



Pray for the Nation ~ INOI MO TE MOTU

Intercessors for New Zealand

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“If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and wash us clean from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9)

Forgiveness !

The choice is ours!

Where is God when God *won't* answer?

It may well be because of sin, rebellion, disobedience, ... including being unwilling to ask forgiveness, or forgive others (see Proverbs 1:24-28)

Why was Jesus – a Man who loved so much, who did so much, who never hurt anyone – crucified? It's all to do with **FORGIVENESS!** He died to pay the penalty for our sins, so we can be forgiven. Amazing grace! – the grace by which we are saved! (Ephesians 2:8-10)

The words “forgive” and its derivatives – forgives, forgiven, forgiveness and forgave – occur 136 times in the Bible, in 119 verses! For example:

- To a paralysed man, Jesus said, “Your sins are forgiven.” But people said, “Who can forgive sins, but God only?” Then Jesus healed him! (Mark 2:1-12)
- To the woman with an alabaster jar of ointment, who anointed Jesus' feet, He said, “Her sins, which were many, have been forgiven.” (Luke 7:36-50)
- To a woman about to be stoned for adultery, Jesus said, “Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again.” (John 8:1-11)
- One of the thieves being crucified on a cross, called on Jesus and said, “Lord, remember me when you come into Your Kingdom.” Jesus replied, “Today you will be with Me in Paradise.” (Luke 23:32-43). His sins had been forgiven!
- On the cross Jesus said “Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing!” (Luke 23:34)

God knows a person's heart even better than we know them ourselves, but *repentance* is usually a pre-requisite to *forgiveness!* It requires *confession* and *asking forgiveness* too. Compare Judas (“Judas went and hanged himself”) with Peter who said (three times; once for each time he had denied Jesus), “Lord, You know that I love You” and Peter was forgiven.

Six possibilities (*without* being too legalistic; and *with* wisdom, grace and love!)

1. **I confess** my sins to those I have wronged, and they forgive me. (This is what God wants!)
2. I confess my sins to those I have wronged, and they do not forgive me. (But I have still done what God requires of me).

3. I will not confess my sins to those I have wronged. (God is not pleased with me, and I cannot expect His forgiveness for sins which I will not confess).
4. **Other people confess** what they have done wrong towards me, and I forgive them. (This is what God wants!)
5. Other people confess what they have done wrong towards me, and I do not forgive them. (I have not forgiven, and I cannot expect God's forgiveness either).
6. Other people do not confess what they have done wrong against me. (But I still need to forgive them).

- What other people do is beyond our control.
- God requires us to confess our sins and to forgive other people who sin against us:
We have sinned and need to ask forgiveness.
Others have sinned against us and we need to forgive.
- If a wronged person does *not* forgive, then hurts, bitterness, resentment and division can occur.
- If we won't forgive (we want revenge – “to get even”) it will hurt us too.

Jesus died for our sins. But we must not only receive *His* forgiveness, we must also forgive others as *He has forgiven us*.

Lord's Prayer: “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.” (Mt 6:12)

“If you forgive others their trespasses, your Heavenly Father will also forgive you; but if you do not forgive other people their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses.” (Mt 6:14-15; 18:35; Mk 11:25-26). This should be a huge incentive for us to forgive others!

We have sinned, and need to repent and ask forgiveness.

Others have sinned against us, and we need to forgive, irrespective of whether they repent and ask forgiveness. To forgive, or not to forgive – the Choice is ours – and so are the Consequences!

It is important to realise and remember that sin – even confessed, and forgiven – usually still has consequences. We may be forgiven and cleansed, but still suffer some of the consequences.

QUESTIONS:

Is there *anyone* I have not forgiven?
Is there *anyone* I need to ask forgiveness of?

To truly forgive, is to do what *God* has done with the things *we* have repented of, and for which we have asked *His* forgiveness.

What has God done with *our* sin, when He has forgiven *us*?

- Washed our sins away – removed them as far as the East is from the West.
- Buried our sins in the depths of the sea – never to be remembered any more (forgotten!)
We also need to try to never remember those sins again – they are FORGIVEN! *Don't live with past guilt for sins which are forgiven!*
- Sets us free from guilt and shame for what we have done wrong; **or** from bitterness, anger and hate towards those who have sinned against us.
- Helps us to find God's forgiveness – *and be a forgiving person!*
- Restores us into right relationship with **others** – just as forgiveness does between **God** and us!

Forgiveness needs *specific confession*, and *specific forgiveness*. Otherwise it is difficult to know what was done wrong, and what was forgiven.

"Name it, and claim it" – confess (name) the sins, and claim the forgiveness!

True repentance and forgiveness bring about a sense of peace (shalom), freedom from guilt and shame, and a knowledge and sense of being clean again.

Unforgiveness can lead to anger, bitterness, hurt, resentment and division (rather than unity and oneness).

Mutual forgiveness is extremely important to good relationships! For example, in friendships, marriage, family, church, work, etc.

NOTES:

- Forgiven sin may **still** have consequences, even though relationship may be restored.
- Forgiveness heals, or helps to heal, relationships between us and **others**. There is still the issue of relationship with **God** if a person won't repent, or won't forgive.
- Is the person who won't ask forgiveness, or won't forgive, really a follower of Jesus?



BIBLE STUDY

His name is *J e s u s*

3. Gifts of the Holy Spirit in Jesus' Ministry

The gifts of the Spirit

Paul lists 9 gifts of the Holy Spirit in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11.

"There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are varieties of services, but the same Lord. There are varieties of activities, but it is the same God Who inspires all of them in everyone. To each person is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. To one person is given, through the Spirit, the utterance of **wisdom**. To another person, the utterance of **knowledge** by the same Spirit. To another, **faith** by the same Spirit. To another, gifts of **healing** by the one Spirit. To another the working of **miracles**; to another **prophecy**; to another the **discernment of spirits**; to another, various kinds of **tongues**; to another, the **interpretation of tongues**. These are all inspired by one and the same Spirit, Who gives to each one individually as the Spirit chooses."

Let's look at each of these gifts of the Spirit, what they are, and examples of them, especially in the life of Jesus.

Wisdom

The supernatural gift of wisdom comes as God reveals to a person things which are not known, or worked out, simply by human wisdom or experience. King Solomon, for example, asked God for wisdom and God gave it to him in amazing ways (1 Kings 4:29-34). Of Stephen, just before he was martyred for his faith, it was said that

he was "a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit", and the people "could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which He spoke." (Acts 6:5, 10).

Jesus also exercised the gift of wisdom on a number of occasions as He dealt with various people – e.g., the woman at the well in Samaria (John 4:5-38); the woman who was about to be stoned for adultery (John 8:1-11); people – especially the scribes and Pharisees – who tried to trap Him or trick Him; His trial before Caiaphas, Herod and Pilate; etc.

The gifts of wisdom and knowledge are both gifts of revelation, where the Holy Spirit reveals things that are not humanly known. See, for example, Luke 2:46-47 and John 7:14-18.

Knowledge

Knowledge, also, comes by a revelation of God's Spirit to a person. It is not something the person already knows, or thinks might happen, but comes by divine revelation. God reveals something that could not be otherwise known. God may reveal knowledge about something, or something to come, and then give the wisdom to know how to deal with it. Jesus exercised the gift of knowledge (often alongside wisdom) on a number of occasions. For example, in choosing His disciples; His teaching and example; with the scribes and Pharisees; with the Canaanite woman; about paying Temple taxes, and taxes to the emperor; answering tricky questions put to Him by people trying to trap Him; answering the rich young ruler; His parables; the way He

summed up all the Law and commandments with the two greatest commandments – total love and commitment to the Lord, and loving others as we love and care for ourselves, etc.

Faith

The gift of faith enables a person to believe for the “impossible” because, with God, all things are possible. If He said it, it will happen, no matter how humanly impossible it may seem. For example, Jesus walked on water but when He called Peter to step out of the boat, Peter had the faith to walk on water initially but began to doubt when he saw the waves. Jesus’ *whole life* was lived by faith – faith to live, to prophecy, to perform miracles and healings, etc. Jesus trusted His Father for everything – even death on the cross – and resurrection!

Healing

The Gospels are full of Jesus’ healing ministry – healing physically, mentally, spiritually – including deliverance from demon possession, and raising the dead.

Miracles

Supernatural events powered by the Holy Spirit – for example, Jesus’ feeding 5000 and 4000 people on two occasions; walking on water; causing storms to cease; turning water into wine; even catching fish! Jesus did “naturally”, by the power of the Spirit, what is otherwise impossible to do!

Prophecy

Jesus prophesied of the days to come – both for Himself (for example, His death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and second coming) and of days to come for His followers – for example, Peter’s denials; the last days; destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem; the scattering of Israel; plus His second coming and the final day of Judgement.

Discernment of spirits

On a number of occasions Jesus discerned demonic activities in people’s lives and, by the power of the Spirit, cast out those evil spirits and set people free. For example, two men; a boy; a man with a legion of spirits – He cast them all out with a word – “Out!” He cast out the spirits in order to heal the person – not just spiritually but also physically.

Tongues and Interpretation

Paul mentions two types of tongues – the tongues of men and of angels (1 Corinthians 13:1). **Tongues of men** are natural, spoken languages; though the gift of tongues may involve speaking in human languages that are not known to the speakers but are known by some of

the hearers, as on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:1-12. There are also the **tongues of angels** – angelic languages which are not known on earth and will need the gift of interpretation if they are to be understood by people. (1 Corinthians 14:1-19).

Did Jesus speak in tongues? The Bible doesn’t say. But He had perfect communication with His Father in any language He chose to speak. He may have spoken in Hebrew, Aramaic, Greek, Latin, or whatever He chose – the Father understood perfectly what His Son was saying, and the Son knew exactly what His Father was saying! Unlike us at times, He knew “how to pray as He ought” (Romans 8:26-27).

Paul speaks quite extensively about spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:1 to 14:25.

Jesus is **the** Son of God; and all those who have been born again of the Holy Spirit, are **children of God** by the new birth. Jesus is **the** Son of Man, and we are also, of course, children of Mankind by our physical birth. Like Jesus, we too can be filled with the Holy Spirit, receive gifts of the Holy Spirit, and minister under His authority, anointing and power.

REMEMBER: *Jesus is our Example!* And He was baptised in water and the Holy Spirit, lived constantly filled with the Spirit, exercised the gifts of the Spirit, prayed as He was led by the Spirit; and His power and authority were those of God, exercised under the leading, anointing and power of the Holy Spirit.

QUESTIONS

1. What is meant by “the gifts of the Spirit”? How do they differ from other talents and abilities we may have? Are there only nine gifts of the Spirit?
2. Knowledge, understanding and wisdom are three somewhat similar concepts. How do they differ? Why is each one so important?
3. Why is the gift of faith so important? What can we do if we exercise the gift of faith, which might not be done without the gift?
4. Have you ever seen a miracle of healing occur? What happened?
5. What examples of the gift of miracles have you seen or (reliably) heard of?
6. What is the difference between prophecy, and tongues with interpretation?
7. Is it reasonable to ask God to give you gifts of His Spirit in order that you might worship, serve, and honour Him in your daily life? (Have you done so?)

Prayer Suggestions

30 DAYS OF PRAYER FOR THE MUSLIM WORLD: 27 May - 25 June

Each year we encourage special prayer for the Muslim world, and for Christians to pray with faith, hope and love for them. A special booklet has been prepared, with information and prayer suggestions for each day during this 30-day period. These can be obtained from

MARN, PO Box 20063, Glen Eden, Auckland 0641 (or contact them through info@marn.org.nz; Mobile 021 185 3334; www.marn.org.nz). The booklets are \$8 each (posted), with discounts for 10 or more copies.

- Please pray for the Muslim world, for Muslims in New Zealand, and join in the above 30-Days of special prayer for them.

YOGA IN SCHOOLS

Recently we heard that the Board of Trustees for a school which has had Bible in Schools for a number of years, voted in favour of no longer allowing Bible in Schools to take place in their school. However, in order to quieten children down when they become too rowdy, or at other times, they would get the children to do yoga exercises and “quieten their minds”. This is a very subtle way in which, when the Bible and the Gospel of Jesus Christ are no longer “acceptable” in “secular society”, the use of other religions seems to be OK.

- Please pray that the number of schools allowing Bible in Schools, and the number of people being available to teach them, will increase, not decrease.
- Please pray too that people will not reject the Word of God and hence be deceived by all sorts of deceiving spirits.
- Generally the human heart longs for a relationship with the God Who created them, but sin, rebellion and the world we live in (the world, the flesh and the devil) encourage deception in such a way that people turn to other gods and worship other things (including materialistic things). Please pray that the one true God will reveal Himself to those who are seeking the Truth, and long for a true relationship with our Heavenly Father and His Son Jesus Christ, through God’s Holy Spirit.

ALPHA

Once again we would like to encourage you to pray for the ministry of Alpha, and their Alpha Courses which share the Christian Faith, teach about Prayer; Marriage and Parenting; and Youth. Many churches throughout New Zealand run these courses and sometimes hundreds attend.

- Pray for those who are not-yet Christians to be invited, and to come, to hear the Gospel.
- Pray for those who may have been church-goers but are not born again; for those who are not really following the Lord as His disciples; those who have gone back on their initial commitment to Christ; and those who have little knowledge about the things of God and His Word.
- Pray that hundreds of people will hear the Gospel, receive the gift of eternal life, and become part of the Church of Jesus Christ.
- Pray for all those people who will be involved in organising Alpha Courses and inviting people along. For further details see www.alpha.org.nz
- Pray for other groups, churches and organisations who actively seek to bring people to Christ. There must be millions of people – here in New Zealand – who have never heard the Good News of the Gospel about Jesus Christ, His love for us (which led Him to die on the cross for our sins) and Who rose again to bring eternal life to those who believe and follow Him.
- Pray that many more New Zealanders will hear the true Gospel and be saved, filled with God’s Spirit,

and live daily as Jesus’ followers, sharing the Gospel in turn with their friends and family.

ALL TOGETHER and

All Together Equip

Another group which is strongly into sharing the Christian Faith is **AllTogether** – part of the ministry of Dave Mann and Tony Collis who led the **Hope Project** for over three years.

- They recommend a 5-minute video called “Who Do You Say I Am?” as a good starter for discussing who Jesus is, why He died, and what His resurrection means to us today.
- They are also encouraging every Christian to do something on Global Outreach Day (Saturday 27 May) to share the Gospel with at least one person who doesn’t know.
- Between June and September, Dave and Tony will also be travelling through the country bringing a one-evening meeting to inspire, inform and encourage personal outreach and witness.

Please pray for the above, and also see www.alltogether.co.nz for further details.

WORLD-WIDE PRAYER NEEDS

Our world is a very troubled place at the moment, in a number of different countries and ways. Please pray for the following countries, and others you may know of, or be led to pray for, in the coming days:

Britain – the coming Brexit poll, whether or not Britain pulls out of the European Union; if so, how it does this, and the repercussions both for Britain and the EU.

France – the final decision, to be made soon, about who will be the next President. Neither of the two candidates who were considered most likely contenders, are in the final vote (they have already been eliminated). What happens in the future, for France, will depend on which of the two very-different candidates wins the final election.

Syria – its future is still very uncertain, after about five years of on-going warfare and terrorism.

Russia, China and the **USA** – relationships between these countries, which are the most powerful in the world, are critical to the future.

North Korea – continues to threaten countries such as the USA, South Korea, Australia, and New Zealand; with China and Japan also being important in what happens concerning North Korea’s threats of attacks by missiles and nuclear weapons.

OUR NZ GOVERNMENT

Some of our MPs are retiring before the next General Election on 23 September, and there has just been a reshuffle of Cabinet and Ministerial positions. Please pray for wisdom for all our MPs, that they will lead our country well, in ways that are pleasing to the Lord, and for the benefit of our people.

Pray for the Nation, 105 Woodman Drive, Tawa, Wellington 5028, New Zealand

Weekly *Prayer Updates* can be found on our website: www.pray-for-the-nation.org/prayer-updates.php

This monthly *Prayer Letter* is also on our website: www.pray-for-the-nation.org/monthly-magazines.php