a feeling of power and they believe this will make them acceptable to the group and gain esteem. This is why bullies normally have a few children who form a bully-group with them.

- Pray for the fear of the Lord to keep the bully in check.
- Pray for the bully's domestic situation, that he or she will get to know the love and unconditional acceptance of God.
- Pray for the salvation of the bully. Maybe he will one day be able to help other bullies to come to accept that it's foolish to continue being a bully. (Also see article for teens focusing on social media).

#### **4. I am the stepmom, what now?**

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An estimated one-third of children will live in a stepparent home before the age of 18. About 50% of all people will have a stepparent at some point in their lifetime and about 75% of those who get divorced, will eventually remarry. If it was a case of divorce, we are reminded of what Scripture says about it: that God hates divorce, because of the violence involved. Violence bears long term consequences, after a divorce children may carry scars for a lifetime. If you are saying today: 'I am the stepmom', remember there was a child that was hurt and without being involved in the divorce, also have to say: 'I am the stepchild'.

What can you as a Christian stepmom do for your stepchild? You can pray. You should pray. Here are a few thoughts and guidelines.

**1. Stepfamilies are formed because of loss and therefore nearly** always carry pain, rejection and resentment into the newly formed family. It is of the utmost importance that each family member needs to deal with his/her loss, pain, rejection, bitterness, resentment, etc. Much prayer is needed. When a parent dies or gets divorced, it is likely to cause insecurity and fear in a child's life. Many Christians falsely assume that a stepfamily formed due to the death of a parent is easier on the children than remarriage after a divorce. The pain and loss is the same, however. There is mourning in both cases. Kids who are grieving often display frustration, depression, or rebellion. *Pray for God's grace for stepmoms and to have patience to embrace the children in the throes of their frustration, depression or rebellion. Ask for her to have favour with the children and the ability to ease any anxiety by showing them love and acceptance.*

**2. Children need dad!** It is wise to encourage your husband to spend time alone with his kids. When Dad remarries, a child may automatically feel scared and unsafe and therefore view the new relationship as a threat and might not want to share him with the new

wife. *Pray for stepmoms to initiate and support activities between Dad and his kids and gradually integrate activities that they can take part in together as a stepfamily. Also pray for wisdom for stepfathers to reach out to your children. Ask for wisdom for both parents in cases where there are children from two families in one new home.*

- 3. The marriage relationship is important.** About 30% of people remarry within a year after a divorce. If a marriage is to survive, the relationship between husband and wife must be nurtured. *Pray for you as the parents not to neglect one another; to give priority to your marriage, but never at the expense of the children. Ask for wisdom to know how to address difficult situations as a team, so children will not take advantage of situations. Also ask that any division that may come between you as husband and wife as a result of a misunderstanding due to children, be resolved quickly.*
- 4. Love unconditionally.** Many stepmoms face step-kids who are difficult, even aggressive. It is important to remember that people who are hurting, hurt others. Remember **Mal.2:16**. Make sure you lay the house rules down, but always exercise discipline with love and compassion. *Pray for stepmoms to have God's grace to learn to love her husband's children even if they do not return that love. Ask that God will grant stepmoms the gift of sacrificial love necessary for any family to survive.*
- 5. Be patient.** One of the most common misconceptions about stepfamilies is that everyone will (hopefully) bond quickly and smoothly. The average stepfamily, however, can take up to seven years to integrate. And some never does. Rushing or forcing relationships in a new family will create tension and put unnecessary stress on the marriage. *Pray for stepparents on both sides to be patient and consistently address difficult issues until their families settle in their new environment. Ask for children to adapt quickly and feel safe and secure within their new family and settle in new relationships.*
- 6. Mistakes are unavoidable.** The only way to deal with mistakes is to acknowledge them to your spouse and the children that have been hurt in the process. *Pray for every root of bitterness, resentment, pain and rejection to come into the light, and for a way to deal with this in your own life and that of your family and/or your stepchildren. Jesus is the Healer and also heals emotional pain. Pray for each person in the*

*stepfamily to understand God's healing power and the importance of forgiveness (to extend and receive forgiveness). Ask that you as parents, who need to take the lead, will at all times persevere and not give up on any of the children, and to treat all of them equally, with fairness and compassion.*

## **5. God's purposes through both men and women (by Zac Poonen)**

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God needs men and women today:

1. **Stand and listen.** Men/women who will stand before His face and hear His voice daily, with no desire in their heart for anything or anyone other than God Himself.
2. **Godly fear.** Men/women who fear Him so greatly that they hate sin in every form and love righteousness and truth in all their ways.
3. **Surrendered.** Men/women who have overcome anger and sexually sinful thoughts and who would rather die than sin even in thought or attitude.
4. **Bearing the cross.** Men/women whose daily lifestyle is one of taking up the cross and pressing on to perfection, and who are constantly working out their own salvation with fear and trembling.
5. **Proclaiming truth.** Men/women who will proclaim the whole counsel of God and expose religious harlotry and unscriptural human traditions.
6. **Having revelation of God.** Men/women who have the revelation of the Holy Spirit on the secret of godliness of Christ having come in the flesh, and opening a new and living way through the flesh.
7. **Being relevant.** Men/women who are not ascetics, but who at the same time live a disciplined life and who are not afraid of hardships.
8. **Living simple.** Men/women who have no interest in expensive clothing or sightseeing and who will not waste their time on unprofitable activities or their money on unnecessary purchases.
9. **Content.** Men/women who have mastered their desire for fancy foods and who are not enslaved to music or sport or any other legitimate activity.
10. **Disciplined.** Men/women who have been disciplined successfully by God in the fires of affliction, abuse, tribulation, false accusation, physical sickness, financial hardships and opposition from relatives and religious leaders.
11. **Stable.** Men/women who find their joy in God alone and who are therefore full of the joy of the Lord, having overcome all bad moods.

12. **Controlled.** Men/women who have learned to bridle their tongues through the help of the Holy Spirit and whose tongues are now aflame with the Divine Word.
13. **Unattached.** Men/women who have forsaken all, who are not attached anymore to money or material things and who desire no gifts from others.
14. **Humble servants.** Men/women who have no desire to dominate or advise others (although ready to give advice, when asked for it) and who have no longing to be considered as 'elder' brothers/sisters, or leaders, but who only desire to be ordinary brothers and servants of all.
15. **No fear of man.** Men/women who will make no distinction between the millionaire and the beggar, the white-skinned and the dark-skinned, the intellectual and the idiot, the cultured and the barbarian, but who will treat them all alike.
16. **Giving God glory.** Men/women for whom God's glory, God's will and God's kingdom always take priority over mere human need and their own comfort.
17. **Eyes set on things above.** Men/women who look at things from a heavenly viewpoint and not an earthly one.
18. **Faithful godly labourers.** Men/women who will refuse all earthly honours and titles offered them, for they labour for God.
19. **Relentless prayers.** Men/women who know how to pray without ceasing and also how to fast and pray when needed.
20. **Holy.** TOTALLY UNCOMPROMISING MEN/WOMEN, like the apostles and prophets of old.

God's work in the world suffers today, because such men/women are few in number. Determine with all your heart that you will be such a man/woman for God in the midst of a sinful and adulterous generation and a compromising Christendom. Since there is no partiality with God, it is possible for YOU too to be such a man/woman, provided you yourself earnestly desire to be one. Since God demands commitment and obedience only in the conscious area of one's life, it is possible for you to be such a man/woman, even though the conscious area of your life may be limited. (That area will keep increasing as you walk in the light and press on to perfection).

Since nothing good dwells in the flesh, we have to seek for grace from God to have the virtues listed above. Cry out to God DAILY then, that He will

give you grace to be such a man/woman in these, the closing days of the age.

## **CHURCH AND MISSIONS**

### **1. More Muslims are turning to Christ**

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#### **What is happening?**

You rarely hear about it on the news. You even rarely hear about it in churches in the West, in the East, or even in the Middle East. But the big, untold story is that more Muslims are coming to faith in Jesus Christ today than at any other time in history. More than 1 million Shia Muslims have turned to Christ since 1979. In Pakistan, there are now more than 2.5 million followers of Jesus Christ. In Sudan, there are now more than 5 million followers of Christ. Not every country has seen millions leave Islam to follow Christ. In Syria, there are between 4,000 and 5,000 Believers, but this is up from almost none in 1967. In Saudi Arabia, there are about 100,000 followers of Jesus now, up from almost none in 1967. But overall, the trend has been dramatic and largely unreported.

#### **What motivates Muslims to seek out other options?**

What they see as the failure of Islamic governments and societies to improve their lives and give them peace, security, and a sense of purpose and meaning in life, is causing them to leave Islam in search of truth. Some have lost their way entirely and become agnostics and atheists. Others, as we have seen, have sadly turned to alcohol and drug abuse. But millions are finding that only Jesus Christ heals the ache in their hearts and the deep wounds in their souls.

For other Muslims, it is rage that is driving them away from the Qur'an and the mosque. They are seeing far too many Muslim leaders and governments and preachers both advocating and acting out cruelty toward women and children and violence even against fellow Muslims. Not all of these find Jesus in their journey away from Islam, but millions do.

In 1993, a Saudi sheikh delivered a sermon entitled "Christian Missionaries Sweeping the Islamic World". Eight years later, in December 2001, another significant Saudi cleric, in a live interview on Aljazeera satellite television confirmed that, "every hour, 667 Muslims convert to Christianity". Al Qataani warned: "Every day, 16,000 Muslims convert to Christianity. Every year, 6 million Muslims convert to Christianity."

(Source: *The Macedonia Project*. Tel.: 012 755 8139, fax: 086 630 3193. Website: <http://www.macsa.co.za> or e-mail: [info@macsa.co.za](mailto:info@macsa.co.za)).

## 2. Church planting

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According to research and also missionaries in the field, church planting remains one of the most effective forms of evangelism and Church growth. The past 30 years were marked by a renewed focus on church planting. When we pray for the expansion of God's Kingdom, we especially pray for God to raise many new church planters. There are at least 20 million people in South Africa who distance themselves from the Church; animists, atheists, unbelievers etc. If we want to see these people in churches, at least 40,000 new churches, each with at least 500 members, are needed. No matter what we think or how we reason, truth is that many skilfully equipped church planters are needed urgently.

Are there present-day examples of successful church planting? Here are a few encouraging examples:

- ✚ In **South East Asia** a church planter started working in an area in 1993 where there were only three churches and 85 church members out of 7 million people. Only four years later there were 550 churches and 55,000 members.
- ✚ In one city in **China** 20,000 people accepted the faith in a four-year period (1993-1997) and 500 new congregations were planted.
- ✚ Another missionary reports from **Asia** that in 1998 he and his wife started 15 new church cell groups. Some time after that, they had to leave for 6 months. On their return they found 30 new church cell groups and he believes there could be at least two to three times more house church type groups and churches. Another missionary reported that it took him 30 years to plant four churches in a certain country. They saw 65 cell churches start in the past 9 months alone.
- ✚ In one specific area in **India**, with 90 million people basically unreached, there were, according to church leaders, only 28 churches after nearly a century of labour amongst them. Within nine years (1998 to 2007) there were 2,000 churches.
- ✚ In **India, the Philippines and Latin America** an accelerated increase in church planting is visible. In one area in India, a Christian worker came to a Christian organisation to ask for help in an area

where 30 churches sprang up in a few months. The mission organisation, overwhelmed with requests for help, could only send help after two months. By that time the number of new churches had doubled to 62. This was in 2007. Since then church planting has accelerated in India.

The encouraging thing is that we see a *rapid, multiplicative increase* in the number of churches planted and they are *indigenous churches*, planted by the locals. Let us pray for God to raise up more church planters!!

### **3. The Church of the future: Lessons from history**

#### **Article by Jurgens Hendriks (shortened)**

The preacher wrote in **Ecclesiastes 3:15**: *Whatever is has already been, and what will be has been before; and God will call the past to account.* There are basic patterns in history that help one gain perspective. From the Old Testament you will recall the 40-year cycles: prosperity and blessing, then a process of degeneration, of a fake religion and external ritual, disobedience; then warnings and eventually ruin (**Deut.8, Judges to Chronicles**). If what the preacher says in **Ecclesiastes** is true, then the secret of the Church of the future can be found in the past. This is ultimately what I want to do.

In his book *The rise of Christianity*, the sociology of religion scholar Rodney Stark (1997: 6-7) discusses the reasons for the Church's remarkable growth between the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the year 350 A.D. From its approximate 7,000 persecuted Believers in the time of **Acts 2**, the Church grew 40% per decade over 300 years, until they numbered approximately 33 million of the total population of 56 million in the Roman Empire ... 33 million out of 56 million!

Stark says the secret for the growth of the Christian church lay in the social networks and intimate interpersonal relationships and loyalties that they had formed, without becoming exclusive and closing their ranks. Their loyalties to Jesus Christ surpassed all other loyalties (Stark 1997: 3-27).

1. ***The Christians lived differently to the world.*** The evangelical method of the early Church, their mission work, was not done by special preachers, mission organisations or evangelical expeditions. It was simply the testimony that the many small home congregations transmitted (Meeks 1983:77). Their love for each other and for others, their disposition and relationships were based on an entirely different ethos than that of the world around them.
2. ***Christians cared for each other and for others out of love.*** In the period of 300 years, there were two unbelievably great epidemics in the Roman Empire. From 165 to 180 A.D., approximately a quarter to a third of the population of the Roman Empire, sometimes up to 5,000 people, died per day. During this period, the Christian survival rate was much better than any other group because they cared for each other and for the sick. After each epidemic, the percentage of Christians, as part of the total population, was much higher and large numbers of people joined the congregations. For the Church in Africa, there is no greater opportunity for testimony than the HIV/AIDS epidemic.
3. ***Christians arranged their marital and family lives according to Biblical principles.*** The sexual morality of the Roman Empire, particularly in and around Rome, the large cities and among the elite, was rife with perversity. Homosexuality, abortion, prostitution and the concomitant marital and family degeneration was shocking. Abortion was so common that infant corpses were one of the causes for the blockages of the sewage systems. In the Roman Empire, despite all the wars, there were 100 women to 131 to 140 men, because so many baby girls had been killed after birth. In the Christian faith communities, people helped to establish a stable marital and family life. This had two consequences: the Christians had a much higher birth rate than the rest of the population and, in Christian congregations there were always more women available for marriage.
4. ***The Christians strongly condemned racism and classism.*** The Roman Empire globalised because of political, economic and social reasons. The marital and family degeneration, as well as the epidemics, caused the implosion of the populations in parts of Italy. Consequently, people from over the known world of that time had to be lured with incentives to key areas. This resulted in people of all races, nations and languages living in all the large cities. Thus, the potential for cultural and racial conflict was high. Differences in status are common in all communities, and the Roman Empire was no exception. The early Christian congregations addressed these issues with passion.

**5. Christians were trustworthy and hardworking – one could rely on them.** I was truly surprised to discover how often the New Testament letters mention this. Christians were reliable, honest and hardworking. They were sought after in society at large. Ultimately, in 313, the Roman Emperor, Constantine, exempted the Christian religion from all forms of persecution (Stark 1997:11) and he also accepted this faith. His motive: it is impossible to rule an empire without reliable people, and Christians were reliable people. He wanted to benefit their case, because they would benefit his case.

The statistics indicate how today's established churches are losing their market share, how they are declining and dying. The statistics also indicate two other tendencies: One, the birth process of a whole series of churches that contextualise in the new time. Secondly: the Independent African Churches that joyfully contextualise in the rich African culture and form. The Church will always have a future. This I believe, because I believe in the resurrected Lord Jesus who received all power in heaven and on earth. The Church of the future follows Him on his crucifixion road, which, paradoxically, is both a way of suffering and a way of victory.

#### **4. Becoming a praying congregation**

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It was very dear to Jesus' heart and also a command from Him that the church should be a house of prayer (**Matt.21:13**). He quotes **Isaiah 56:7** and so confirms that God's plan with His "church" (Old Testament) is also His plan with the church in the New Testament. It is still one of the greatest challenges for churches to be houses of prayer. The following are a number of guidelines that churches can use to give more momentum to prayer in the congregation:

1. A praying congregation starts with *individuals who pray*. The most important focus of spiritual leaders in the congregation remains helping individuals to pray with greater boldness and more faith. Individuals need guidance on how to enter into a deeper and more intimate and personal relationship with God.
2. Continuous, uncomplicated and practical *instruction in prayer* is necessary. Numerous sermons and books on prayer give wonderful spiritual content, but are mostly lacking in practical guidelines on how to plan your daily quiet time. Teach Believers how to use a prayer journal. Give them a simple layout of what to pray for, how to listen to God and how to pray the Word.

3. *Establishing prayer groups* in the congregation is of the utmost importance. Boost existing prayer groups and encourage the establishment of new prayer groups. It helps to get together businessmen, for example, in one or more prayer group, and also to encourage young people, children, women and specific interest groups to start their own groups. The different ministries of the congregation must be encouraged to establish a prayer movement or prayer group for their ministry, on the understanding that they also pray in those groups themselves and not expect others to do the 'prayer work' while they just do the other work.
4. The concept 'intercessor' can create many problems in a congregation. In many congregations the unhealthy situation sometimes develops where a few people in the congregation become known as the 'intercessors' or 'those who pray'. Intercession is a *type of prayer*, it is not a *type of person*. Should we limit the prayer ministry of a congregation to a number of *intercessors*, we exclude 98% of the congregation who could also be praying. The 98% could eventually feel their prayers are not good enough, they are not 'experts', God will not hear them so readily, and then a group of people start saying, "We'll do the work and you (the intercessors) can pray for it." This is not Biblical and the quickest way to immobilise an entire congregation. It deprives the so-called 'non-intercessors' from the *privilege and responsibility* to be involved in the prayer ministry of the congregation, as well as praying for their families, the community, the town/city and the world. The Word of God is clear; every member of the church should be an intercessor, one who prays – every child, young person and adult, irrespective of profession or position.
5. If you want to raise the level of prayer in the congregation, you must be involved as spiritual leader. Leaders cannot encourage the congregation to pray, but not be involved themselves. The apostles say very clearly in **Acts 6:4** that they (as spiritual leaders) have the responsibility to concentrate on *prayer* and the ministry of the Word. You cannot expect others to pray, to carry the prayer responsibility of the congregations, if you as leader are not involved.
6. Preachers can encourage people to pray by doing, among other things, some of the following:
  - Regular preaching on prayer or making prayer an important part of the message.

- On a regular basis, tell real-life stories of answer to prayer from the pulpit as well as at other gatherings of the congregation
- Present seminars on prayer – a Friday night and Saturday morning, for example, could work well.
- Encourage church members to read books on prayer – give the titles of one or two at a time.
- Choose a book on prayer and get members to work through it in Bible Study groups or cell groups.

## **5. What to pray for a missionary**

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Besides specific prayer requests received from a missionary, you can also pray for general things such as:

1. A healthy and balanced family life, if you are praying for a missionary family.
2. Marital bliss, in the case of a married couple.
3. Children adapting to new environments/circumstances, attitudes, education and upbringing.
4. Spiritual and physical needs.
5. Health – even for the little things such as colds and stomach problems.
6. Physical protection against persecution, theft, assault, injury, accidents etc.
7. Spiritual protection.
8. Family at home – some missionaries do not have the support of their families. They also worry about elderly or sick parents and miss their country of birth, friends and family.
9. Visa applications are one of missionaries' biggest challenges.
10. Favour from the government regarding work, accommodation, visas and business opportunities.
11. Effective and Spirit-filled ministry.
12. Protection against own greed and exploitation by others.
13. Wisdom, knowledge and understanding of God's Word and His plan for them with regard to their ministry toward others, as well as with regard to their own families.
14. Stewardship in finances and other aspects of their ministry.
15. Well-established relationships in the area/country where they work, as well as with their local church.
16. Effective discipleship.
17. Pray for the government, the people groups and the

town/city/area/country where the missionary works. Pray that God would break down the spiritual strongholds in those areas so that His Kingdom would advance.

18. Find out (from the missionaries) which Scriptures God has given them for their ministry and pray these into the lives of the people group where the missionaries work.
19. Pray that the missionary's church and leadership would be understanding of their needs and that they would do everything they can to help and care for their missionaries.

(Source: Sendingereedskap / Mission's Tools, e-mail: [deonfelies@lantic.net](mailto:deonfelies@lantic.net)).

## **6. Missions in our world today**

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There are several trends that the Church needs to take into account when we think and pray about missions today. I want us to focus on only three of them to give us a better understanding of the challenge ahead of us and how to pray about it. Church to become peacemakers. Until about 1995 wars were fought on the basis of many different, mostly secular, ideologies. But since the late nineties a shift came and religion became the basic ideology of war. A study on the wars over the last 15 years will prove this.

Wars create great pain, trauma and also an opportunity for the Church to make use of such situations to demonstrate the love of Christ, irrespective of the plight of the victims and the trauma accompanying it. In wiping away the blood and tears, in comforting and sheltering the widows and children, caring for their personal needs, people can see the love of God. This in itself is not evangelism, but “pre-evangelism”. Through the pain and suffering, people can see God and will open up to Him when they are cared for, irrespective of the fact that they may be seen as the “enemy”. In the years to come, the Church will have to use these opportunities to reach out to the victims of war. We need peacemakers, people that will bring peace and comfort in the midst of blood and brokenness.

His throne stands on righteousness and justice. Over the past several decades, we saw an almost complete breakdown of “community” in the world. As urbanisation increases, people are losing their cultural identity and sense of belonging to a community. Loneliness sets in. Never before in history have we seen so many lonely and displaced people. The more independent people become, the lonelier they become. When people do

not belong to a community, they start losing their sense of identity. This also results in people losing or giving up on their values, and they no longer know which values to uphold. It is at such times that the only way to control people running wild is to increase the police force. The opportunity for the Church is to create new communities where people can experience love, identity, a sense of belonging and being cared for. Jesus calls His followers His friends and also brothers and sisters. That is family and community. People deeply need to belong. It is in a family context that people can take care of one another, listen to one another's stories and carry one another's burdens. Belonging to a community makes people feel special and necessary. Our gospel is a gospel of bringing people into the household of God, being reconciled with God, becoming part of the family of God. And in this situation we can start to uphold the values of The Kingdom, and that will restore law, order and justice. The growth of materialism. At the root of materialism lies greed, the desire to be independent and replacing lasting with temporary things. In materialism "things" replace the spiritual needs of people and proclaim that material things can replace spiritual needs.

Materialism is short-sighted, it only looks at this life and does not make provision for eternity, and it also ignores mankind's deepest longing, which can only be defined as spiritual. The response of the Church is not to preach a prosperity gospel to compete with materialism. The task of the Church is to preach and live a true, deep and real spirituality. We need to live a life of faith, trusting God to provide for our needs and not to hoard riches and put our trust in what is laid up in our "barns". The Church needs to live from the reality of a deep personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The Church needs to live in the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit, where there are signs and wonders, healings, compassion, emotional healing and deliverance from demonic forces and pain of the past. The Church needs to live in the reality of the joy of being saved from our sins and a new freedom in following Jesus, knowing that He takes care of all our needs, temporary and spiritual.