



Pray for the Nation ~ INOI MO TE MOTU

(Intercessors for New Zealand)

105 Woodman Drive, Tawa, Wellington 5028, New Zealand
ifnz@xtra.co.nz <https://www.pray-for-the-nation.org/>

The LORD said, "If My people, who are called by My name, will humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from Heaven, and I will forgive their sin, and heal their land." (2 Chronicles 7:14)

FEBRUARY 2021

God's word for this year ...

A Biblical truth, though not a Bible quote. Written by Minnie Haskins in 1912.

Quoted by King George VI in December 1939, 3 months after the start of World War II and 7 months before the start of the Battle of Britain.

I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year, "Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown." And he replied, "Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be to you better than a light, and safer than a known way."

Wow!

What a lot has happened since this time last year!

- Covid was almost unknown; now there have been over **100** million reported cases worldwide, and just over **2** million people have died from covid. Also, new variants now occur which spread the virus faster than before. But, praise God, there are now vaccines available.
- New Zealand now has a Labour government with an absolute majority of MPs.
- United States now has a Democratic President, government, and Senate.
- Plus a lot more!

What has **not** changed is that God is in control of all things, and even if we don't know or understand why He allows certain things to happen, we continue to pray as His Spirit leads us, we continue to trust Him, and we commit everything we have, including our lives, into His hands.

"O what peace we often forfeit;
O what needless pain we bare,
All because we do not carry,
Everything to God in prayer!"

What really matters

The world's problems will never be completely resolved because we live in a world that is riddled with sin. However, God has sent His Son to open the way for forgiveness, salvation, hope and eternal life to those who hear this good news, believe in Him and are born again by the Holy Spirit.

Around the world, Christians have talked and prayed a lot about Covid, their country and its

needs, elections, climate change, etc. What we need is every Christian to pray and share God's good news with others. We need evangelists who are specifically called, gifted and equipped to share God's message under the power and anointing of His Spirit; and missionaries who are called to go forth to the uttermost parts of the world to share the message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

Please pray:

For every Christian to be willing, equipped and ready to share the Christian faith – faith in Jesus Christ – and to demonstrate this by the way they live, love and speak.

For many more evangelists to be called, and obey God's call, to reach out and preach the Gospel to the 'unconverted', not just to those who already believe.

For missionaries to hear the call and be willing to go wherever God sends them, to sow the seed, water the soil, and see a harvest reaped.

For Christians to pray for other Christians, churches, preachers, pastors and so on; that the Church will be united, built up, empowered, ready and willing to lay aside things which would hinder the spread of the Word of God throughout their land.

Then we can pray about covid, our government, other major problems and needs in our country, and even our own relationship with the Lord and our needs too.

"Put your hand in the hand of the Man who stilled the water,
Put your hand in the hand of the Man who calmed the sea,
Take a look at yourself, and you can look at others differently,
By putting your hand in the hand of the Man from Galilee" – **JESUS!**

PRAYING WITHOUT CEASING, IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES

For God, whom I serve with my spirit by announcing the gospel of His Son, is my witness that *without ceasing* I remember you always in my prayers ... (Romans 1:9)

Rejoice always, pray *without ceasing*, give thanks in all circumstances ...
(1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)

Day and night *without ceasing* they sing, "Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God the Almighty, who was and is and is to come."
(Revelation 4:8)

Nobody, by themselves, can literally pray without ceasing! But together, the prayers of Christians in New Zealand and around the world are like fragrant incense which continually, without ceasing, arises from earth to the Lord God in Heaven. See Revelation 5:8 and 8:3-4.

We highly recommend ministries which encourage united prayer, and provide topics of Christian interest for prayer, including those listed below.

PLEASE PRAY for the following, and other similar Christian organisations; and visit their websites for further prayer topics and information.

Pray for the Nation

www.pray-for-the-nation.org

One of a number of Christian prayer ministries which encourage and assist people to pray – for the country, the church, our government, for the sharing of the Gospel, and for spiritual revival in our land which will revive Christians, the Church, and evangelistic outreach for the salvation of our people.

Pray as One NZ

www.prayasone.nz

Organizes weekly, 1-hour, online prayer meetings, via Zoom. These are held on Monday evenings from 8-9 pm, starting on Monday 1st February.

Prayer @ Parliament

www.prayeratparliament.org.nz

Holds three meetings each year in the Grand Hall at Parliament, from 7.20-9.00 pm. They will be held on Thursdays 18 March, 3 June, and 2 September. It is *essential* to register *at least 7 days* before the meeting (via their website above).

NZ Christian Network

www.nzchristiannetwork.org.nz

Seeks to unite Christians and churches, helping them to work together, build the Church, and have a positive influence on our society.

City by City

www.citybycity.co.nz

City by City exists to help encourage unity, prayer and transformation throughout Aotearoa-New Zealand. Its specific focus is a city-by-city approach. They seek to strengthen local leaders in faith, hope and love.

Open Heaven

www.openheaven.nz

Holds large prayer gatherings in different parts of the country. (See this website for current gatherings).

***“Ask and you will receive;
seek and you will find;
knock and it will be opened to you.”***

For prayer, praise and thanksgiving...

Psalm 46 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in times of trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy habitation of the Most High. God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved; God will help it when the morning dawns.

The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter; He utters His voice and the earth melts. But the LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge.

Come, behold the works of the LORD; see what desolations He has brought on the earth – He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow, and shatters the spear; He burns the shields with fire.

He says, "Be still, and know that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, I am exalted in the earth."

The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. ***Hallelujah!***



REVIVE US AGAIN!

12 Social concern

One of the dangers in what we call “evangelism” is that we can be so concerned to “save souls” that we forget that these “souls” may also have very real physical, social and economic needs. In our desire to “get them saved” we must not forget these other needs and problems: souls have bodies, and both have needs! In fact, many people who may not respond to the traditional methods of evangelism may be reached by showing genuine Christian love and concern by ministering to their other needs first.

As in most things, a balance is required. If we simply preach at people and ignore their real hurts and problems, we may alienate them as far as the Gospel is concerned. And yet, if all our efforts are put into social welfare and we fail to tell people of the saving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, then while we may help them in this life, they may still not have found the Lord.

The balance, then, is to show both genuine Christian love and concern for the lost, and tell them of the saving grace of Jesus whose love constrains us to minister to both the material and spiritual needs of people.

James puts it this way: “Religion [true Christianity] which is pure and undefiled before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world” (James 1:27). “What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him? If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food, and one of you says to them ‘Go in peace, be warmed and filled’, without giving them the things they need for the body, what does it profit? So faith, by itself, if it has not works, is dead” (James 2:14-17).

The Gospel is Good News, not only for the next life, but also for this! Jesus spent much of His time here on earth ministering to those who were poor, needy, oppressed, fatherless and widows. In fact, Jesus Himself knew what it was to be poor, needy, oppressed and fatherless! He was deeply concerned for people’s hurts as well as their eternal welfare. He fed the hungry, healed the sick, raised a

widow’s son from the dead, brought sight to blind beggars, washed dirty feet, wept with those who wept, brought comfort to the fearful and liberty to those in bondage. Jesus was concerned for the whole person: body, soul and spirit. He ministered wholeness in the power of the Spirit, and so must we!

What God requires as well as fasting

Fasting is one of the things mentioned in the Bible – “When you fast...” (Matthew 6:16-18). It is important to notice, however, that unless our fasting is accompanied by other things, this is not all that God really wants. “Is not this the fast that I choose?”, God says, “to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free and to break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry and bring the homeless poor into your house, and to clothe the naked? Then shall your light break forth like the dawn, and your healing shall spring up speedily; your righteousness shall go before you, the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry, and He will say ‘Here I am.’” (Isaiah 58:6-14).

This is not to minimize the importance of fasting, but simply to point out that fasting, by itself, is not enough, unless it is combined with acts of compassion to the poor and needy.

In a somewhat similar way Jesus said “Woe to you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin, but have neglected the weightier matters of the law – justice, mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others” (Matthew 23:23).

The example of the early Church

Right from the foundation of the Church in Acts 2, while evangelism was of paramount importance, the social needs of people were not neglected. “All who believed were together and had all things in common; and they sold their possessions and goods and distributed them to all, as any had need” (Acts 2:44-45; see also Acts 4:32-37).

When the needs of the Greek widows were being neglected, the first deacons were chosen to rectify this situation (Acts 6:1-6). When there was a famine in Judea, the Christians in Antioch sent relief to the believers there (Acts 11:27-30).

So we see that the early Church cared for both the spiritual and material welfare of its people. In fact, one of the meanings of the word “fellowship” (*koinonia*) is to share material blessings with those in need: “Those in Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution (*koinonia*) for the poor among the saints at Jerusalem. They were pleased to do it and indeed they are in debt to them, for if the Gentiles have come to share (*koinonia*) in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings” (Romans 15:26-27). The same concept also occurs in Romans 12:13, “Contribute (*koinonia*) to the needs of the saints”. Galatians 6:6, “Let him who is being instructed in the Word share (*koinonia*) with the one instructing, in all good things”. Also see Philippians 4:10-19.

However, we need not only to minister to the needs of those within the Church (i.e., needy Christians), but also to the needs of the unconverted. In this way we “let our light so shine before people that they may see our good works and give glory to our Father Who is in Heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

Materialism versus Christian socialism

In the West we live in a very materialistic society and this “capitalist spirit” has invaded the Church and the lives of many Christians, almost as much as it has the rest of our society. A competitive spirit, coupled with greed, selfishness, individualism and materialism has made this system of capitalism just as evil as communism. Believe it or not, God is not pro-capitalist and anti-socialist; both have their good and bad sides!

As we have seen in Acts, the early Christian Church practised a form of socialism based on sharing with those in need. Acts 5:4 (“While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal?”) implies that the Christians did not necessarily have to sell all they owned and put everything into a common pool, but they held material things so lightly that they shared freely with those in need and so there “was not a needy person among them” (Acts 4:32-37).

For those of us who find it hard to break away from the idea of what “we own” (“This is mine and that is yours”) we do well to remember the example of our Lord Who “did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men, and being found in human form He humbled Himself ...” (Philippians 2:4-8).

Of course, to avoid abuses of this system of Christians sharing all things in common, requires great wisdom, and this is why the first deacons that were chosen had to be “of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom” (Acts 6:3).

As the last days approach, and the Church faces increased persecution, and the world faces greater and greater economic and social crises, the need for Christian social action is going to be increasingly important as the Church stands out from the world in stark contrast, showing the genuine love, sharing, giving and concern of the people of God, compared to the increasing selfishness, competitiveness and greed in the world.

May the Church today be characterised by these Christlike qualities as it ministers to the poor, the oppressed and the needy.

QUESTIONS

1. “I don’t talk to people about Jesus, I just show them by my life.” Is this enough? Why or why not?
2. We live in a welfare state, so do Christians really need to be concerned with helping the poor? Discuss the statement: “Christians should be concerned with spiritual needs; non-Christians can minister to people’s other needs”.
3. Should the Church be capitalist or socialist?
4. Why is it important to maintain a balance between evangelism (the “evangelical Gospel”) and ministering to material needs (the “social Gospel”), and how can this be achieved?
5. What are some of the social needs in our society today which the Church is not adequately ministering to?
6. In what ways should the Church today be a caring, sharing community, having “all things in common”?