



***Change your world
through prayer***

**Standing in the gap
International Concerns
[VOLUME 1/2010]**

Standing in the gap: International Concerns

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Introduction

The purpose of this booklet is to provide some guidelines in leading Bible study, cell or other groups of Christians in prayer for growing international and global concerns.

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.

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INTERNATIONAL CONCERNS FOR PRAYER

1. Prayer preparation before disaster strike (Part 1)

Natural disasters are the one thing we cannot control or prevent. We can prepare for them, but we can't prevent them; we can anticipate them, but we can't accurately predict them. There are numerous instances of earthquakes, storms etc. in the Bible, and their impact on nations; causing them turn either to, or away from God. Several earthquakes have struck the inhabitants of the earth since January 2010. How and what do we pray for when disaster strikes? The following are just a few interesting points on disasters that are listed as occurring all over the world the most often. Let us pray in these times for God's mercy upon the nations of the earth, as the earth urgently begins to moan and groan for the revelation of the sons of God, and the return of our Bridegroom, King Jesus Christ!

Natural disasters in general are subdivided into different categories: Land movement disasters (avalanches, earthquakes, volcanic eruptions); water disasters (floods, tsunamis); weather disasters (cyclonic storms, droughts, hailstorms, heat waves, tornadoes); fire disasters; health and diseases (epidemics, famine); space (Gamma ray bursts, impact events, solar flares, supernovas (explosion of stars) and hyper novas (disintegration of stars)).

1. **Hurricane:** Hurricanes (Atlantic & eastern Pacific Oceans), tropical cyclones (Indian Ocean), and typhoons (western Pacific) are different names for the same phenomenon: a cyclonic storm system that forms over the oceans. *Pray for Christians working at different weather stations to hear God's voice clearly to be able to warn people in advance. Ask for people to take up spiritual authority and responsibility in prayer in this respect in every nation of the earth.*
2. **Earthquake:** An earthquake is the result of a sudden release of energy in the earth's crust that creates seismic waves. The magnitude of an earthquake is conventionally reported on the Richter scale, with magnitude 3 or lower earthquakes being mostly imperceptible, and magnitude 7 causing serious damage over large areas. *Continue to pray for various nations that have been affected or hit by earthquakes this year. Ask for the church worldwide to take up their responsibility to help, care for and support those in need. Also ask for God's mercy on the people where earthquakes occur, that many will testify of His grace and protection.*

3. **Tornado:** Tornadoes are violent, rotating columns of air which blow at very high speeds. Tornadoes can occur one at a time, or in large tornado outbreaks along squall lines or in other large areas of thunderstorm development. *Please pray for God's grace upon crops, livestock and residential areas. Ask that Christians will cry out to God amidst their distress and testify to God's answers to their prayers that will lead many others to Christ.*
4. **Volcanic eruption:** A volcanic eruption releases lava and poisonous gases into the air. Some eruptions form high-temperature clouds of ash and steam that can travel down mountainsides at speeds exceeding that of an airliner. *Lift up in prayer those nations affected by volcanic activity at the moment. Ask that many people will begin to call upon the Lord and surrender their lives to Him alone amidst their circumstances.*
5. **Tsunami:** A tsunami is a series of waves created when a body of water, such as an ocean, is rapidly displaced. Earthquakes, mass movements above or below water, volcanic eruptions and other underwater explosions, landslides, large meteorite impacts, comet impacts and testing with nuclear weapons at sea all have the potential to generate a tsunami. *Pray that people will be wiser in how and where they build houses, especially in areas where tsunamis are known to occur. Also pray that such nations will turn their hearts to the Lord and ask Him for the safety of people inhabiting their coastlands.*
6. **Flood:** *Pray for those who have been impacted by floods this year, that they will be able to rebuild their lives soon. Also ask for the church worldwide to reach out to such communities, and especially for God to pour out His Spirit upon them.*
7. **Wildfire:** Common causes of wildfires include lightning, human carelessness, arson and volcano eruption. Wildfires can also produce ember attacks, where embers carried on by the wind set fire to buildings at a distance from the fire itself. *Pray for people to be watchful and responsible in not causing these wildfires themselves. Ask for God's grace in areas where wildfires break out, that the wind will cease and the fire be put out quickly. Ask that people will cry out to Him to intervene, and for many to turn their lives over to Him.*
8. **Drought:** Droughts can persist for several years and can cause significant damage and harm the local economy. *Pray for regions affected by the El Nino effect, especially central Africa. Ask for God's grace especially upon children that suffer malnutrition and death. Ask that He will also reveal new agricultural methods to Christian*

farmers in these countries to provide for those in need, and so spread the gospel.

9. **Avalanche:** Avalanches are one of the major dangers in snow-capped mountains during winter. As avalanches move down the slope they may entrain snow from the snow pack and grow in size. *Pray for communities to be on the watch for these avalanches, to warn one another and be able to escape safely. Also ask for Christians in such areas to stand in prayer before the Lord for the safety of their region.*
10. **Landslide:** Landslides can be caused by an earthquake, volcanic eruptions, or general instability in the surrounding land. Mudslides or mudflows are a special case of landslides, in which heavy rainfall causes loose soil on steep terrain to collapse and slide downwards. *Lift up in prayer those who suffered the loss of a loved one due to a landslide this year. Ask for Christian scientists to have favour from the Lord to find scientific ways to spot possible landslides before they happen. Pray for communities vulnerable to landslides to stand before the Lord in prayer for the safety of their area.*

(In this article, factual material is used from *Wikipedia* articles: *Natural Disasters*. Prayer requests and conclusions are those of the writer of this article).

2. How to pray when disaster strikes (Part 2)

International issue: How to pray when natural disaster strikes

If you have not experienced it yourself, it is pretty impossible to imagine what goes through the hearts and minds of people facing a sudden natural disaster. The number of natural disasters worldwide is more frequent than ever before. How do we pray about disasters and for those in need? The following are a few guidelines on how to pray for victims of a natural disaster whether it be a flood, fire, earthquake, mudslide, tsunami, etc. Disasters can be critical spiritual turning points for people. Some may turn to God while others might turn away from Him completely, and this is why we must pray in great earnest into such situations.

Pray for the Church:

✠ For Believers everywhere to consciously and practically prepare themselves to be ready, should any disaster have a direct influence on them, their loved ones or their community.

- ✚ That they will have such an intimate and established relationship with the Lord that they will not feel overwhelmed, but have a clear understanding of exactly what to do to help and support others in need.
- ✚ For churches to consider strategies to manage in times of disaster as part of normal ministry, as well as to prepare their congregation on how to minister to and help people both practically and spiritually in such a situation.

Ongoing prayer strategy:

Pray for Believers to acquire a greater awareness of where in the world disaster has struck and to pray focused and effective prayers into such situations, keeping themselves updated on the progress made and new needs of people as they arise.

Practical prayer for issues on ground level:

- ✚ Pray especially for victims who lost a loved one to be able to find rest and comfort in God. Ask that non-Christians will be able to meet someone who can share the gospel with them, and that they will be really open and receptive.
- ✚ Pray for those who have lost a home, possessions and because of destruction, their job.
- ✚ Ask for God's grace upon communities, that strong Believers will arise and play a significant role in portraying God's hope for the future and encourage people to stand together in rebuilding their communities.
- ✚ Pray for sufficient medical supplies and personnel to be deployed to disaster areas within a very short while and for as long as it is necessary.
- ✚ Pray for search companies, for God's guidance to find people trapped under rubble, mud, etc. and to be able to safely and quickly remove them from difficult situations.
- ✚ Ask for the quick arrival and effective distribution of food and clean water to disaster victims. Pray that food and water will be provided for as long as necessary.
- ✚ Pray for God's grace and protection against any outbreak of viruses or sickness among people, animals or crops just after a disaster. Ask that suitable cures for such tendencies will be developed and be ready for application in every situation.
- ✚ Pray for the necessary financial aid towards a disaster-struck area for the rebuilding of infrastructure and livelihood.

Pray for Spiritual work done in a disaster area:

- ✚ Ask for opportunities for aid workers and Believers who might be victims themselves, to encourage, befriend and share the hope of Jesus Christ with disaster victims.
- ✚ Ask for the corporate local church in a specific disaster area to take up responsibility in helping, feeding and teaching people amidst the situation.
- ✚ If there are no active prayer groups going, pray for prayer groups to be established right after disaster strikes. Also that these groups will grow as people gather before the Lord to cry out to Him for help and the salvation of the people in their community.
- ✚ Pray for the Church worldwide to become more visibly involved in the long-term assistance of people who suffered natural disasters.

3. Praying about global issues facing our world

As South African Christians eagerly awaiting the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, we can and should not ignore the global signs of the times:

The global danger posed by extremist Muslims: Let us pray for the Lord's hand to still the threat to world peace brought by the so-called war on terror since 9/11 in 2001. We see a global escalation in hatred and bloodshed in and between the countries directly involved (Afghanistan and Iraq) and their supporters and the West. In general we see a greater polarization between Islam and Christianity. Spiritually, we see the forces of Satan rising up against Christianity and against Israel. As Christians, we should pray that God will bring peace and will use the extremism of Muslims to soften the hearts and turn millions of moderate Muslims to Christ.

Pray with Christ's love for countries and people that are predominantly Muslim. Remember, was it not for God's love and grace on our lives, You or I might have been a Muslim today! Pray for the peace of Jerusalem (**Ps.122**)! Pray that God's chosen nation will recognise their Messiah and turn to Him (**Rom.9-11**).

The above prayer pointers do not claim to represent all the important issues to pray about. These are only a few highlights. This prayer information is available in Afrikaans & English from: Willem at cell: 082-650 5684, e-mail: wjoubert@icon.co.za or the office at tel.: 011- 824 1985.

PRAY FOR THE PRACTICAL NEEDS OF THE WORLD

Using information from newspapers, TV and radio for prayer

Practical guidelines

1. Buy a newspaper every morning (for the next week), listen to the news as often as possible during the day and try to watch at least one newscast on TV to identify prayer information. These three types of media give us a good idea of what is going on in the world.
2. The earth belongs to the Lord and He has appointed us, His children, as His representatives on earth to rule, cultivate and to keep watch over it. God gave us the offices of king, priest and prophet to fulfil our mandate and calling. In this case, it is mainly the priestly office that applies. Based on the price that Jesus paid on the cross, we intercede with God as priests to plead for mercy and grace for the world.
3. Take a red marker and mark certain reports as you read the newspaper. Pray and ask the Lord to point out those issues for which you should pray. The Holy Spirit will show you. Take a few minutes to mark a few (5 – 10 articles or headings).
4. Read the report and ask the Holy Spirit to lead you in your prayer. Do not pray with an attitude of judgment and do not be critical. Give up your own preferences or aversions (e.g. your own political position and how you feel about certain people and issues). Do not pray out of fear – pray in such a way that God will receive the honour.
5. Always pray according to Scriptural guidelines and wherever it is possible, use portions from Scripture that are applicable to the specific situation.
6. Pray for individuals by name:
 - ✎ Pray that God will reveal Himself to them.
 - ✎ Pray that they will see His love.
 - ✎ Pray that the Holy Spirit will convict of sin where applicable. (**John 16:8-11**)
 - ✎ Pray for their emotional healing.
 - ✎ Pray for their salvation where applicable.
 - ✎ Pray for the truth to be revealed. Often lies and accusations obscure

and hinder answers to prayer.

✚ Pray that God will lead the hearts of these people in the direction that He desires – like a stream of water. (**Prov.21:1**)

✚ Pray God's blessing on every individual for whom you pray.

7. When it is obvious that the individual does not have a relationship with the Lord, pray for the work of the Holy Spirit in them. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the truth to their hearts according to the following seven questions.

✚ Whom can I trust?

✚ What is the purpose of my life?

✚ Where will I go when I die?

✚ When will I be free?

✚ Why do I hate God?

✚ Why do I flee from God?

✚ How can I handle my problems?

8. Do not pray against people and issues. Pray God's Word and His creative purposes. Proclaim the Word, the authority and blessing of God into the situation. Do not first pray all the darkness away, but pray for the glory and power of God to come into the situation. For instance, where a person is addicted to drugs, pray that God would reveal His love and acceptance to that person so that all forms of rejection will be removed.

(Source: *Practical Prayer* by Bennie Mostert, 2007).

4. Global focus to pray about violence and war

The following pointers provide a basic foundation on how to pray about violence/war in the world right now. Please feel free to add to these and other issues the Holy Spirit might show you.

1. **35 Wars going on right now:** There have been over 250 major wars in the world since World War II. Over 37 million people have been killed by wars in the 20th century. Three times more people have been killed in wars in the last 90 years than in all the previous 500. There are over 35 major conflicts going on in the world today. *Father God, we lift up every person who suffers because of a war in their vicinity right now. May they know Jesus. May they be anxious about nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make*

known their requests to You. Grant them peace which surpasses all understanding, guard their hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Phil.4:6-7).

2. **Who is dying?** In the wars of the last decade, more children were killed than soldiers. Child victims of war in the last decade include an estimated 2 million killed, 4 to 5 million disabled, 12 million left homeless, and more than 1 million orphaned. *Father God, reveal Your Son Jesus to the children that are left disabled, homeless and orphaned. May each one see Your marvellous loving-kindness, You who save by Your right hand, O You who save those who trust in You from those who rise up against them (Ps.17:7).*
3. **Child soldiers:** Some 300,000 children are serving as soldiers in current armed conflicts. They carry AK-47s and M-16s on the front lines of combat, serve as human mine detectors, participate in suicide missions, carry supplies, and act as spies, messengers or lookouts. Child soldiers are being used in more than thirty countries around the world. (Website: <http://www.worldrevolution.org/guide/childsoldiers>). *Father God, we cry out that You would raise up those who would execute true justice and show mercy and compassion, everyone to his brother (Zech.7:9). May the children be released to be children, given peace from war.*
4. **Children and war:** Millions of children are caught up in conflicts in which they are not merely bystanders, but targets. Some fall victim to a general onslaught against civilians; others die as part of a calculated genocide. Still other children suffer the effects of sexual violence or the multiple deprivations of armed conflict that expose them to hunger or disease. Just as shocking, thousands of young people are cynically exploited as combatants. (*The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), State of the World's Children, 1995, p. 2. Website: <http://www.worldrevolution.org/guide/childrenandwar>*). *Father God, we cry out to You for the plight of children. Show them salvation through Jesus Christ. Keep them as the apple of Your eye, hide them under the shadow of Your wings, from the wicked who oppress them, from their deadly enemies who surround them (Ps.17:8-9).*
5. **Women and war:** During armed conflict, women and girls are continually threatened by rape, sexual exploitation and trafficking, sexual humiliation and mutilation. They are at heightened risk in all settings, whether at home, in flight or in camps for displaced people. (Website: <http://www.worldrevolution.org/guide/womenandwar>). *Father God, we cry out to You to turn the tide for women, especially*

those who suffer because of ongoing wars. We ask on their behalf, that none will oppress the widow or the fatherless, the alien or the poor. Let no one plan evil in his heart against them (Zech.7:10).

6. **Refugees:** Today, no continent and barely any country in the world are untouched by the global refugee crisis. At the beginning of 2000 an estimated 14 million people were living as refugees, uprooted, forced from their homes and compelled to cross an international border because of war, civil conflict etc. An estimated 30 million are displaced, those who are forced to flee their homes, but who remain within their own country, and hence are not eligible for protection under the same international system as refugees. (Website: <http://www.worldrevolution.org/guide/refugees>). *Father God, we cry out to You on behalf of refugees and those who are displaced. Like in Bible times, will You provide bread and water for those who have fled from the distress of war (Isa.21:14-15). Help them to know You are a God Who saves, physically and spiritually.*
7. **Landmines:** It is estimated that there are between 60 and 70 million landmines in the ground in at least 70 countries. Landmines wound or kill approximately 26,000 civilians every year, including 8,000 to 10,000 children. Those victims that survive endure a lifetime of physical, psychological, and economic hardship. At least 75% of landmine victims are civilians. (Adopt-a-Minefield, website: www.landmines.org or <http://www.worldrevolution.org/guide/landmines>). *Father God, we pray for a solution to be found soon to solve this problem worldwide. Minister to the victims of landmines, heal the broken-hearted and bind up their wounds (Ps.147:3).*

5. What in the world is going on?

Peter Tarantal, National Coordinator for World Evangelisation Network of South Africa (WENSA)

The last hundred years have seen dramatic changes in the *Global South* - a missiological term for the less developed continents of Latin America, Africa and Asia. We have seen Christianity grow at an unprecedented rate in these areas. For instance, in 1900 there were reportedly 8 million Christians on the continent of Africa: today there are approximately 450 million. These changes have enormous potential consequences for Kingdom advances in the *Global South*, where the majority of the world's

unreached peoples are located. One of the challenges though is to encourage the sending of missionaries to keep pace with the dramatic growth of Christianity in these areas.

New innovative approaches to missions are being born in these areas. An example is the model of *Proximate Missions* where the Church in a region takes the initiative to reach those from a similar ethno-linguistic and economic background.

There are approximately 2 million Filipinos in the Arabian Peninsula, many of them Believers. These brothers and sisters need training but need no financial support as they earn a living in the countries where they are working. New initiatives in missions such as *Business as Mission* and *Arts in Mission* linked with sports, for example, are more innovative ways to see the gospel reach so many more people.

There are a number of challenges still remaining for us though. The challenge of the one-fourth world still confronts all of us, where 27% of the world is still unreached. Unfortunately only 1% of all church income goes towards missions in that part of the world and the same can be said of the workers going to the mission field.

Another challenge for us will be the issue of the uniqueness of Christ. We live in an increasingly relativistic world which demands us to be more tolerant and accepting. A major challenge for the Church of Jesus Christ is the re-evangelisation of the West. Europe already regards itself as post-Christian. We have the situation now where churches from Latin America, Africa and Asia are beginning to send workers to Europe. The largest church in Europe is being led by an African. We have the challenge of discipleship and the training of leaders, especially in the *Global South* where the Church is growing at phenomenal rate.

I am not sure that we have fully grasped the impact of the global recession on missions yet. I know of a number of missionaries who have been adversely affected in their support as a result of it, so we will have to look for new ways of funding missions. In this regard the new recognition of the great value of marketplace ministry is greatly encouraging.

In the midst of great challenges we can truly see that God is busy with "new and greater things".

6. Praying about global abortion trends

Number of abortions is declining. The number of induced abortions declined worldwide between 1995 and 2003, from nearly 46 million to approximately 42 million. About one in five pregnancies worldwide end in abortion. Most abortions occur in developing countries— 35 million annually, compared with seven million in developed countries —a disparity that largely reflects the relative population distribution. **Prayer:** Give thanks to the Lord for the decrease in the number of abortions taking place worldwide. Pray specifically for difficult circumstances women face in developing countries e.g. rape, incest, beliefs etc. that contribute to large numbers of abortions being performed, that these things might be turned around in practical ways. Asia performs most abortions. Because the world's population is concentrated in Asia, most abortions occur there (26 million yearly); nine million of these take place in China.

Prayer: Lift up in prayer women in this global region as they face pretty tough situations both personally and because of legislation, especially in China where couples are limited to have only one child per family. Pray for God's mercy on the unborn, for miracles in impossible situations and mothers to be able to take care of their unborn babies once they are born. Also pray for responsible fathers to care and meet their responsibilities and not leave women to face these challenges on their own.

Laws do not stop abortions. Legal restrictions on abortion do not affect its incidence. The abortion rate is higher e.g. in Africa, where it is mostly illegal. The lowest abortion rates in the world are in Western and Northern Europe, where abortion is accessible with few restrictions. Poverty and fear of a pregnancy being found out are some of the main reasons for abortions.

Prayer: Pray that God will intervene in the hearts and minds of people, so that they might understand the gift of life given to them. Pray especially for those who got pregnant through unfortunate circumstances over which they had no control. Pray for them to find Christ, and healing from the shame and trauma of such an experience.

Abortion takes lives. Worldwide, 48% of all induced abortions are unsafe and an estimated five million women are hospitalised each year for treatment of abortion-related complications. Approximately 220,000

children worldwide lose their mothers every year to abortion-related deaths.

Prayer: Lift up in prayer all children orphaned as a result of their mothers having an abortion. Pray for God to comfort and reveal Jesus to them as their Friend in trouble. Ask that orphaned children will be put in proper care and not be violated themselves by family members or other adults.

Number of pregnancies terminated. More than one-third of the approximately 205 million pregnancies that occur worldwide annually are unintended and about 22% of all pregnancies end in induced abortion. **Prayer:** Pray for mothers who want to have children and have had to face the loss of a baby by natural abortion. Ask that especially in countries where it is expected of women to have children and specifically a son, to have favour with their husbands so that they do not reject them and marry another wife.

Developed countries guilty percentage-wise. Of the 23 million pregnancies that occur in developed countries, more than 40% are unintended, and 28% end in induced abortion.

Prayer: Lift up in prayer young and old having sex for fun as a lifestyle and then getting rid of unwanted pregnancies through abortion. Ask that mothers-to-be will hear God's voice speaking to them, put their trust in Him and find ways to preserve lives. Pray that if there are pre-marital pregnancies, that there will be opportunities of having a newborn baby adopted if they cannot take care of the baby themselves. Pray for more worldwide initiatives like Window of Life that take care of unwanted new born babies.

Different faces of abortion. Intentional abortion occurs when the new human being is intentionally killed, for therapeutic or elective reasons, through chemical or surgical means. Unintentional abortion occurs when the new human being is unintentionally aborted, or miscarried. The mother may or may not be aware that this occurs, because the aborted baby may pass out of her with her menses. Miscarriage is accidental foetal loss through natural means; referred to in the medical literature as a "spontaneous abortion". Abortifacient is a drug that kills a newly formed human being, whether by directly killing the baby or by preventing implantation, and so causing an abortion, either intentionally or unintentionally.

Prayer: Lift up in prayer mothers everywhere coming up against these different ‘faces of abortion’. Pray for God to comfort those losing a baby unintentionally or through miscarriage. Ask for the others to realise the dangers of their intentional decision, also to their health and for an instinct to treasure the life of their unborn child.

Lack of contraception reason for high number of pregnancies.

More than 100 million married women in developing countries have an unmet need for contraception, meaning they are sexually active; are able to become pregnant; do not want to have a child soon or at all; and are not using any method of contraception, either modern or traditional.

Contraception can be divided into different categories, but mainly those prohibiting/preventing pregnancy and those ‘bringing down a fertilized egg’.

Prayer: Pray about this situation, especially in developing countries. Ask for women to have access to contraception prohibiting pregnancy one way or another so they will not even have to consider an abortion. Pray for the necessary funding to make this possible for women worldwide.

16 Countries slacken abortion laws in 10 years. In the 10 years since the last global review of abortion policies (1998-2007), 16 countries have increased the number of grounds on which abortions may be legally performed, while two have eliminated all such grounds. Those broadening their views were: Benin, Bhutan, Chad, Colombia, Ethiopia, Guinea, Iran, Mali, Nepal, Niger, Portugal, Saint Lucia, Swaziland, Switzerland, Thailand and Togo. Two territories and one state in Australia and six states in Mexico also liberalised their laws. In contrast, El Salvador and Nicaragua changed their already restrictive laws to prohibit abortion entirely.

Prayer: Pray for each of these countries by name, asking the Lord to touch the hearts and minds of those in government about their decisions to promote abortion. Give thanks for those countries which are tightening their views on abortion.

Abortion is becoming more acceptable worldwide. Worldwide, medication for abortion has gained broad acceptance. At least 39 countries have registered abortion medication, 35 in the last 10 years.

Prayer: Despite the overwhelming statistics, let us stand on the firm foundation of God’s throne of righteousness and justice to be established concerning the issue of abortion in each and every country in the world.

Declare the Name of the Lord over legislation legalising abortion, calling out for righteousness and justice. Also ask God to raise up humble but strong men and women to be a voice in every nation of the world on the issue of abortion.

(The prayer guidelines suggested here are those of the writer of this article in Jericho Walls. Facts were taken from these and other resources. Resources: http://www.gutmacher.org/pubs/fb_IAW.html and <http://www.christiantelegraph.com/issue3695.html> and http://www.gutmacher.org/pubs/fb_IAW.html).

7. Increasing global poverty concerns

Poverty is a growing problem and has been part of mankind for thousands of years and will be with us till the end of time. God gave us in the Church the task to take care of the poor and the destitute. It is so that God expects governments to rule justly and to care for the poor. However it is not, in the first place, the State's responsibility to care for the poor. When for example, we read the book of Proverbs, it is quite clear how God thinks about the poor and what His instructions are to Believers and non-Believers. However, taking care of the poor is primarily the responsibility of the Church.

Poverty has an incredibly degrading effect on people's lives. It often leads to total inferiority, a beggar's mentality, and people give up hope completely of working or looking for work because of repeated failure to stand up, look for work and earn an honest living. For most of the poor it's a matter of survival. Few other things matter. Yes, sin is rife among the poor, but there is not less sin among people who are not poor.

It serves no purpose quoting statistics on the number of poor people and their living conditions. We see it every day. The point is quite simply that we must do something about it. The most effective thing to do is firstly, to pray, but praying alone is not good enough. A number of guidelines follow that will help you pray for the poor:

- **Perspective.** When we pray for the poor, we must understand first of all, that they did not necessarily contributed to be poor because they sinned or because they are too lazy to work or that they are simple-minded. The fact that someone was born in a squatter camp is for

example not due to the fact that this person is bad or wicked or that he/she deserves it, or is stupid and lazy. Do not judge or make assumptions, God is the only one knowing everything.

- **Scripture.** Read **Isaiah 58** and pray through the book. Focus on everything concerning poverty and use this as the basis for your prayer. Don't be judgmental when you pray, don't accuse people. Pray that God will be gracious and give deliverance.
- **Compassion.** When you pray for the poor, pray with a broken heart and with compassion. Make sure there is no haughtiness in you, no feelings of superiority or condemnation. Share with the poor and don't begrudge them the same grace that God shows you. When we want to pray for the poor, the most important aspect of our prayer is the attitude of our hearts.
- **Rule in righteousness.** Pray for systems and legislation that will prevent the poor from being exploited and misused. Pray for governments to make laws so that the poor can be helped.
- **Honesty.** Millions of Rands are made available in countries (by governments and foreign grants) towards caring for the poor. Worldwide statistics show that approximately 2% of the money made available in this way towards the upliftment of the poor actually reaches them. In some cases it is a little more, but normally an insignificant amount of the money reach the people who are in need. Pray that such fraud will come to light and that the poor will reap the benefits of the money.
- **More to become involved.** Pray for the Church that it will do more than what is done now. Most congregations have projects to care for the poor. The problem is however, that in most cases this is done by a few individuals in the congregation. Also, that church councils/governing boards don't make available considerable amounts of money for this and that the vast majority of church members are uninvolved. Pray that God the Father, through the working of the Holy Spirit will touch the hearts of more people in church councils/governing boards and more church members so that they will become actively involved in the needs of people.
- **Become involved.** When we really pray from the heart for the needs of the poor, it is impossible not to become practically involved in the plight of these people. Each one of us can give a few rand extra a month, each one of us has an hour or two more a week that we can use to help the poor and the needy. If you don't know of an existing project,

start one. Pray and ask the Lord's guidance. This is how all the other projects started. The Bible is very clear about it that God the Father has a heart for the poor and the destitute and therefore He will help us when we step out in faith and start doing something. Even if we start by helping one or two people and then expand with time, it is good enough.